FIELDING’S “NEW PROVINCE OF WRITING”

By ERWART MATTHEWS*

Henry Fielding (1707-54), frequently referred to as the “Father of the English Novel”, undoubtedly began his first long narrative, *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews* (1742), as a parody burlesque on Richardson’s sentimentalism, doing more elaborately and in obvious imitation of the manner of Cervantes what he had attempted tentatively in *Shamela*. He carried the tone of parody consistently through the initial chapters, but apparently his intention was soon lost in the growth of a work which perforce would not be held down to so low a level, and, as Sir Walter Raleigh points out, “from Chapter IX, which deals with ‘several new matters not expected’, it becomes a novel of adventure of a type new to English literature. So that when Fielding came to write his preface he found that he too had to defend and explain a kind of writing hitherto unattempted.”¹ He was not slow to recognize this fact, nor was he hesitant in claiming for himself the honor of having created a new form in English fiction. He begins his preface to *Joseph Andrews* by observing that “it may not be improper to premise a few words concerning this kind of writing, which I do not remember to have seen hitherto attempted in our language.” A few sentences further on he makes practically the same statement again, and in the concluding paragraph of the preface he caps his pride with the claim that the character of Parson Adams is “not to be found in any book now extant.”

The Preface to *Joseph Andrews* also outlines rules for the “new species of writing” and discourses at some length on terminology; and by the time Fielding, seven years later, is ready to present *The History of Tom Jones* to the English public, he has become so taken with the

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¹ Walter Raleigh—*The English Novel*, pp. 164-5.
idea of his "new province of writing" that he initiates the novel itself and each of its eighteen books with ample discussion of the character, purpose, and limitations of his new form, saying that "as I am in reality, the founder of a new province of writing, so I am at liberty to make what laws I please therein." (Book II, 1.)

But, of course, it would be foolish to take these claims at their face value. However new the design of Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones may have been in many respects, it was not a wholly original order conceived in Fielding's mind and brought forth fully developed. It possessed its modicum of originality, but that was no more than a slightly different compounding of elements already well-known and frequently used in fiction. Moreover, its sudden appearance was in reality the climax of a development which, indeed, did not complete itself until the publication of Fielding's final novel, Amelia (1751).

The question now arises, what exactly was this new creation? Fielding in the Preface to Joseph Andrews calls it "a comic epic poem in prose", and in Book V, chapter 1, of Tom Jones he terms it "prosaic-comic-epic writing". The "comic epic in prose" idea was one well-known in Renaissance criticism, and, strangely perhaps, links up with both Aristotle and Cervantes. Therefore, to understand what it signifies in connection with Fielding, it may be well to examine his theory of writing and the structure of his novels in connection with the various influences playing upon him from the past.

Digeon, a recent French critic, in an effort to do this very thing, says: "Le roman fieldingsque est à proprement parler, et pour employer les termes de son inventeur, une épopée comique en prose. Et je crois que c'est fort consciemment que Fielding l'a inventé, en utilisant d'une part son expérience dramatique, de l'autre son education classique et les règles de l'épopée telles que les avaient interprétées les critiques, et tout particulièrement les critiques français." 2 M. Digeon is cor-

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rect so far as he goes, but he errs in failing to recognize a third influence which should have been more than obvious—that of the picaresque tale and the romance. The picaresque is, indeed, more important than the dramatic influence, for although Fielding certainly owes much in characterization, scene construction, and tone to his own experience as a writer of comedies and to the work of Molière and Congreve, his novel is, in its final technical form, the result of a conflict between the example of the picaresque tale and the rules of tragic and epic writing as laid down by Aristotle.

The picaresque story was nearest to Fielding in point of time and in pointedness of example. We have innumerable indications that he was acquainted with practically all the writers of the picaresque tale and steeped in their works. In Book III, chapter 1, of Joseph Andrews, he mentions Cervantes and Scarron, Le Sage's Gil Blas, and the History of Marianne and Le Paysan Parvemay by Marivaux, and goes into a short discursus on romances. Likewise, in the Preface to Joseph Andrews he draws a clear contrast between his own work and "those voluminous works, commonly called Romances, namely, Clelia, Cleopatra, Astraea, Cassandra, the Grand Cyrus, and innumerable others."

His novels bear witness also to the influence of the picaresque in their own composition. Saintsbury, in the Introduction to his edition of Fielding's works, says: "Fielding was also well acquainted with Marivaux's Paysan Parvemay, and the actual resemblances between that book and Joseph Andrews are much stronger than Fielding's admirers have always been willing to admit." Erich Bosdorf, in a thesis prepared at the University of Berlin in 1908 (Entstehungsgeschichte von Fielding's "Joseph Andrews"), devotes a chapter to the similarities between Joseph Andrews and Gil Blas, listing a number of parallel situations and passages. In the same work, he goes thoroughly into the connection between Joseph Andrews and Don Quixote, and is in such a study on the safest of ground. For Cervantes seems to have been the
most revered figure in Fielding's literary gallery. He was most akin to Fielding in spirit—the spirit of unsentimental humor, of burlesque, of social satire; and when Fielding came to write a parody of Pamela, it was to Cervantes that he turned for pattern. "Writ in the manner of Cervantes" is the subtitle legend to Joseph Andrews, and the course of the book, moving away as it does from its Cervantastic model as it takes form, nevertheless holds close to much of the machinery of the Spanish burlesque.

It may be that it was from Cervantes Fielding obtained his idea of the "comic epic in prose". This conception of the prose epic is found first in the Preface to Joseph Andrews, wherein Fielding says, "As this poetry (the epic) may be tragic or comic, I will not scruple to say it may be likewise either in verse or prose; for though it wants one particular, which the critic enumerates in the constituent parts of an epic poem, namely meter; yet, when any kind of writing contains all its other parts, such as fable, action, characters, sentiments, and diction, and is deficient in meter only, it seems, I think, reasonable to refer it to the epic"—a pronouncement, in argument and idea, not unlike the canon of Toledo's discussion in Don Quixote of the romance, which concludes with the assertion: "Porque la escritura desatada destos libros da lugar a que el autor pueda mostrarse épico, lírico, trágico, cómico, con todas aquellas partes que encierran en sí las dulcísimas y agradables ciencias de la poesía y de la oratoria; que la épica también puede escribirse en prosa coma en verso." (I, IV, 20.) Saintsbury seems to think that this passage is the source of Fielding's idea of the "epic in prose", for he says in this connection that "the famous contention that epics may be written in prose as well as verse, though important from its actual illustration in the Don and in its effect on Fielding, is in no sense original (with Cervantes), and as an opinion hardly more than an echo of Scaliger."³ Certainly Fielding knew the passage in Don

Quixote. He may or may not have known Scaliger, whose reference to the subject consists of an indirect comment to the effect that the Aethiopica of Heliodorus, a prose romance, "should be most carefully conned by the epic poet, as furnishing him the best model." 4

The probability is that Fielding, however he may have depended upon Cervantes for the prose-epic idea, owed quite as much to Le Bossu, the French critic, whose Le Traité de la Poésie Epique was one of the classics of Eighteenth Century criticism and was translated into English a number of times. 5 Fielding knew the work and mentions Bossu as one of those "who have certainly been duly authorized to execute at least a judicial authority in forio literario", along with Aristotle, Horace, Longinus, and Dacier. 6 According to Digeon, Sarah, Fielding's sister, frequently cited Bossu in the original, 7 and it is probable that Fielding himself was quite as familiar with the Frenchman's work. The exact passage to which Fielding owes, if not the prose-epic idea itself, at least the particular phrasing of it, is found on page 15 of Le Traité: "Mais si l'on écrivait une Epopée en prose, serait-ce une Poème Epique? Je ne le crois pas, parce qu'un Poème est un discours en vers. Cela néanmoins n'empêcherait pas qu'elle ne fût une Epopée."

Bossu and Cervantes, however, dispose of only one item in Fielding's label of his new species of writing—its prose medium. The "comic" item comes from a different source—from Aristotle, whose rules of the epic as embodied in his Poetics were perhaps the most important single influence in the determination of Fielding's technique. Fielding, who possessed a brilliant and catholic acquaintance with the classics, knew the Poetics intimately. He mentions Aristotle more frequently than any other critic, even more frequently than his beloved Cervantes; and the impress of Aristotelian rule is found both in the theoretical discussions of the novelist's art

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4 Padelford—Select Translations from Scaliger's Poetics, III, 96.
5 Digeon, op. cit., p. 285.
6 Tom Jones, Book XI, chapter 1.
7 Digeon, op. cit., p. 284.
in the prefatory chapters of Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones, and in the structure of the novels themselves. He connects up Aristotle most directly with his work in the Preface to Joseph Andrews, when he is attempting to define his "new kind" of fiction: "The Epic, as well as the Drama, is divided into tragedy and comedy. Homer, who was the father of this species of poetry, gave us a pattern of both these, though that of the latter is lost; which Aristotle tells us, bore the same relation to comedy which his Iliad bears to tragedy. And perhaps, that we have no more instances of it among the writers of antiquity, is owing to the loss of this great pattern, which, had it survived, would have found its imitators equally with the other poems of this great original."

This "great pattern" of the comic epic was Homer's Margites, of which we "possess only six verses, . . . . in three fragments; but we know from various accounts that it treated in epic form the adventures of a simpleton who was unable to act like other people. Ignorant and conceited, he performed a series of stupid acts for which presumably he had to pay dear. Satire here took the place of epic grandeur. The ridiculous personage was celebrated like an epic personage, though he was the very opposite of a hero." It is not difficult to discern the similarity between this Greek comic poem and the burlesque rogue stories of Cervantes and Scarron, nor hard to follow Fielding's course of thought in drawing a parallel between it and his own projected works. Aristotle, however, must be credited with pointing out to Fielding this possible parallel. In his discussion of the Margites in the Poetics, Aristotle says: "His (Homer's) Margites bears the same relation to Comedy that the Iliad and Odyssey do to Tragedy. But when Tragedy and Comedy

8 Croiset—History of Greek Literature, p. 31.

9 However, we must not overlook the tradition of the comic epic in European literature and the fact that Fielding might well have been more influenced by the Italian La Secchia Rapita, Boileau's Le Lutrin, Pope's Rape of the Lock, and other such adaptations of the mock epic, than by the lost Margites.
came to light, the two classes of poets still followed their natural bent: the lampooners became writers of Comedy and the Epic poets were succeeded by Tragedians, since the drama was a larger and higher form of art." Fielding simply extends this development from the drama to prose fiction—heir in idea, if in nothing more, to Homer’s Margites and Aristotle’s interpretation of it.

Fielding apparently set out to pattern his prose epics as closely as possible on the rules for the verse epic which Aristotle had set down in the Poetics. That he could not follow the rules to the letter, he very soon discovered, for he was attempting to apply them to a type of literature the development of which had been entirely in another direction. Historically, prose fiction was a matter of fables, romances, and tales, developed into extravagant and luxuriant forms without the restraint of the classic rules. To fit the picaresque tale to the Aristotelian proprieties of Greek drama and epic was to tame the untamed, to civilize the barbaric, to bring order out of chaos. That Fielding succeeded and thereby brought to intelligent form the modern novel, is sufficient tribute to his constructive genius. He found fiction characterized either by marvellous adventures and fairy-tale happenings or by hearty and rampant burlesque. He shaped it to the realism of human nature, sweetened with civilized comedy. He found it a rambling series of stock situations strung along the trail of a nomadic hero, with no climatic conclusion, with no unity of purpose, and with no architectonic symmetry. He left it an artistic unit, properly motivated and deftly built, part fitted to part.

Fielding was faced by three problems: first, to shift the tone of the novel from the marvellous and burlesque to the realistic; second, to establish decorum of character; and third, to provide a logical and orderly structure. He attacked the first problem with the composi-

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10 Poetics, IV. The translation used here and continuously throughout this discussion is that of S. H. Butcher in his Aristotle’s Theory of Poetry and Fine Art.
tion of *Joseph Andrews*. In his preface to that work, he takes considerable pains to state his position in regard to the serious romance and the burlesque, and to define the comedy which he substitutes for them. "Now, a comic romance," he says, "is a comic epic poem in prose; differing from comedy, as the serious epic from tragedy: its action being more extended and comprehensive; containing a much larger circle of incidents, and introducing a greater variety of characters. It differs from the serious romance in its fable and action, in this; that as in the one these are grave and solemn, so in the other they are light and ridiculous: it differs in its characters by introducing persons of inferior rank, and consequently, of inferior manners, whereas the grave romance sets the highest before us; lastly, in its sentiments and diction, by preserving the ludicrous instead of the sublime. In the diction, I think, burlesque may be sometimes admitted; of which many instances will occur in this work, as in the description of the battles, and some other places, not necessary to be pointed out to the classical reader, for whose entertainment those parodies or burlesques imitations are chiefly calculated.

"But though we have sometimes admitted this in our diction, we have carefully excluded it from our sentiments and characters; for there it is never properly introduced, unless in writings of the burlesque kind, which this is not intended to be. Indeed, no two species of writing can differ more widely than the comic and the burlesque; for as the latter is ever the exhibition of what is monstrous and unnatural, and where our delight, if we examine it, arises from the surprising absurdity, as in appropriating the manners of the highest to the lowest, or *e converso*; so in the former we should ever confine ourselves strictly to nature, from the just imitation of which will flow all the pleasure we can this way convey to a sensible reader. And perhaps there is one reason why a comic writer should of all others be the least excused for deviating from nature, since it may not be always so easy for a serious poet to meet with the great
and the admirable; but life everywhere furnishes an accurate observer with the ridiculous."

Further on in the discussion he says that "the Ridiculous only, as I have said before, falls within my province in the present work." This idea of the Ridiculous, as he admits, he takes from Aristotle, who speaks of its being "proper to comedy".\(^{11}\) In his characterization of the persons of comedy as of "inferior rank, and consequently, of inferior manners," Fielding is practically paraphrasing Aristotle, who defines comedy as "an imitation of characters of a lower type."\(^{12}\) In fact, his entire discussion follows Aristotle's comment on comedy as contrasted with tragedy. Furthermore, Fielding's dictum that in comic writing "we should ever confine ourselves strictly to nature, from the just imitation of which will flow all the pleasure we can this way convey to the sensible reader", is simply a repetition of Aristotle's great principle of the "imitation of nature."\(^{13}\) Time and again Fielding refers to trueness to nature as a necessity in the writing of fiction. He devotes the first chapter of Book VII of Tom Jones to a discussion of the world as a great theatre, in connection with which he observes that "the theatrical stage is nothing more than a representation or, as Aristotle calls it, an imitation of what really exists; hence, perhaps, we may fairly pay a very high compliment to those who by their writing or actions have been so capable of imitating life, as to have their pictures in a way confounded with, or mistaken for, the originals."

Thus, instead of the "monstrous" of the burlesques, Fielding sets up the truthful lifeliness of a realistic imitation of human nature, flavored by a sense of the Ridiculous. For the Marvellous of the medieval romance, he substitutes logical action and reason. "I think," he says, "it may very reasonably be required of every writer that he keeps within the bounds of possibility; and still re-

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\(^{11}\) Poetics, V. 2.

\(^{12}\) Ibid.

\(^{13}\) Poetics, I.
members that what it is not possible for man to perform, it is scarce possible to believe he did perform.”\textsuperscript{14} Again: “I wish with all my heart, that Homer could have known the rule prescribed by Horace, to introduce supernatural agents as seldom as possible.”\textsuperscript{15} He advises that ghosts, “the only supernatural agents which can in any manner be allowed to us moderns,” be used “extremely sparing(ly)”; that “elves and fairies, and other such mum-mery” should be used not at all; and that in relating man’s actions, “great care . . . . be taken that we do not exceed the capacity of the agent described.”\textsuperscript{16}

In his insistence on reasonable action, Fielding is following Aristotle’s “law of probability or necessity”.\textsuperscript{17} This law of course is linked most directly with the unity of action, which will be discussed later, but it likewise applies to the supernatural or the humanly impossible. As Aristotle says in another connection, “within the action, there must be nothing irrational,”\textsuperscript{18} and Fielding applies this rule conscientiously to his own work. As I shall show in later discussion, he adheres to a strict realism of incident, strangely different from the fantastic method of the fiction of two centuries earlier.

Intimately connected with realism in action is decorum or realism of characterization. By this is meant the proper adjustment of character and action so that, as Fielding points out, the action may be such as “may not only be within the compass of human agency, and which human agents may be supposed to do,” but may “be likely for the very actors and characters themselves to have performed; for what may be only wonderful and surprising in one man may become improbable or indeed impossible, when related of another.”\textsuperscript{19} Here again he follows Aristotle, who hands down the law that “a person of a given character should speak or act in a given way,

\textsuperscript{14} Tom Jones, VIII, 1.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} Poetics, IX.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid, XV.
\textsuperscript{19} Tom Jones, VIII, 1.
by the rule either of necessity or probability; just as this event should follow that by necessary or probable sequence.” But Fielding, in the implications of his theory and the achievement of his practice, goes much further than Aristotle. The Greek philosopher is thinking in terms of types more than in terms of individuals. He holds, indeed, that “character must be true to life,” but he is more insistent that the plot is “the soul of tragedy: Character holds the second place.” He is concerned with the “universal”: “how a person of a certain type will on occasion speak or act.” Fielding is thinking of finer distinctions than differences of type. He is desirous that his characters “appear to think”; that they do think, possess personalities, and exercise judgments peculiar to their separate natures. It is only necessary to list some of his fine character creations—Parson Adams, Mrs. Slipslop, Partridge, Trulliber, Squire Western, and Tom Jones—to be convinced of the power he possessed to breathe life into men and women of complete human proportions and to people his theatre with personalities, not types.

It is in the solution of his third problem—the provision of a logical structure to his novels—that Fielding depends most on Aristotle’s rules and conflicts most with the tradition of fiction, both picaresque and romantic. Of course, in his insistence upon realism of incident and individualization of character he broke with the romance of chivalry and the picaresque burlesque. The picaresque, however, has its realism and its well-realized characters. Parson Adams is no great distance from Don Quixote nor Partridge from Sancho Panza. It was in plot organization that Cervantes and all the writers of rogue stories and chivalrous romances fell short of Fielding’s ideal and his practice.

These tales are usually interminable, rambling accounts of adventures, a multitude of episodes beaded on

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20 Poetics, XV.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid, VI.
23 Ibid, IX.
a slight string of connecting plot. Usually they are biographical in style. In the case of the romance, two handsome youths or beautiful maidens, close friends or relatives, are separated by some untoward fate, and struggle through misfortune after misfortune, meeting and being cruelly separated again, doing amazing deeds of valor, and finally achieving a span of victory and mutual society sufficiently lengthy to merit the close of their careers. The picaresque story is quite similar: a poor boy is cast adrift on the world of robbers, grafters, loose women, and corrupt clergy. He has many episodic adventures, travels extensively, accumulates several fortunes and loses each, has innumerable love affairs and innumerable disillusionments, and finally ceases his wanderings simply because his creator has succumbed to writer's cramp or the gout.

Of plot coherence or structure there is little. The episode or individual adventure is the unit. Each time a new character is introduced, he proceeds to tell the story of his life. No effort is made to weave the various divergent strands of narrative into a single complete fabric. There is no climax and no dénouement—no controlling interest in the story resolved by the disposition of affairs and characters at the conclusion. Fielding, having in mind Aristotle's rules of logical plot development, designed in his novels to escape this chaos.

"Of all plots and actions," says Aristotle, "the episodic are the worst. I call a plot 'episodic' in which the episodes or acts succeed one another without probable or necessary sequence."24 And to combat this episodicity of plot he sets forth his law of unity of action. Briefly, it is that the plot, "being an imitation of an action, must imitate one action and that a whole, the structural union of the parts being such that, if any one of them is misplaced or removed, the whole will be disjointed and disturbed."25 In other words, every character, event, and situation must bear a definite and proper

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24 Poetics, IX.
25 Ibid, VIII.
relation to the superior design and purpose of the plot. There can be nothing extraneous, nothing thrown in for a moment’s edification or entertainment. Every item in the narration must pass two tests—those of sequence and pertinency. It must come in the proper place and have a proper significance in that place.

Such a rule obviously calls for a fiction form at the opposite pole to the romance or picaresque. The latter forms take the nature of history; the former the nature of selective drama. Fielding was aware of this difference and comments upon it to this effect: “We intend . . . to pursue the method of those writers who profess to disclose the revolutions of countries,” rather “than to imitate the painful and voluminous historian, who, to preserve the regularity of his series, thinks himself obliged to fill up as much paper with the details of months and years in which nothing remarkable happened, as he employs upon those notable eras when the greatest scenes have been transacted on the human stage.” 26 This is the same idea of selective incident for the purpose of obtaining unity of action as Aristotle outlines in his famous discussion of the difference between history and tragedy. “It”, he says, speaking of tragedy, “should have for its subject a single action, whole and complete, with a beginning, a middle, and an end. It will thus resemble a living organism in all its unity, and produce the pleasure proper to it. It will differ in structure from historical compositions, which of necessity present not a single action, but a single period, and all that happened within that period to one person or to many, little connected together as the events may be. For as the sea-fight at Salamis and the battle with the Carthaginians in Sicily took place at the same time, but did not tend to any one result, so in the sequence of events one thing sometimes follows another, and yet no single result is thereby produced. Such is the practice, we may say, of most poets. Here again, then, as has been already observed, the transcendent excellence of

26 Tom Jones, Book II, 1.
Homer is manifest. He never attempts to make the whole war of Troy the subject of his poem, though that war had a beginning and an end. It would have been too vast a theme, and not easily embraced in a single view.”

That Fielding intended to follow the example of Homer in this respect, making a proper selection of incident to develop his plot, is sufficiently indicated by the quotation from the second book of Tom Jones in the above paragraph, and by the following jocular thrust at hypercritical readers: “We warn thee,” Fielding says, “not too hastily to condemn any of the incidents in this history as impertinent and foreign to our main design, because thou dost not immediately conceive in what manner such incident may conduce to that design. This work may, indeed, be considered as a great creation of our own; and for a little reptile of a critic to presume to find fault with any of its parts, without knowing the manner in which the whole is connected, and before he comes to the final catastrophe, is a most presumptuous absurdity.”

As to just how successful Fielding was in following the Aristotelian rule of unity of action, we can determine by an examination of his novels. Joseph Andrews, written when he was still very much under the influence of Cervantes and the picaresque method, is the least unified of the three. It has a single plot interest which is resolved in the conclusion—the parentage of Joseph—, but this interest does not develop until near the end of the story, so near the end, indeed, that it is actually a part of the dénouement. Most of the novel is an account of the undirected travels of Joseph, Fanny, and Parson Adams through a portion of England. There are a number of incidents which are similar in every respect to the episodes of the picaresque, serving only to keep alive an action which apparently is going nowhere and might as well be allowed to die. “The history of Leonora, or the

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27 Poetics, XXIII.
28 Tom Jones, Book X, 1.
unfortunate jilt" and the life history of Mr. Wilson are episodic excursions in the manner of the romance or picaresque. Manifestly, Fielding has not in Joseph Andrews employed the rule of unity of action to its full advantage; he is still following the pattern of Cervantes and Scarron.

Tom Jones is much more a unit of action. The plot is the controlling force in its composition, each incident and character filling into the total design. As Murphy says, "the action has that unity, which is the boast of the great models of composition; it turns upon a single event, attended with many circumstances, and many subordinate incidents, which seem in the progress of the work, to perplex, to entangle, and to involve the whole in difficulties, and lead on the reader's imagination, with an eagerness of curiosity, through scenes of prodigious variety, till at length the different intricacies and complications of the fable are explained, after the same gradual manner in which they have been worked up to a crisis: incident arises out of incident; the seeds of everything that shoots up are laid with a judicious hand; and whatever occurs in the latter part of the story, seems naturally to grow out of those passages which preceded; so that upon the whole, the business, with great propriety and probability, works itself up into various embarrassments, and then afterwards, by a regular series of events, clears itself from all impediments, and brings itself inevitably to a conclusion; like a river, which, in its progress, foams amongst fragments of rocks, and for a while seems pent up by insurmountable oppositions; then angrily dashes for a while, then plunges underground into caverns, and runs a subterraneous course, till at length it breaks out again, meanders around the country, and with a clear, placid stream flows gently into the Ocean. By this artful management, our Author has given us the perfection of fable."  

There is little doubt of the perfection of the plot of

Tom Jones. Fielding had a right to be proud of it, for it is a structure of crafty planning and neat building. As Murphy says, each incident has its value in the final resolution of the plot; each little excursion has its significance as a tributary to the principal movement. It is not within my purpose to go into a close analysis of the plot and art of Tom Jones, since such general statement as has been made is sufficient to indicate the care its author took in following the law of unified action. But attention must be given to his lapses from the law, for at the time of the composition of Tom Jones Fielding still had his eye on the picaresque and its formless structure. R. B. Sharpe, of Goucher College, in an unpublished analysis of Tom Jones, deploys the actions and their natures, as follows:

- Expository at Allworthy’s home—Books I to IV.
- Dramatic at Allworthy’s and Western’s—Book V.
- On the Road—Books VI to VIII.
- Dramatic at Upton—Books IX and X.
- On the Road—Sophia, Book XI; Tom, Book XII.
- Dramatic at London—Books XIII to XVIII.

From this analysis, we can see that Fielding has not yet outgrown the old picaresque and romantic device of the journey. The large central portion of the book is devoted to a movement of the various characters toward London, which in its essence is the same peripatetic adventure scheme as that in Don Quixote. Likewise, there are character story digressions, notable among them the life history of the “old man on the hill” and the adventures of Mrs. Fitzpatrick. But Tom Jones contains much less of the picaresque than did Joseph Andrews. Fielding has discovered the value of unity of place along with unity of action, and the really successful portions of the novel are those in which he uses the dramatic method—at Allworthy’s, at Upton, and in London.

Finally, Fielding’s last novel, Amelia, unites unity of place with unity of action, giving the dramatic method its best opportunity and establishing Fielding’s construc-
tive genius. Perhaps the plot of *Tom Jones* is the more cleverly built, but in its exposition it is not so compact. The entire present action of *Amelia* takes place within a very short time in the city of London. What few digressions there are, with the single exception of the story of Miss Matthews, are in the nature of retrospects for the purpose of bringing the action up to date intelligibly. Fielding does not feel under obligation in order to maintain interest to start his characters out on some wild-goose chase across England. His conception of the novel has matured to the point where he can conceive of people living ordinary and sedentary lives in city chambers and yet having enough of the adventure of the spirit to make them worth writing about. For that reason, *Amelia* represents the maturity of his art, the point at which the novel steps from all connection with the picaresque into its proper place as a prose epic of the soul according to the rules of Aristotle.

The result, then, of this study is the conclusion that Fielding represents in the course of his literary life a continuous conflict between the pattern of picaresque adventure and burlesque tales and the rules of Aristotle, and that in the long run the classic restraints of the Greek philosopher triumphed to such an extent that they eliminated from Fielding's work the chaotic structure and type-character drawing of the earlier fiction forms and brought him to the creation of a "new province of writing", the modern realistic novel, with its life-like characterization and its carefully constructed plot.
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