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Los Angeles

Sentiment and Laughter:

Caricature in the Novel, 1740-1840

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in English

by

Leigh-Michil George

2016

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2016

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Sentiment and Laughter:

Caricature in the Novel, 1740-1840

by

Leigh-Michil George

Doctor of Philosophy in English

University of California, Los Angeles, 2016

Professor Jonathan Hamilton Grossman, Co-Chair

Professor Felicity A. Nussbaum, Co-Chair

This dissertation examines how late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century British novelists—major authors, Laurence Sterne and Jane Austen, and lesser-known writers, Pierce Egan, Charles Jenner, and Alexander Bicknell—challenged Henry Fielding's mid-eighteenth-century critique of caricature as unrealistic and un-novelistic. In this study, I argue that Sterne, Austen, Egan, and others translated visual tropes of caricature into literary form in order to make their comic writings appear more "realistic." In doing so, these authors not only bridged the character-caricature divide, but a visual-verbal divide as well. As I demonstrate, the desire to connect caricature with character, and the visual with the verbal, grew out of larger ethical and aesthetic concerns regarding the relationship between laughter, sensibility, and novelistic form.

This study begins with Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* (1742) and its antagonistic stance towards caricature and the laughter it evokes, a laughter that both Fielding and William Hogarth portray as detrimental to the knowledge of character and sensibility. My second chapter looks at how, increasingly, in the late eighteenth century tears *and* laughter were integrated into the sentimental experience. Sterne's readers wept sentimental tears for *Tristram Shandy*'s (1759-1767) heartbroken Maria, but they also sought "delicate laughter" in the verbal and visual caricature of Dr. Slop. In the third chapter, I explore how Jane Austen's *Persuasion* (1818) mocks Sternean sensibility and its problematic idealization of fragile, female bodies by adapting tropes of visual caricature into literary form. The fourth chapter examines Pierce Egan's *Life in London* (1821), rarely read today, but hugely popular in the 1820s. Egan's protagonists are "men of feeling" who thrive on the thrills of "real life," which in the novel is best exemplified by caricature. The novelist follows in the comic realist tradition of Fielding, but embraces Sternean sensibility and its enthusiasm for caricature. Egan sees caricature and sensibility as interconnected, rather than opposed.

The dissertation of Leigh-Michil George is approved.

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University of California, Los Angeles

2016

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures……………………………………………………………………………vi

Acknowledgements………………………………………………………………………ix

Vita………………………………………………………………………………………xii

Introduction………………………………………………………………………………1

Chapter 1
“[A] very proper object of laughter”: Realism and the Ridiculous in Henry Fielding’s *Joseph Andrews*…………..……………..……42

Chapter 2
Sterne, Bunbury, and the Sentimental Journey of Laughter……………………..65

Chapter 3
“Unbecoming Conjunctions”: The Comforts of Caricature in Jane Austen’s *Persuasion*………………………………………………………………………103

Chapter 4
“Real Life” in Caricature: Pierce Egan’s *Life in London*………………………142

Conclusion
“The Last Days of Coarse Caricatures”………………………………………...184

Bibliography……………………………………………………………………………196

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: William Hogarth, *Characters and Caricaturas* (1743)…………………………....3
Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University

Figure 2: Simon François Ravenet after William Hogarth, [Frontispiece to volume one of *Tristram Shandy*](1760s?)……………………………………………………………...7
Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University

Figure 3: James Gillray, Detail from *The New Morality* (1789)…………………………21
Courtesy of the British Museum

Figure 4: After Henry William Bunbury, *A Family Piece* (1794)……………………….....25
Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University

Figure 5: Francis Grose, *Rules for Drawing Caricaturas,* Plate I (1788)……………..…34
Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University

Figure 6: Elizabeth Bridgetta Gulston, *A Character* (1772) …………………………….38
Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University

Figure 7: After Pier Leone Ghezzi, *Dr. Tom Bentley* (c.1700-1760)……………………46
Courtesy of the British Museum

Figure 8: William Hogarth, *The Bench* (1758)…………………………………………..47
Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University

Figure 9: John Bretherton after Henry William Bunbury, *The Overthrow of Dr. Slop* (1773)……………………………………………………………………………....67
Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-102363

Figure 10: Thomas Rowlandson*, A Kick-Up At a Hazard Table!* (1790)………………86
Courtesy of the British Museum

Figure 11: After Henry William Bunbury, *The Propagation of a Lie*, Plates 1 and 2 (ca. 1815)…………………………………………………………………………..88
Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University

Figure 12: After Henry William Bunbury, *The Propagation of a Lie*, Plates 3 and 4 (ca. 1815)…………………………………………………………………………...88
Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University

Figure 13: After Henry William Bunbury, *Evening, or, The Man of Feeling* (1802)…...89
Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University

Figure 14: Sir Joshua Reynolds, *The Infant Samuel* (c. 1776)…………………………91
Courtesy of the Tate Britain, Available under CC-BY-NC-ND (3.0 Unported) license, http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/reynolds-the-infant-samuel-n00162

Figure 15: After Henry William Bunbury, *Misery* (1788)…………………………..…98
Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University

Figure 16: Charles Williams, *Fat and Lean* (1806)……………………………………109
Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University

Figure 17: Hugh Thomson, "He attended to her large, fat sighings" (1898)…………..113

Figure 18: William Heath, *1812 or Regency a La Mode* (1812)……………………......117
Courtesy of the British Museum

Figure 19: James Gillray, *Dido in Despair*! (1801)……………………………………125
Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University

Figure 20: Richard Earlom after George Romney, *Sensibility* (1789)…………………127
Courtesy of the British Museum

Figure 21: James Gillray, From *A New Edition Considerably Enlarged, of Attitudes Faithfully Copied from Nature: and Humbly Dedicated to all Admirers of the Grand and Sublime* (1807)……………………………………......................128
Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University

Figure 22: Friedrich Rehberg, From *Drawings Faithfully Copied from Nature at Naples* (1797)………………………………………………………………….…......129
Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University

Figure 23: James Gillray, *Following the Fashion* (1794)………………………………130
Courtesy of the British Museum

Figure 24: Thomas Rowlandson, *Dropsy Courting Consumption* (1810)…...…………133
Courtesy of the British Museum

Figure 25: Thomas Rowlandson,"Dr. Syntax and Bookseller" (1813)….…………..…137
Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University

Figure 26: *Life in London*, Title Page (1821)…………………………………………..143

Figure 27: *A real Character P—O* (1777)………………………………………......148
Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University

Figure 28: *A Real Character in St. Helena by Lootho* (1781)……………………….....149
Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University

Figure 29: George and Robert Cruikshank, "Tom & Jerry, Sporting their bits of blood among the Pinks in Rotten Row" (1820)……………….……………….……..152
Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University

Figure 30: Edward Topham, *The Macaroni Print Shop* (1772)………………………153
Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University

Figure 31: James Gillray, *Very Slippy-Weather* (1808)………………………………155
Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University

Figure 32: *Caricature Shop* (1801)…………………………………………………....156
Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University

Figure 33: After G.M. Woodward, *Caricature Curiosity* (1806)…………………….…..158
Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-DIG-ppmsca-30755

Figure 34: Isaac Cruikshank after G.M. Woodward *The Caricature Magazine,* vol.1, Title Page (c. 1808).………………………………………………………………...…..160
Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University

Figure 35: Robert Cruikshank, *Dandies Dressing* (1818)…………………………...…162
Courtesy of the British Museum

Figure 36: George Cruikshank, "The Dandy of Sixty" (1819)…………………..…..…164

Figure 37: Theodore Lane, *Honi Soit Qui Mal Y Pense* (1821)……………………..…168
Courtesy of the British Museum

Figure 38: George and Robert Cruikshank, *Life in London*, Frontispiece (1821)……...171
Courtesy of the British Museum

Figure 39: George and Robert Cruikshank, "Highest Life in London" (1821)………...173
Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University

Figure 40: George and Robert Cruikshank, "Lowest 'Life in London'" (1821)…...…..175
Courtesy of the British Library

Figure 41: Robert Cruikshank, *Finish*, Frontispiece and Title Page (1871[?])……......179
Courtesy of the British Library

Figure 42: Robert Seymour, Mr. Pickwick Addresses the Club (1836)……….........191
Scanned image and text by Philip V. Allingham
Victorian Web
http://www.victorianweb.org/victorian/art/illustration/seymour/1.html

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Sentiment and Laughter: Caricature in the Novel, 1740-1840
Introduction

In Charles Jenner's sentimental novel *The Placid Man, or the Memoirs of Sir Charles Beville* (1770), a father fears caricature will ruin his son's sensibility. Sir George Beville, a baronet, lives in a comfortable country estate, with his only son, Charles, whose mother, Lady Beville, died in childbirth. Young Charles is an exceptional boy, "remarkable in his temper," and especially sensitive to music: a "placid serenity" fills his face whenever he hears singing.[1] Sir George encourages his growing son's affinity for music, believing that "the very same delicacy of feelings which laid a man open to the power of music, might lay him more peculiarly open to the sentiments of humanity"(*PM* 1.25). But as Charles enters manhood, Sir George believes that his son's sensibility, his "innate sensitiveness," might be at risk.[2] The culprit is laughter.

Charles has a penchant for the comical: "[N]ature had spread such a vein of pleasantry through his mind, that it affected more or less every action and pursuit of his life; not only his amusements, but his studies were of the comic kind"(*PM* 1.39). When Sir George discovers his son "drawing droll caricatura figures…Nestor in a tie wig, Hector like ancient Pistol, and Paris like a dancing master," he shares his concerns with Charles's tutor, Mr. Norris (*PM* 1.25). Norris, however, regards the drawings as delightful rather than harmful:

> [He] comforted Sir George, who was a great admirer of the ancients, and saw Charles's caricaturas in rather too serious a light, with telling him, that perhaps it

[1] Charles Jenner, *The Placid Man, or the Memoirs of Sir Charles Beville* (London, 1773), 1.24. Hereafter cited as *PM*.

[2] Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction* (London: Methuen, 1986), 7.

> was the surest method of shewing, that he entered into the spirit of the story, if not intirely [sic] into the beauties of the poetry, for his figures, though in burlesque, were always very characteristic. (*PM* 1.39—40)

It is not hard to understand why Sir George believes caricature and sensibility are opposed. Caricature mocks human features and behaviors, seemingly signifying a lack of sympathy. "Its aim is to exhibit monsters, not men," Henry Fielding claims in the Preface to *Joseph Andrews* (1742), where he describes the "distortions and exaggerations" of caricature as unnatural and unrealistic, and, thus, un-novelistic.[3] William Hogarth's print *Characters and Caricaturas* (1743) (fig. 1) illustrates this divide between character and caricature that the novelist advocates. But as Norris's comments indicate, this division lies in the eye of the beholder. When Norris looks at Charles's drawings he finds them "very characteristic." It is as if the caricatures draw him closer to the characters rather than farther away from them. Caricature reveals character.

This dissertation examines how late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century British novelists—major authors, Laurence Sterne and Jane Austen, and lesser-known writers, Pierce Egan, Charles Jenner, and Alexander Bicknell—challenged Fielding's mid-eighteenth-century critique of caricature as unrealistic and un-novelistic. In this study, I argue that Sterne, Austen, Egan, and others translated visual tropes of caricature into literary form in order to make their comic writings appear more "realistic." In doing so, these authors not only bridged the character-caricature divide, but a visual-verbal divide as well. As I demonstrate in this study, the desire to connect caricature with

[3] Henry Fielding, *Joseph Andrews* (New York: Penguin, 1979), vii.

character, and the visual with the verbal, grew out of larger ethical and aesthetic concerns regarding the relationship between laughter, sensibility, and novelistic form.

Figure 1: William Hogarth, *Characters and Caricaturas* (1743)

I. Caricature as Sentimental Spectacle

When the word "caricature"—originally spelled as "caricatura" or "caractura" and derived from an Italian verb, *caricare*, meaning "to load or charge"—first entered English usage in the seventeenth century it was solely used to describe visual objects. By the mid-eighteenth century, however, the visual term had also become a literary one.[4] The implications of this development have been traced in Deidre Lynch's *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning* (1998). Lynch's study, however, centers on *character* in the novel, as opposed to *caricature* in the novel, the focus of this dissertation. This is not to say that her work lacks compelling analysis of caricature in the novel; indeed, it does provide many powerfully persuasive insights, particularly in its chapters on Fielding, Hogarth, and Sterne. Rather, its insights demonstrate that there is still so much more to be said about the topic. This dissertation builds on the scholarship of Lynch, but it also breaks new intellectual ground.

By reevaluating the Fielding-Hogarth critique, which still, unfortunately, overdetermines how literary scholars view both visual and verbal caricature today, I seek to show how that critique originated in part from Fielding's ethics of laughter—an ethics that attempted to invalidate caricature as a comical mode. According to Fielding, caricature is not just unrealistic and un-novelistic: it is also unsentimental. The author's view, I contend, carried less weight in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century than it does today, though. It may seem counterintuitive that a satirical medium like caricature could be aligned with sympathy. Instead, we, as scholars, may take for granted the correlation between sentimental novels and tears. But, as I argue in this study, the divide that separates laughter and tears, like the divide between caricature and character,

[4] In this dissertation, "caricature" refers to the visual form, unless otherwise noted.

and the visual and verbal, was not only challenged, but refashioned in this period by Sterne, Austen, Egan, and other novelists. The *spectacle of caricature* became, at times, in the eyes of these long eighteenth-century beholders *sentimental spectacle.*

Sterne, perhaps more strongly than any of the other novelists I will discuss, believed that caricature functioned as a form of sentimental spectacle. Like Charles Jenner's Mr. Norris, Laurence Sterne's Tristram Shandy seeks out what is "very characteristic" in caricature. In volume 2 of *Tristram Shandy* (1759-1767), Tristram declares that the "out-lines" of the man-midwife Dr. Slop's height, belly, and back "may as certainly be caractur'd, and conveyed to the mind by three strokes as three hundred."[5] The frontispiece to the novel, however, is an elaborate design by Hogarth (fig. 2) that seems at odds with Tristram's sketchy description of Dr. Slop. But it is this very contrast—the visual extremes of the three strokes versus three hundred—that excites Sterne's literary imagination. Unlike Fielding, he does not dismiss the aesthetic and moral possibilities that visual caricature holds for the novel. Caricature lies at the heart of *Tristram Shandy*, and it also lies at the heart of Sterne's vision of sensibility. This did not escape the notice of his readers. In 1777, one critic remarked:

> I cannot help considering *Tristram Shandy* rather as an admirable caricature of history, than an exact portrait of private life: A lucky attempt at "modestly over-stepping the modesty of nature;" and of alluring mankind with flattering deceptions, beyond the bounds of probability. This appears more strongly in those places where [Sterne] seems desirous to claim attention by pathos or ridicule...Yet it is by these means he has exceeded all writers in his knowledge of disposition and character. By

[5] Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 2.9.85.

> carrying us beyond our usual feelings, he has taught us, that the human heart is capable of the greatest improvement; and that nature never feels herself more noble and exalted than in the exercise of benevolence and humanity.[6]

Sterne's anonymous critic alludes to *Hamlet* when he describes the excesses of *Tristram Shandy*. In Act Two, Scene Three of *Hamlet*, the Danish prince instructs a player to "o'erstep not the modesty of nature. For anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing."[7] Here, however, the "overdone" is an "admirable caricature." The novel's "flattering deceptions" reach "beyond the bounds of probability" in a way that enhances the aesthetic and moral effects. Overcharged caricature begets an overcharged heart. What Sterne's critic expresses is a belief that caricature can "carr[y] us beyond our usual feelings" to the heart of sensibility. It was a belief shared by others. In 1787, the editor of *The Beauties of Sterne* notes that he has added comic passages from Sterne's fiction, like "Dr. Slop and Susannah," to the latest edition of the anthology because readers felt "depriv[ed]…of many most laughable scenes."[8] These readers believed that laughing at caricatures—literary or visual—could be a sign of their sensibility. Why and how this belief emerged in the late eighteenth century is a topic I will return to later in this introduction.

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[6] *Yorick's Skull; or, College Oscitations. With Some Remarks on the Writings of Sterne, and a Specimen of the Shandean Stile* (London, 1777), 34-36.

[7] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* in *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2008), 3.2.17-20.

[8] Laurence Sterne, *The Beauties of Sterne; Including Many of His Letters and Sermons, All His Pathetic Tales, Humorous Descriptions, and Most Distinguished Observations on Life. Selected for the Heart of Sensibility*, 10th ed. (London, 1787), vi.

Figure 2: Simon François Ravenet after William Hogarth,
[Frontispiece to volume one of *Tristram Shandy*](1760s?)

Throughout this dissertation I compare and contrast the visuality of caricature with the verbal expression of literary characters and caricatures. This means, at times, I will be analyzing prints and illustrations, caricatures drawn by Hogarth, James Gillray, Thomas Rowlandson, George Cruikshank, and lesser-known figures, like Matthew and Mary Darly, Francis Grose, Henry William Bunbury, and G. M. Woodward. Other times, I will turn to verbal descriptions of caricatures, like those found in *The Placid Man* and *Tristram Shandy.* My approach differs from many literary scholars who have written about verbal caricature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, who do so without engaging with the rich historical context of visual caricature.[9] When scholars, like Deidre Lynch (as I have noted), Ronald Paulson, Ian Haywood, and Robert L. Patten, do engage with the history and aesthetics of caricature they provide illuminating portraits of the major novelists and artists of the day.[10] Yet, what I tend to find missing from such impressive and influential scholarship is a sustained discussion of caricatural style beyond what major figures, like Hogarth, Gillray, Rowlandson, and Cruikshank, produced. Historians and art historians have, over the last thirty years, greatly expanded our knowledge of the "age of caricature," shedding light on largely forgotten artists, like the Darlys.[11] Still, there is much we do not know about those artists and the reception of their work.

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[9] A prominent example is Alex Woloch's *The One vs. The Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

[10] See, for example, Ronald Paulson's *Hogarth* 3 vols. (Rutgers: Rutgers University Press, 1991-1993), Deidre Shauna Lynch, *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture, and The Business of Inner Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), Ian Haywood, *Romanticism and Caricature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), and Robert L. Patten, *George Cruikshank's Life, Times and Art: Volume 1, 1792-1835* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992).

[11] See, for example, Amelia Rauser, *Caricature Unmasked: Irony, Authenticity, and Individualism in Eighteenth-Century English Prints* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008), Vic Gatrell, *City of*

Another key feature of this dissertation is that the definition I choose to employ for caricature—"Grotesque or ludicrous representation of persons or things by exaggeration of their most characteristic and striking features"—is an intentionally broad one.[12] Some scholars use the phrase "graphic satire" to describe the thousands of funny pictures, parodies, and lampoons, some highly polished, others sketchy designs, that filled print shop windows, albums, screens, playing cards, and drawing books, but I prefer the term "caricature" because that word, like "burlesque" and "character," was actually used by the men and women consuming these visual objects.[13] It became the term used most frequently, and, as a result, it best captures the classificatory challenges for those writing about a long eighteenth-century medium today. And classificatory disruption is in large part what this dissertation offers: a new way of defining and understanding "realism" and "sensibility" through the lens of caricature.

Besides Lynch's *The Economy of Character*, there are few scholarly texts that investigate the relationship between visual caricature and novelistic realism, without

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Laughter: Sex and Satire in Eighteenth-Century London (London: Atlantic, 2006), Tamara L. Hunt, *Defining John Bull: Political Caricature and National Identity in Late Georgian England* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), Shearer West, "The Darly Macaroni Prints and the Politics of 'Private Man,'" *Eighteenth-Century Life* 25.2 (2001): 170-182, Mark Hallett, *The Spectacle of Difference: Graphic Satire in the Age of Hogarth* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), Diana Donald, *The Age of Caricature: Satirical Prints in the Reign of George III* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), and John Brewer, *The Common People and Politics, 1750-1790s* (Cambridge: Chadwyck Healey, 1986).

[12] "Caricature, n.". OED Online. March 2016. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/27973?rskey=jl1yDu&result=1 (accessed April 10, 2016).

[13] For more on the terminology debates, see John Richard Moores, *Representations of France in English Satirical Prints 1740-1832* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 1-3. Moores argues that the term "caricature" should be limited to describing works that "employ the technique of caricaturing their subjects in the sense of distorting their physiognomic features." Todd Porterfield, however, "opts for the wider usage of the term [caricature] found more typically in French culture" which "encompass[es] a broader range of graphic, satiric, violent, polemical, and witty imagery." See Todd Porterfield, ed., *The Efflorescence of Caricature, 1759-1838* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 2.

assuming that caricature is an "unrealistic" medium.[14] One notable exception is Henry B. Wonham's study of nineteenth and early twentieth-century American novels, caricatures, cartoons, and comic illustrations: *Playing the Races: Ethnic Caricature and American Literary Realism* (2004).[15] My project is similar to Wonham's in that I explore how caricature advances (albeit ironically) a realist aesthetic, but my historical-geographic context is distinct from his. This is a significant difference because novels, like caricatures, represented a relatively new artistic form in the period I am studying. In mid-eighteenth century Britain, as opposed to mid-nineteenth century America, there was much less certainty as to what to call this new literary form. For example, in *Rambler* 4 (1750), Samuel Johnson describes novels as "the comedy of romance" and as "familiar histories," without ever calling these "works of fiction" novels.[16] Nevertheless, Histories, Lives, Comic Romances, or, "comic epic-poem in prose," as Fielding would say, were understood to share a common feature: the representation of reality. They "exhibit life in its true state, diversified only by accidents that daily happen in the world, and influenced by passions and qualities which are really to be found in conversing with mankind," according to Johnson.[17] These eighteenth-century representations of reality—the

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[14] Although Jane Stabler has not published a monograph on the topic of caricature and novelistic realism, she does explore how caricature "offers a momentary code of psychological intensity that questions the representational norms of realist fiction" in "Jane Austen and Caricature," *Nineteenth Century Studies* 21 (2007): 2.

[15] Henry B. Wonham, *Playing the Races: Ethnic Caricature and American Literary Realism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004): "[T]he age of realism in American art and letters is simultaneously the great age of ethnic caricature. These two aesthetic programs, one committed to representation of the fully humanized individual, the other invested in broad ethnic abstractions, operate less as antithetical choices than as complementary impulses, both of which receive full play within the period's most demanding literary and graphic works," 8.

[16] Samuel Johnson, *Selected Poetry and Writings,* ed. Frank Brady and W.K. Wimsatt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 155, 157.

[17] Johnson, *Selected Poetry and Writings*, 155.

"particulars of time and places of [individuals'] actions," termed "formal realism" by the influential twentieth-century scholar Ian Watt—appealed to and troubled Johnson and many of his contemporaries.[18] In the *Rambler* essay quoted above, Johnson expresses his concern that these works of fiction are "written chiefly to the young, the ignorant, and the idle…They are the entertainment of minds unfurnished with ideas, and therefore easily susceptible of impressions; not fixed by principles, and therefore easily following the current of fancy…open to every false suggestion and partial account."[19] In Johnson's view, too many novel readers, due to lack of education and experience, were intellectually and morally deficient.

In his writings, Fielding voices his own concerns regarding the deficiencies of those who enjoy caricature, which he disparages as a low and sensationalist medium. Caricature will "strongly affect and agitate the muscles," but comic writing, like *Joseph Andrews*, evokes a "more rational and useful pleasure."[20] It is as if Fielding projects the fears many of his contemporaries had regarding novel readers onto those who read burlesque squibs or look at caricatures—the visual equivalent of burlesque writing, according to Fielding. The novelist is also an author of burlesque dramas (*The Author's Farce* and *The Tragedy of Tragedies*, for example) and a burlesque novella (*Shamela*), and he admits in the Preface to incorporating from time to time a bit of the burlesque into *Joseph Andrews*, so his dismissal of the burlesque and of caricature is to some extent tongue-in-cheek, as we shall see in the following chapter. But the overall impression one

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[18] Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 32.

[19] Johnson, *Selected Poetry and Writings*, 156.

[20] Henry Fielding, *Joseph Andrews,* vii.

gains from his assertions is that caricature is unrealistic and that it provokes the wrong kind of laughter. Although this view did not necessarily reflect the general cultural assumptions of his contemporaries, other aspects of Fielding's realist aesthetics were highly influential in his day. Charles Jenner and Pierce Egan were just two authors among a large field of novelists who considered themselves (or were considered by others) as practitioners of the "New Species of Writing Founded by Mr. Fielding," a mode of writing that "was not a mere dry Narrative, but a lively Representative of real Life."[21] But not all of Fielding's followers, particularly Egan, placed caricature and "real Life" in such opposition as Fielding did.

Another way that my research differs from Wonham's study on caricature and literary realism, or any other scholar's, is that my project explores the relationship between caricature and realism through a key eighteenth-century term: "sensibility." Although many books have been written about caricature, and even more about sensibility, I have found no scholarly studies written about caricature *and* sensibility that suggest, as I do, that late eighteenth-century men and women found a way to affirm their sensibility through looking at and reading about caricatures. I find this to be a striking omission in the scholarly literature, though not a surprising one. "Sensibility" is a word that does not typically come up when scholars talk about British caricature in the eighteenth to early nineteenth century, nor is it much a part of our discussions on laughter, unless we are talking about how caricature and sensibility are opposed, or how laughter "expose[s] the limits of sympathy," as Simon Dickie argues.[22] Recent studies by

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[21] [Francis Coventry], *An Essay on New Species of Writing Founded by Mr. Fielding* (London, 1751), 16.

[22] See Simon Dickie, *Cruelty and Laughter: Forgotten Comic Literature and the Unsentimental Eighteenth-Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 15. Alternatively, scholars might discuss

Dickie and Vic Gatrell have emphasized how contradictory laughter and sensibility were in the period.[23] "Confronted with identical spectacles of suffering, the same individual might laugh one day and weep the next," Dickie tells us. "Pity coexisted with indifference; sympathy was fleeting, unstable, and easily transformed into malice or delight."[24] How did eighteenth-century Britons make sense of such conflicting feelings? How did they reconcile sympathy and ridicule? Perhaps some were never able to reconcile such dissimilar emotions. What my research has shown me, though, is that many may have come to terms, and found ways to make sense of their feelings, in part, by reading anthologies, like *The Beauties of Sterne,* or sentimental novels, like Charles Jenner's *The Placid Man*, where sympathy and ridicule, tears and laughter, are linked, and sometimes on the very same page of a book. But why did Sterne and Jenner write scenes that transgressed the affective boundaries of sentimental spectacle? Why did Austen and Egan use caricatural tropes to disrupt or refashion their readers' understanding of sentimental spectacle? In order to begin to answer the questions I pose directly above, I need to introduce an eighteenth-century concept that exists somewhat under our scholarly radar: "sentimental laughter."

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visual or literary caricatures of sensibility, like James Gillray's parodic personification of "Sensibility" holding a dead bird in her hand in the 1789 print *New Morality*. See, for example, Markman Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility: Race, Gender and Commerce in the Sentimental Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 192-198, and Tobias Menely, "Zoöphilpsychosis: Why Animals Are What's Wrong with Sentimentality," *symplokē* 15.1-2 (2007): 244-267.

[23] See Simon Dickie's *Cruelty and Laughter* and Vic Gatrell's *City of Laughter*.

[24] Dickie, 11.

II. Sentimental Laughter

"Sentimental laughter" may be an underexplored topic within eighteenth-century studies in part because the phrase was rarely formally expressed in contemporary literature. In "An Essay on Laughter and Ludicrous Composition" (1776), the philosopher James Beattie coins the term "sentimental laughter" to describe laughter that arises from sentiments that are "innocent" and "pleasing," but the phrase, itself, was not commonly used in the l770s to 1820s.[25] Instead what one repeatedly finds in that period are expressions like "innocent mirth" and "delicate laughter" that match Beattie's description of "sentimental laughter." In *The Placid Man*, for example, the author pairs "innocent mirth" with "sympathetic tenderness":

> [T]he sympathetic tenderness which may arise in the breast from the history of a feigned distress, may open the heart to an attention to real misery; and even the transient satisfaction of a laugh at innocent mirth, may spread a vein of good humour through the mind, which the wife, the husband, the friend, the servant of the reader, may find the good effects of, all the remainder of the day. (*PM* 1.3)

The novel never mentions the term "sentimental laughter," but the connection made between "innocent mirth" and "sympathetic tenderness" aligns with Beattie's own discussion of a "species of laughter, which is at once natural and innocent" (*EL* 303). According to Beattie, sentimental laughter and sentimental smiles are "innocent and agreeable," the "effect of good humour, complacency, and tender affection" (*EL* 303-304). As we shall later see, Charles Beville, the hero of *The Placid Man*, and his tutor,

[25] James Beattie, *Essays: On Poetry and Music, As They Affect the Mind; On Laughter and Ludicrous Composition; On the Usefulness of Classical Learning*, 3rd ed. (London, 1779), 304-305. Hereafter cited as *EL*.

Mr. Norris, are men of "tender affection" whose laughter and smiles are innocent and pleasing.

These examples from *The Placid Man* and the "Essay on Laughter" give us some insight into the meaning of "sentimental laughter," but more precise descriptions than "innocent" and "pleasing" may be elusive. At the beginning of the "Essay," Beattie abstractly defines sentimental laughter as "THAT PLEASING SENTIMENT OR EMOTION WHEREOF LAUGHTER IS THE EXTERNAL SIGN," admitting, "Why this agreeable emotion should be accompanied with laughter as its outward sign…I cannot ultimately explain, otherwise than by saying, that such is the appointment of the Author of Nature" (*EL* 305-306; emphasis in original). According to the philosopher, sentimental laughter cannot be completely defined because both the "pleasing emotion" and the laughter it provokes escape Beattie's—or, as he believes, anyone's—full comprehension. Yet, Beattie insists on the existence of sentimental laughter and sentimental smiles, emphasizing how natural they are: "To smile on certain occasions, is not less *natural*, than to weep at the sight of distress or cry out when we feel pain" (*EL* 133). Here we see, as in *The Placid Man*, sentimental laughter and smiles are understood through their relation to tears and other sympathetic responses to "the sight of distress"; both laughter and tears function as external signs of internal experiences, providing visibility to sensibility.

Sometimes, though, Beattie seems to be more of an advocate for the internal "pleasing emotion" than of laughter, "the external sign." He advises his readers never to laugh too much or "much oftener than others; nor laugh at all, except where it is probable that the jest may be equally relished by the company" (*EL* 403). Sentimental laughter

must be moderate in order to be "agreeable" and it must be agreeable in order to strengthen "fellow feeling." As such, sentimental laughter is an external sign of virtuous sociability. This is perhaps, for the philosopher, the key significance, when he states, "what improves individuals will in time improve nations" (*EL* 404). Ultimately, sentimental laughter can be, he claims, an external sign of a nation's sensibility.

One of the few studies I have found that traces in depth the historical development of sentimental laughter is Stuart M. Tave's *The Amiable Humorist: A Study of Comic Theory and Criticism of the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (1960). In many ways, *The Amiable Humorist* was, when published over five decades ago, ahead of its time, offering several valuable insights.[26] For example, one could argue, as Tave does, that both individual and national expressions of "sympathetic laughter" spanned the long eighteenth century, and not just the late eighteenth century.[27] His interpretation sounds sensible, especially when considering why and how the sentimental comedy (or "weeping comedy") was popular in the first half of the century (e.g. Colley Cibber's *Love Last Shift*, 1696, Richard Steele's *The Conscious Lovers*, 1722) and in the second half (e.g. Hugh Kelly's *False Delicacy*, 1768, Richard Cumberland's *The West Indian*, 1771).[28] Notably, though, the rate of production of sentimental comedies did surge in the 1770s.

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[26] Interestingly, four years before the publication of Tave's *The Amiable Humorist*, Northrup Frye published an article in which he rejects the label of "pre-romantic" for defining "the period of English literature which covers roughly the second half of the eighteenth century." Instead, he suggests the phrase: "age of sensibility." See Northrup Frye, "Towards Defining An Age of Sensibility," *ELH* 23.2 (1956): 144.

[27] Stuart M. Tave, *The Amiable Humorist: A Study of Comic Theory and Criticism of the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 3.

[28] For a detailed discussion of these sentimental comedies, see Frank H. Ellis, *Sentimental Comedy: Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

This surge, however, did not sit well with all late eighteenth-century theatergoers.[29] Oliver Goldsmith, for example, cheekily complains in "A Comparison Between Laughing and Sentimental Comedy" (1773), that these new comedies had "abundance of sentiment and feeling."[30] In his essay, Goldsmith sportively rails against the mixing of tragedy and comedy—a sentimental comedy is "a kind of mulish production, with all the defects of its opposite parents, and marked with sterility"—but as Tave points out in "Humor and Pathos," the final chapter of *The Amiable Humorist*, "there flourished in the late eighteenth century a large audience that was pleased to laugh and cry and did not bother its head with critical difficulties."[31]

Tave concludes his survey in the 1830s with observations on Carlylean humor and Dickensian humor. According to Tave, Thomas Carlyle's writings on the German novelist Jean Paul Richter show how "men of humor are also men of sensibility."[32] The humor is "a wholesome and perfect thing because of its playfulness, like the teasing fondness of a mother to her child. Irony, caricature, is distortion, a soulless thing, but true humor springs from the heart as well as the head; its essence is not contempt but the

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[29] Even Charles Jenner wrote a sentimental comedy, *The Man of Family* (1771), though David Garrick had discouraged him: "the Comedie Larmoyant is getting too much ground upon Us, & if those who can write the better Species of ye Comic drama don't make a stand for ye Genuine Comedy & vis comica the Stage in a few years, will be (as Hamlet says) like Niobe all tears." Cited in Kalman A. Burnim, *David Garrick, Director* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburg Press, 1961), 196.

[30] This has appeared to some readers to be a case of the playwright pot calling the kettle black. Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* first appeared on the London stage in 1773, the year he wrote, "A Comparison Between Laughing and Sentimental Comedy." A. Lytton Sells, *Oliver Goldsmith: His Life and His Works* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1974), 328. For further discussion of Goldsmith's essay, see Ellis, 20-22.

[31] Tave, 226.

[32] Ibid., 239. For a broader discussion of the appeal of "mixtures" for eighteenth-century Britons, see Wolfram Schmidgen, *Exquisite Mixture: The Virtues of Impurity in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

reverse."[33] (We should take note that this description maternalizes laughter; the gender politics of laughter is a topic we will turn to shortly.) This is one of the few instances of the word "caricature" in Tave's study, and in this example "caricature," as a figurative mode of expression, is presented as the opposite of heartfelt, true humor.

Although Tave ends his text with a few remarks on Dickensian humor, he does not discuss visual and literary caricature in relation to Dickens or *Pickwick Papers*' "cheerful confines of amiable humor," though Dickens was influenced by Hogarth's art.[34] This omission is understandable, though, given that *The Amiable Humorist* was published more than a half century ago, and much of the scholarship on Dickens and caricature had not yet been produced. Moreover, the scholarly "efflorescence" of caricature studies we have now grown accustomed to was just emerging at the time Tave published his work in 1960. For example, M. Dorothy George's seminal two-volume study *English Political Caricature* (1959) was published only a year earlier by Oxford University Press. Still, it seems striking to me that such a thorough study of laughter would omit serious discussion of one of the most prominent modes of visual satire in the period. I find it equally striking that Tave does not investigate the gender politics of sentimental laughter. Tave does discuss James Beattie's "Essay on Laughter," but he does not probe the way Beattie links societal progress to the feminization of laughter. Although Beattie, along with many of his contemporaries, may have believed that the expression of "sentimental laughter" led to the improvement of society—for example, he highlights the significant role women

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[33] Ibid., 239-240.

[34] Ibid., 243. See, for example, Michael Steig, "Dickens, Hablot Knight Browne, and the Tradition of English Caricature," *Criticism* 11.3 (1969): 219-233, Harry P. Marten, "The Visual Imagination of Dickens and Hogarth: Structure and Scene," *Studies in the Novel* 6.2 (1974): 145-164, and Sambuddha Sen, *London, Radical Culture, and the Making of the Dickensian Aesthetic* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2012).

could play in demonstrating the refined qualities of feminine laughter and feminine sensibility—this belief was, as the dissertation will show in my chapter on Austen, ultimately quite repressive, constraining how women should laugh and how they should behave.

A much more recent study, Vic Gatrell's *City of Laughter: Sex and Satire in Eighteenth-Century London* (2006), does examine the relationship between caricature and sensibility, though in doing so it emphasizes the divide between caricature and sentimental laughter. Focusing on prints by Gillray, Rowlandson, and Cruikshank, Gatrell offers a vividly bawdy account of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century British caricature. Throughout *City of Laughter*, he celebrates the coarse humor on display in these images:

> The best satires in this tradition achieved a complexity of effect, an incisiveness and vehemence, unequalled since. They took an unabashed pleasure in the primal engines of human happiness—sex, drink, low bodily crepitations, the lot. It is this dangerous mixture of a primal male humour, playing with tabooed bodily parts and hovering on the edge of indecency, combined sometimes with an astonishing inventiveness, that explains why the old visual satires today still speak to us so vivifyingly…[35]

The brilliance of these caricatures, Gatrell asserts, lies, in great part, in their "dangerous mixture of a primal male humour"—a humor that he argues is opposed to prudish feminine sensibility and delicacy. Presenting numerous examples, a dense catalogue of dirty and often misogynistic jokes, Gatrell effectively demonstrates why the crude and

[35] Gatrell, 433.

harsh attacks of so many political caricatures appear at odds with the ethos of sensibility. For example, James Gillray's 1789 print *New Morality* (fig. 5) symbolically mocks the female figure of "Sensibility." Three melodramatic tears drop from her eyes. She holds a lifeless bird in her right hand, and in her left hand a text by Rousseau. To her right stand "Philanthropy" and "Justice," concepts regularly associated with sensibility. "Philanthropy," with an angry glare, hugs a globe in her arms, while a vengeful "Justice," the belt of "Égalité" strapped around her waist, raises a right dagger with her right hand, and carries another dagger in her left hand. Sharp criticism of the French Revolution resonates in the bonnet rouges donned by all three of the female figures; the crowned, decapitated head of Louis XVI rests under Sensibility's right foot. The women are depicted as gross, hypocritical, and deranged: Sensibility looks strung out (perhaps on the opiate of human benevolence), Philanthropy greedily holds the whole world in her hands, and Justice scowls, her sagging bosom conspicuously hangs from her scrawny frame (has the proverbial milk of human kindness been sapped from her breasts?). The female body, like feminine sensibility, is a target of Gillray's comical attack. Here, the portrayal of the low and bodily seems less "life-affirming" than it does devivifingly misogynistic.[36]

Gatrell acknowledges the explicit and implicit misogyny of much of the visual satire he discusses. Other scholars, like Cindy McCeery and David Francis Taylor, have also investigated this topic.[37] In the second half of *City of Laughter*, Gatrell labels this ridicule as "masculinist backlash" that seeks to expose the hypocrisy of sentimental cant

[36] Ibid. Gatrell concedes that there was "a lot of rubbish among the prints," but insists that "while the old laughter flourished, their frankness, the forms of release they achieved, and the taste for satire itself were redemptively life-affirming."

[37] See Cindy McCreery, *The Satirical Gaze: Prints of Women in Late Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) and David Francis Taylor, "Edgeworth's *Belinda* and the Gendering of Caricature," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 26.4 (2014): 593-624.

and female delicacy.[38] In doing so, he repeatedly emphasizes the binary of masculine satire vs. feminine sensibility. This binary is, as binaries are apt to be, highly problematic.

Figure 3: James Gillray, Detail from *The New Morality* (1789)

Furthermore, Gatrell pits this vibrantly coarse late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century caricature against the “domesticated” and “tame” Victorian caricatures and cartoons in a way that is also highly gendered: while “the Victorians lost sight of the carnivalesque, the more robust of our Georgian male elites were neither forgetful of its legacy nor uneasy about it.”[39] But, as I will demonstrate in my chapters on Sterne and Austen, the emergence of a tamer, domesticated, more sentimental mode of caricature began much earlier than the Victorian period. This development began in the late eighteenth century in response to a larger cultural phenomenon: the gendering of “sentimental laughter” as feminine laughter.

[38] Gatrell, 444.

[39] Ibid., 190. Gatrell’s remarks also highlight how class, along with gender, can be linked to laughter, a topic I will return to in my chapter on Fielding.

Although *City of Laughter* is an impressive study, it paints an incomplete picture of the period because the main argument Gatrell advances—late Georgian caricature was dominated by a coarse and crude masculine humor—obscures the importance of caricaturists like Matthew and Mary Darly, Francis Grose, Henry William Bunbury, and G.M. Woodward, whose social caricatures were often less cruel and abrasive than Gillray's political caricatures. These artists offer us a different vision of "the golden age" of caricature. For example, art historian Ann Bermingham has recently remarked, "[Woodward's] works point to a transformation of visual satire and to the emergence of nineteenth-century forms of social satire."[40] Like Woodward, Bunbury—whom Horace Walpole hailed in his *Anecdotes of Painting in England* (1762-71) as a "second Hogarth"—was a popular artist: "Of the many amateur caricaturists who flourished during the second half of the eighteenth century, Bunbury was undoubtedly the most famous."[41] Despite the popularity of Bunbury's caricatures, Gatrell includes only one Bunbury image in *City of Laughter*. The historian provides a valuable narrative, but by minimalizing the significance of artists like Woodward and Bunbury, Gatrell's work presents a skewed account of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century visual satire.

III. Sensibility, Caricature, and the Novel

The "sentimental" caricatures of Bunbury, Woodward, and others, are gentler and tamer than many of Gillray's and Rowlandson's satires. Paradoxically, these sentimental

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[40] Ann Bermingham, "G. M. Woodward's Coffee-House Characters," *Representation, Heterodoxy, and Aesthetics: Essays in Honor of Ronald Paulson*, ed. Ashley Marshall (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2015), 114.

[41] See John C. Riely, "Horace Walpole and 'The Second Hogarth,' *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 9.1 (1975): 28.

caricatures sometimes promote sensibility through their “polite” ridicule of excessive sensibility. Similarly, Alexander Bicknell’s *Painting Personified: or, the Caricature and Sentimental Pictures of the Artists of the Present Times, Fancifully Explained* (1790) links caricature and the sentimental in a way that mocks the sentimental, yet also reinforces sensibility. A poet, novelist, biographer, and essayist, Bicknell was active as a writer from 1775 to 1794; he died in 1796, struggling to make a living from the sporadic income of his profession.[42] The wide range of Bicknell’s publications—from sentimental novel to romance to grammatical treatise to religious dissertation—and the often formulaic quality of his works makes it difficult to discern a distinctive authorial voice and vision. Perhaps the only common theme is his writing is his educational mission for a middle-class audience, which is apparent in *The Benevolent Man* (1775), a sentimental novel, and *Painting Personified.* Bicknell’s *The Benevolent Man*, a story of virtuous and charming young lovers, Belville and Eloisa, triumphing over tribulations, presents a traditional interpretation of sensibility as “an innate sensitiveness or susceptibility revealing itself in a variety of spontaneous activities such as crying, swooning and kneeling.”[43] In the novel, Belville and Eloisa’s memories of their former misfortunes make them more sympathetic when they encounter the sufferings of others. When Eloisa passes by a cottage she is like “a sensitive plant,” her “tenderness…excited” when she

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[42] The entry on Bicknell in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography notes that he was “widely thought to have written *The Memoirs of Mrs. Sophia Baddeley, Late of Drury Lane Theatre, by Mrs. Elizabeth Steele* (1787),” in addition to *An Apology for the Life of George Ann Bellamy, late of Covent Garden Theatre, Written by Herself* (1785). But Ann Culley dismisses Bicknell as a “hack journalist” and the rumors of his authorship of *The Memoirs of Mrs. Sophia Baddeley*. See Ann Culley, “The Sentimental Satire of Sophia Baddeley,” *SEL* 48.3 (2008): 677-692. For an overview of Bicknell’s attempts to receive financial support for his writing, see Richard C. Cole, “Alexander Bicknell and the Royal Literary Fund,” *Notes and Queries* 47.2 (2000): 211-213 and Robert James Merrett, “Problems of Self-Identity for the Literary Journeyman: The Case of Alexander Bicknell (d. 1796)” *English Studies in Canada* 28.1 (2002): 31–64.

[43] Todd, 7.

hears “the voice of distress”; she observes “an aged couple dissolved in tears” and requests to hear their story.[44] The elderly couple confides to Eloisa that their youngest daughter has been carried off by the lord of the manor, who “immediately formed dishonorable designs upon her” when he first saw her.[45] The story brings tears to Eloisa’s eyes, and she cries along with the grieving father and mother. Unlike the *Benevolent Man*, *Painting Personified* does not limit the sentimental to tears.

In *Painting Personified*, the laughter and ridicule that caricature provokes is also sentimental, existing on one end of the spectrum of the sympathetic imagination, benevolence and pity on the other end. Bicknell advances this expansive interpretation of sensibility over the course of two volumes while bridging the visual and the verbal. He constructs detailed narratives in dialogue, verse, and prose, deciphering and re-imagining twenty-five visual works, by artists like Thomas Rowlandson, Henry Fuseli, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and others less well known today, including Bunbury. In selecting his works, Bicknell’s major concern is not in imposing a low art-high art distinction between caricature and academy paintings, but instead in locating and relating “*the Expression of Sentiment*” in them.[46] Bicknell presents an original literary contribution with *Painting Personified*; its originality is one reason why it is difficult to classify in terms of genre. It is not really ekphrasis, though the Horatian epigraph “Ut Pictura sic est Poesis” (“a poem is like a painting”) on the title page implies this, because it extends beyond a verbal

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[44] Alexander Bicknell, *The Benevolent Man* (New York: Garland, 1974), 188.

[45] Ibid., 192. It’s worth noting that this “poor captive maid,” unlike Richardson’s Pamela, does not ultimately persuade her captor to release her, but is instead rescued by another: Eloisa’s husband (194). Belville is no less sensitive than his wife; he is “always happy to assist even the meanest of his fellow-creatures” (195). Near the end of novel the narrator reassures the reader “that the pleasures resulting from benevolence, are real and substantial; and that, to be good is to be happy” (215).

[46] Alexander Bicknell, *Painting Personified; or, the Caricature and Sentimental Pictures of the Principal Artists of the Present Times, Fancifully Explained* (London, 1790), 1.3. Hereafter cited as *PP*.

account of a visual image. Bicknell often creates storylines that include dialogues and descriptions that do not appear in the images, as we shall see in Bicknell's account of Bunbury's caricature *A Family Piece* ([first published in 1781) (see fig. 4 for a 1794 edition of the print).

Figure 4: After Henry William Bunbury, *A Family Piece* (1794)

In his literary version of Bunbury's *A Family Piece*, Bicknell satirizes the cultural and pictorial aspirations of a middle-class merchant family, but he also portrays them as sentimental. The man, woman, and child sit for a portrait, which they believe will endure as an immortal "Monument" of their bodies. After providing introductory remarks about his dramatic choice of representation of *A Family Piece* ("for the clearer Elucidation of it, I will give it in the dialogue Style"), Bicknell presents a detailed storyline revolving around "The Griskins." The dialogue commences with Mrs. Griskin, suggesting to her husband, Mr. Griskin, a deputy, that the entire family pose for the painter, Mr. Van Naso:

Mrs. Griskin. ‘Tis a Shame, *Mister Deputy*, that a Person of your Consequence should depart this Life, and when he is departed, no Traces of him should remain!

Mr. Deputy. Depart this Life!—Surely I am not going to die yet, Wife. Nothing ails me that I know of.

Mrs. *G*. I don’t mean, *Mr. Deputy*, to infer that you are going to depart this Life at present.—However agreeable it might be to sport a fashionable Suit of Widow’s Weeds, I don’t wish for such a Thing *yet*. But when you die, I say, no Monument of what you was will remain behind.

Mr. *D.* Yes but there will, Wife! my Name will be engraved upon a Tomb-stone, won’t it?

Mrs. *G.* But will that let Posterity know what a proper, good-looking Man the Deputy of — Ward was? Or can any idea of those Charms which I condescended to bestow upon you, Mr. *Griskin*, be conveyed to future Generations by a *Here lies the Body?*

Mr. D. That’s true, Wife; but, how can it be done any other Way?

Mrs. G. You must be a Blockhead, *Mr. Deputy*, not to know what I mean.—Have not several of your Common Council had their Portraits and those of their Spouses drawn by the famous *Mr. Van Naso*? Some with Dogs on their Laps;—some with their favourite Cats purring by their Sides;—some with long-tailed Mackaws squalling from the Tops of their Cages;—and some with pretty

> Canary-Birds or Goldfinches perched upon their held-out
> Forefingers? (*PP* 1.3-6)

Here we see that the Griskins are seeking a sentimental aestheticism, to artistically record the spectacle of their bodies in the hopes of evoking some future sentimental response in a viewer—and the text found on a tombstone ("*Here lies the Body*") is not an adequate enough container of sentiment for Mrs. Griskin. Soon after commenting on the great number of dogs, cats, mackaws, canary-birds, and goldfinches appearing in portraits, the wife insists that she will "be drawn with a pretty Bird upon my Hand" and that her husband will have "one of the same, to be sure" because she "loves uniformity in all things"(*PP* 1.9). In the visual caricature, we see the conclusion of this thought-process and conversation: the woman holds in her right hand a bird and a second one rests on the man's left hand, symbolizing the couple's cultural pretensions and their ludicrous excessive sensibility (cf. Gillray's *The New Morality* "Sensibility" clutches a dead bird in her right hand, fig. 3). Additionally, the idealization that classical allusion often provides is comically subverted in Bunbury's print by the boy, dressed as Cupid, vulgarly yawning.[47] The boy's arrows are aimed at the canvas, but perhaps the artist intends for the ultimate target to be the birds perched on the parents' hands, or, rather, what the birds symbolize: the moral travesty of exaggerated sensibility.

Hence, for instance, Bicknell sees in the Griskins' attempt to immortalize themselves their misunderstandings of Christianity. The bird "perched upon [the] held-

[47] See "Physiognomy, Deportment and Dress: The Visual Language of Social Convention" in John Brewer's *The Common People and Politics* for an analysis of boorish facial expressions in eighteenth-century British caricatures (21-26).

out Forefinge[r]" belonging to Mrs. Griskin may be a goldfinch, a symbol of Christ's passion in religious art.[48] The Griskins' desire to immortalize their bodies, however, is an unholy passion that Bicknell lampoons through the dialogue between mother and son. The Griskins' son, Tony, longs to be painted like his parents with a bird in his hand. But his mother promptly informs him that she doesn't "think a *Trio* of birds will be uniform"; he will be "drawn in the Character of Cupid," holding a bow, with a quiver of arrows strapped to his back (*PP* 1.10). Mrs. Griskin's dismissal of trios is sacrilegious; for Christians, the most uniform trio is the Holy Trinity. After Tony learns from his mother that "Cupid is a God," the boy unwittingly puns a rather unholy request: "pray let me be a God." Meanwhile Mrs. Griskin's vanity is double-fold: she wants the spectacle of her body to be perceived as designating her as better than her inferiors and she wants her body to figuratively live on after her death. Her sensibility is a "new morality" that prizes self-love and superficial display over philanthropy; Cupid is the pagan god of desire and erotic love, and not the Christian God of *agape*, unconditional, selfless love. While Bicknell's own novel *The Benevolent Man* is an edifying tale of God's benevolence manifested in human benevolence, this satirical piece moralizes that aspiring to divine immortality does not lead to earthly immortality.

The Griskins are not the only target of satire: Van Naso exhibits too much misguided sensibility as well. The sensibility that is acquired through an appreciation of the arts and polite learning is parodied through Bicknell's portrayal of a self-absorbed portraitist. The prefix "Van" signals that the painter is Dutch and it alludes to the influence of Dutch painting on English artists. "Naso," Latin for "nose," refers to the

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[48] Hope B. Werness, *The Continuum Encyclopedia of Animal Symbolism in Art* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 46.

Roman poet Ovid (Publius Ovidius Naso), whose aquiline nose is featured in many reproductions of his figure. The painter in Bunbury's caricature also has a distinctively shaped nose. Bicknell's choice of the name "Naso" highlights the caricatural trope of the exaggerated nose. It is also a witty dig at pretentious familiarity with the classics, which Van Naso displays when he shares his pedantic theories of art with the Griskins.[49] After the family arrives at the painter's establishment, he leads them through a gallery filled with his artwork, "pointing out to them the Beauties of the principal Portraits"(*PP* 1.12). The family members look on and listen, "absorbed in wonder and admiration." But their response to Van Naso's "Beauties" is empty affect, "attended with no little fatigue" (*PP* 1.13), that the painter interprets as genuine awe. The irony is that Mr. and Mrs. Griskin are even less aware than Van Naso. They have come to him because they wish to be rendered as sentimental figures, like the portraits on the wall they stare at. Yet their lack of a sympathetic response for the images in front of them exposes the futility of their desires and their sham version of sensibility. For Bicknell, however, laughing at *A Family Piece*, and the pretentious politeness of the Griskins, affirms his own true sensibility.

IV. Caricature and a "Heart of Sensibility"

Through examples like Bicknell's *Painting Personified* and Jenner's *The Placid Man*, this dissertation explores how sensibility and caricature became aligned in the minds of many eighteenth-century Britons. Although I discuss the work of lesser-known

[49] In February 1748, Lord Chesterfield wrote from Bath to his son "to abstain from [the] learned ostentation" of phrases like "*old* Homer; that *sly rogue* Horace," and to avoid saying "*Maro* instead of Virgil; and *Naso*, instead of Ovid. These are often imitated by coxcombs, who have no learning at all, but who have got some names and some scraps of ancient authors by heart, which they improperly and impertinently retail in all companies, in hopes of passing for scholars." Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield, *Lord Chesterfield's Letters to His Son and Others* (London: Dent, 1959), 47.

writers like Jenner and Bicknell, my main focus lies in analyzing the comic writings of major authors—Fielding, Sterne, and Austen—as well as the once popular novelist Pierce Egan. This study begins with Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* and its antagonistic stance towards caricature and the laughter it evokes, a laughter that both Fielding and Hogarth portray as detrimental to the knowledge of character and sensibility. My second chapter looks at how, increasingly, in the late eighteenth century tears *and* laughter were integrated into the sentimental experience. Sterne's readers wept sentimental tears for *Tristram Shandy*'s heartbroken Maria, but they also sought "delicate laughter" in the verbal and visual caricature of Dr. Slop. In the third chapter, I explore how Jane Austen's *Persuasion* (1818) mocks Sternean sensibility and its problematic idealization of fragile, female bodies by adapting tropes of visual caricature into literary form. The fourth chapter examines Pierce Egan's *Life in London* (1821), rarely read today, but hugely popular in the 1820s. Egan's protagonists are "men of feeling" who thrive on the thrills of "real life," which in the novel is best exemplified by caricature. The novelist follows in the comic realist tradition of Fielding, but embraces Sternean sensibility and its enthusiasm for caricature. Egan sees caricature and sensibility as interconnected, rather than opposed.

Before I conclude this introduction and delve into the specifics of what I have termed the Fielding-Hogarth critique, I want to return to where I began, with Charles Beville's "droll caricatura figures." Charles Jenner had some success in the early 1770s with *The Placid Man*—a second edition was published in 1773, a year before the novelist's death—though his work never had as much cultural or literary impact as

Fielding's or Sterne's.[50] Still, the novel presents a useful tool for relaying my approach to caricature, sensibility, and realism. According to Fielding and Hogarth, caricature is the antithesis of "real" character. Perhaps a similar logic operates in the mind of Charles's father, Sir George, when he first sees his son's drawings, though Mr. Norris attempts to persuade him that caricature can be "very characteristic."

As a highly stylized mode of visual satire, caricature may mock, but it also reveals "character," which Samuel Johnson first defines in the *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) as, "A mark," and later describes as "A representation of a man and his personal qualities."[51] When Norris praises the pictures as "very characteristic" he draws on both meanings above. The caricatures comically exaggerate the personal qualities of the Homeric characters. Nestor, the old, wise counselor of the *Iliad*, incongruously wears a "tie wig," as if he were an eighteenth-century army officer or a lawyer.[52] This burlesque may rattle Sir George's nerves, but it also highlights the comical undertones of Nestor's counsel. Nestor is a good man, *and* he is also a bit of a rambler, whose advice can be "irrelevant" and "anachronistic."[53] He is at times a ridiculous figure, and the modern tie-

[50] For more on *The Placid Man*, see J. M. S. Tompkins, *The Popular Novel in England, 1770–1800* (London: Constable, 1932), 42-43, and James R. Foster, *History of the Pre-Romantic Novel in England* (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1949), 184-185.

[51] Samuel Johnson, *Dictionary of the English Language*, vol. 1 (London, 1755).

[52] The tie-wig or Ramillie wig, in which the hair is tied back with a ribbon, was shorter and less cumbersome than the full bottom wig. It became "standard for informal military dress after the 1706 Battle of Ramillie and subsequently, during the 1730s, for general wear." Lynn Festa, "Personal Effects: Wigs and Possessive Individualism in the Long Eighteenth Century," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 29.2 (2005), 54. Jokes about lawyers and their tie-wigs were common in the period. For example, in the prologue to *The School for Scandal* (1771) an attorney waggishly describes a sergeant-at-law as "profuse of robe, and prodigal of tie." Richard Brinsley Sheridan, *The School for Scandal and Other Plays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 9.

[53] "[T]he same scholars who see Nestor as embodying Homer's ideal of the wise counsellor also observe Nestor's many flaws, from his prolixity to the irrelevant, anachronistic nature of some of his advice, and argue that at one or another place in the narrative Homer presents him ironically, mocks him, or shows him to be ridiculous." Hannah Roisman, "Nestor the Good Counsellor," *The Classical Quarterly* 55.1 (2005),

wig drawn on his white-haired ancient Greek head gently mocks him and his "anachronistic" military advice. Similarly, the caricature of the great warrior Hector as Shakespeare's Ancient Pistol, the cowardly "swaggerer" and ensign to Falstaff, pokes fun at the cowardice of the Trojan prince when he retreats from the Myrmidons in Book 16 of the *Iliad*.[54] *The Placid Man* does not include any illustrations, but presumably the humor also lies in a clash of styles—the helmet, cuirass, and shield of ancient military attire mixed with the flamboyant cockade and sash worn by Ancient Pistol.[55] There is also a play on words in the name "Hector": in the early modern period, a "Hector" was a "A swaggering fellow; a swash-buckler."[56] In the *Iliad*, Hector's handsome brother, Paris, makes love to Helen when he should be preparing for battle.[57] Paris's portrayal as a dancing master humorously belittles his physical beauty and seductive grace. Eighteenth-century dancing masters were arbiters of elegance, but they were also ridiculed in

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17. In *A Burlesque Translation of Homer* (1774), Thomas Bridges ridicules "Grave Nestor" as a "A queer old tike, and full of jaw;/…he talk'd all kinds of jargon,/… Hiccup'd the language of the Danes,/And warbled soft Italian strains; But made a damnable hotch-potch/Between his English and his Scotch" (151).

[54] Zeus compels Hector to retreat: "[A]nd Zeus began with Hector, he made the man a coward./Hector leaping back in his chariot, swerving to fly,/shouted out fresh orders—"Retreat, Trojans, now!" Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. Robert Fagles (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 433, lines 16.763-765.

[55] The parody may have reminded Jenner's contemporaries of the performances of Theophilus Cibber, the son of actor and dramatist Colley Cibber, in the "Character of Ancient Pistol." In the frontispiece to *Theophilus Cibber, to David Garrick, Esq. with Dissertations on Theatrical subjects* (1759), the actor appears as Ancient Pistol, wearing "a laced cocked-hat, with a cockade in it…he has a military sash, with a shoulder knot on it; to his belt hangs a large basket-hilted broadsword…He is swaggering, with both hands placed on his hips; his legs are wide apart." Frederick George Stephens, *Catalogue of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum. Division I. Political and Personal Satires. Vol. II—June 1689-1733* (London: Chiswick Press, 1873), 807.

[56] According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the noun "Hector" was frequently used "in the second half of the 17th c" and it "applied *spec*. to a set of disorderly set of young men who infested the streets of London."

[57] In Alexander Pope's translation, Paris tells Helen, "But let the business of our life be love." *The Iliad of Homer*, vol. 1 (London, 1736), 199, line 3.548.

caricatures and comic literature.[58] This ridicule may have stemmed from the "English anxiety about the culture of comportment being alien…a perception that correctly identified its Italian and French origins," and other concerns, like "the gentleman's worry that the graceful dancing master might seduce his wife and daughters."[59] In low burlesque fashion, dancing master Paris, whose very name emphasizes his foreignness, has, in capturing the heart of Helen and in stealing her away from her husband, Menelaus, played out a country or city gentleman's worst fears.

With each caricature, Charles exposes a particular trait or behavior and amplified it, or as in Norris's words, "entered into the spirit of the story." But what exactly does Norris mean? Homer's epic is a vividly violent account of warfare; the "spirit" or essence of the story might more accurately be depicted by the image of one soldier impaling another.[60] Charles's drawings, however, are satirical and lighthearted sketches. There is nothing grand or epic about them. They concern themselves with the particularities of character. Charles demonstrates his feeling for "the spirit of the story" through those particularities, via a medium that has trained his eye to discern distinguishing marks—perhaps a tendency towards garrulousness or a fixation on fine limbs—that define a character.

If the fictional Charles Beville had acquired his knowledge of caricature from the real-life drawing books of the day, like Matthew and Mary Darly's *A Book of*

[58] For example, a "lame German dancing master" is an object of ridicule in Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* (209).

[59] John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 438.

[60] For example, Achilles pierces Hector neck with a spear in *Iliad* 22: "the open throat, where the end of life comes quickest—*there*/as Hector charged in fury brilliant Achilles drove his spear/and the point went stabbing clean through the tender neck." Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. Fagles, 552, lines 22.384-386.

Caricaturas: On Fifty-Nine Copper Plates, with Ye Principles of Designing in that Droll & Pleasing Manner (1756-1764?) or Francis Grose's *Rules for Drawing Caricaturas: With an Essay on Comic Painting* (1788), he would have learned to parse a face in the way one parses a sentence. A face, the Darlys and Grose would have informed him, is a made up of lines—angular or right lines, convex or concave lines. Sometimes a face consists of a combination of straight and curved lines. For example, the first plate (fig. 5) from *Rules for Drawing Caricaturas* shows profiles. Grose asks his readers to observe which type of line dominates each face. The "general contour[s]" for figures 1, 2, 3, and 4, below, are fairly straightforward, but what do we call the "mixed" lines that make up figures 5, 6, 7, and 8? Are the lines recto-convexo or convexo-concavo? It can get a little complicated.[61] All the lines and compounds of lines makes the rules for drawing caricatures a tiny bit like Euclidean geometry, but mostly like an amusing puzzle.

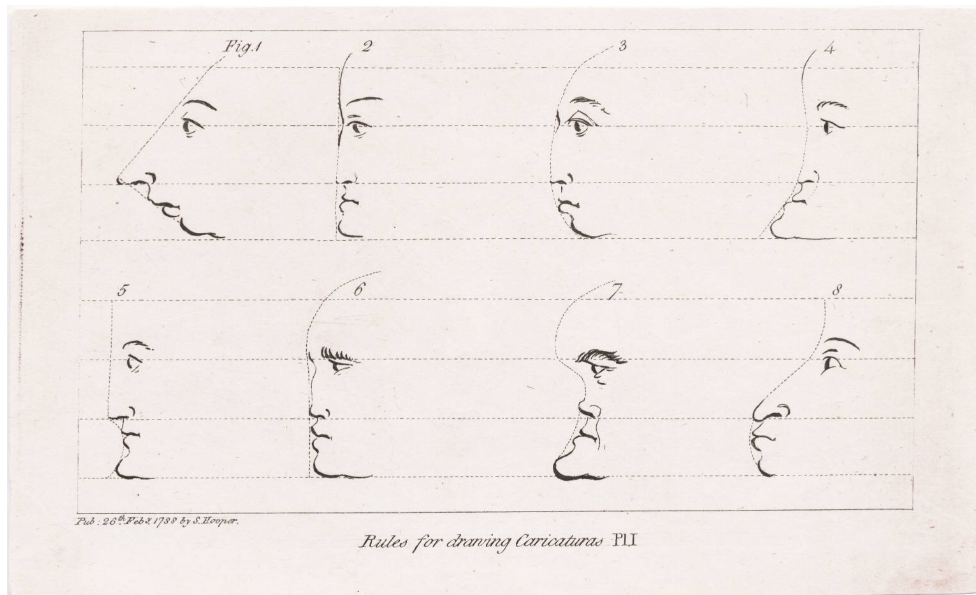

Figure 5: Francis Grose, *Rules for Drawing Caricaturas,* Plate I (1788)

[61] The answers are (5) recto-convexo, (6) convexo-recto, (7) convexo-concavo, and (8) concavo-convexo. Grose advises, "to prevent confusion in all mixed contours, the figure named should be placed uppermost." Francis Grose, *Rules for Drawing Caricaturas: With an Essay on Comic Painting* (London, 1788), 9. Hereafter cited as *RDC*.

And Grose heartily believes that drawing caricatures should be amusing, pleasing, and surprising (*RDC* 7-8). Still, he stresses just how logical all that amusement is: "the sketches given in the different plates are not to be considered in any other light than as mathematical diagrams, illustrating the principles here laid down" (*RDC* 17). The tone of this comment is, I suspect, defensive. When Grose instructs his readers to observe faces he is telling them to be on the lookout for oddities and defects—for example, a broken nose, or an under-hung mouth, or a "cucumber" chin (*RDC* 11). So he begins his treatise with an apology for "The art of drawing Caricaturas" which "is generally considered as a dangerous acquisition, tending to rather to make the possessor feared than esteemed; but it is certainly an unfair mode of reasoning to urge the abuse to which any art is liable, as an argument against the art itself" (*RDC* 3). He starts with an appeal to reason, and he finishes with another appeal, for the rationality of caricature, its "mathematical diagrams" and "principles." In between, he shows that drawing caricatures, like drawing portraits, is a polite accomplishment. Even more, he asserts that drawing caricatures will help artists paint better portraits because the study of caricature will aid them in "discover[ing] what constitutes the peculiar character of each person" (*RDC* 16-17).

The idea that caricature reveals character does not originate with Grose. Rather, it harkens back to the art form's Italian roots and to the Baroque painter and caricaturist Annabile Carracci, who purportedly claimed that caricature "grasp[s] the perfect deformity, and thus reveal[s] the very essence of a personality."[62] This understanding may have filtered through the larger cultural consciousness in the second half of the eighteenth century. Amelia Rauser, for example, argues that a broader awareness of

[62] E.H. Gombrich and E. Kris, *Caricature* (Hammonsworth: Penguin, 1940), 12. For more on Carracci, see Sandra Cheng, "*Il Bello Dal Deforme*: Caricature and Comic Drawings in Seventeenth-Century Italy" (PhD diss., University of Delaware, 2008).

caricature's "unmasking" of character emerged in the 1770s: "As the modern notion of self-hood…and its valorization of private authenticity, individualism, and consistency across time—rather suddenly replaced older, more flexible notions of identity, so caricature developed as a technology for representing this new self, making character visible on the surface of the body, unmasking the public role and revealing the authentic private self beneath."[63] The notion that caricature unmasks character certainly resonates with Norris's remarks to Sir George, and it surfaces in the language of Sterne's anonymous critic who praises the novelist for "exceed[ing] all writers in his knowledge of disposition and character." What Sir George doesn't yet understand, but Mr. Norris and Sterne's critic already realize, is that caricature and "the knowledge of character" it generates may very well be a path to sensibility, and not a detour from it.

According to Johnson's *Dictionary*, sensibility is "quickness of sensation" and "quickness of perception." Of course, there are many other ways to define what sensibility means in the eighteenth century.[64] But for now I want to focus on "quickness of perception" because it is the definition that most clearly links it to caricature. "Observe," Francis Grose tells his readers. Observe noses, mouths, eyes, eyebrows, and chins. "Take notice," the Darlys instruct their readers. "There is an amazing diversity in the forms of different Objects, that which is most peculiar in each, is the distinguishing

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[63] Rauser, 15.

[64] I discuss "sensibility" at greater length in chapter 3. On this topic, many studies have been helpful, including Jonathan Lamb, *The Evolution of Sympathy in the Long Eighteenth Century* (New York: Pickering and Chatto, 2009), Lynn Festa, *Sentimental Figures of Empire in Eighteenth-Century Britain and France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), Markman Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility: Race, Gender and Commerce in the Sentimental Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), Ann Jessie Van Sant, *Eighteenth-Century Sensibility and the Novel: The Senses in Social Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), G.J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), and John Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

mark to be caricatured, whether it appears in the air and outlines of the whole face or in the size or shape of any particular feature."[65] The art of caricature begins with faces, but it leads to an "amazing diversity" of peculiarities.

The prints that make up the several volumes of *Caricatures, Macaronies, and Characters* the Darlys published in the 1770s showcase a range of peculiar body parts, peculiar clothes, peculiar hair, peculiar behaviors. The Darlys marketed the prints they sold as refined entertainment, "the amusement and productions of men of rank and figure." Women of rank and figure, like the amateur astronomer and poet Elizabeth Bridgetta Gulston, also drew caricatures. In "A Character" (fig. 6), published by the Darlys in 1772, Gulston ridicules a poorly dressed courtier. She describes the "Queer Old Beau," in the verses inscribed below the picture, as "Ugly Face & Staring Hat/A Carcase which has lost its Fat/An ill shap'd Coat, too bad for shew,/Yet Hides the Aukward Legs below."[66] Here, Gulston wittily displays her keen eye for the "striking peculiarity" of "defects and blemishes."[67] She conveys a quickness of perception, but no delicacy of feelings. What Sir George wishes for his son, though, is a combination of the two. He believes that Charles's ear for music makes him "more peculiarly open to the sentiments of humanity." The question he struggles to understand is how an eye for defects and blemishes of the "comic kind" can make anyone more sympathetic and benevolent.

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[65] Matthew and Mary Darly, *A Book of Caricaturas: On Fifty-Nine Copper Plates, with Ye Principles of Designing in that Droll & Pleasing Manner* (London, 1762 or1764), 2.

[66] The full poem reads:

An Ugly Face & Staring Hat,
A Carcase which has lost its Fat.
An ill shap'd Coat, too bad for shew,
Yet Hides the Aukward Legs below.
The Sword a Thing not meant for Harm
And Therefore Hug'd betwixt the Arm.
Whene'er at Court he shows his Face
The Breeding Ladies Quit the Place
Take him in short from Top to Toe
And set him down the Queer Old Beau.

[67] Darly, 2.

Figure 6: Elizabeth Bridgetta Gulston, *A Character* (1772)

Despite Norris's reassurance, Sir George remains "alarmed" when he finds that Charles has drawn another caricature:

> In a book belonging to Mr. Norris was a little song of Pergolesi, well known to musical people, the subject of which is, an unfortunate princess complaining of her lover for having forsaken her, *Che non medissi un di* [sic]; at the top of which young Beville, who had read the song but never heard of it, had drawn a burlesque figure of a girl just upon the point of hanging herself. (*PM* 1.40-41)

The baronet fears that his son's "turn for humour…might arise from want of sensibility." But his fears subside when he discovers Charles crying over the song. One day the young man decides to play the music on the harpsichord, and he is suddenly overcome with emotion for "the great beauty of the expression, the delicacy of the air, so finely contrived to convey the plaintive sentiments of the words, struck him very forcibly…he could contain no longer, but burst into tears; in which situation Sir George found him"(*PM* 1.41). Quite pleased to see his son in such pain, Sir George consoles Charles "never to be ashamed of a tenderness so amiable in itself."[68] That the young, handsome hero of a sentimental novel bursts into tears over the story of an abandoned beauty is not so surprising. What is striking is that the same young man both laughs at *and* cries over the portrayal of "virtue in distress."

The music that moves Charles to tears is the aria, "*Che non mi disse un dì*," from Giovanni Battista Pergolesi's *L'Olimpiade* (1735). Pergolesi had many British admirers, including Charles Burney, who praises the Italian opera in the fourth volume of the

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[68] As Harriet Guest notes, "[A]lmost every…account produced in [the 1770s]…emphasizes that sensibility implies the capacity to experience pain as well as pleasure—indeed, as the price of pleasure." *Small Change: Women, Learning, Patriotism, 1750-1810* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 189.

General History of Music for its "union of poetry and Music," which "seldom have had a more powerful effect on an English audience."[69] But when Charles reads the poetry, without the music, he laughs. The *opera seria* libretto, by Pietro Metastasio, is unintentionally farcical, and perhaps this is why Charles makes a joke of Princess Argene's despair—she is in love with a man who is pretending to be another man who is in love with another princess who is in love with the man who is pretending to be the man Argene loves—but Argene doesn't know this. She believes she has been forsaken by her lover Licida so her heartbreak is genuinely "pathetic." But it is also ludicrous since she has not been deserted by Licida, but instead by Princess Aristea's lover Megacle pretending to be Licida. Charles sees both the humour and the sadness of it all, and so he understands "*Che non mi disse un dì*" in a way that his father, who is also seriously devoted to music, does not. But the significance of this does not quite register with Sir George. At this point in the novel the baronet is simply happy to know, that despite the caricatures, Charles's "heart was more than ordinarily open to delicate sensibility" (*PM* 1.40).

I can understand why this is the case. There is no scene in which young Beville explains to his father how or why caricatures make him more sympathetic and benevolent. *The Placid Man* is never this explicit. Instead, what Charles Jenner does suggest in his novel is that Charles's sensibility is *whole*-hearted, as if tears and laughter are two complementary halves of the sentimental experience. That is, Charles has greater fellow feeling because his "sympathetic tenderness" stems from his attunement to the pathetic and the ludicrous. He may weep and be spurred to "generous action" at the sight

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[69] Charles Burney, *General History of Music: From the Earliest Ages to the Present Period*, vol. 4 (London, 1789), 448. For more on Pergolesi's *L'Olimpiade*, see J. Kenneth Wilson, "L'Olimpiade: Selected Eighteenth-Century Settings of Metastasio's Libretto," Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1982.

of a “body in distress” (*PM* 1.40). But he also has a unique ability to see truth in laughter. Norris recognizes this in Charles, and he also shares the same ability: “[Norris] was possessed of a vein of strong humour…he could extract every particle of the ridiculous from any character, and hold it up in so strong a light, that even the person himself must acknowledge the ridicule to be just” (*PM* 1.33). Like a caricaturist, Norris picks up on the striking peculiarity or “particle.” “[Norris] would strike humourous remarks out of objects which would pass intirely [sic] unnoticed by a less observing eye; and by this means he turned that talent to the delight of every body, which, in the possession of a man with a worse heart, would have given pain to all his acquaintance round” (*PM* 1.33-34). His jests are always “just,” never unduly cruel or unfeeling. Charles’s caricatures, also, do not unjustly attack or malign anyone. Instead, they make fun of classical literature and Italian opera. They are cultured, clever jokes that do more good than harm.

At first Sir George senses only the harm. He knows that music and literature of great beauty and delicacy “may raise a warmth in the heart” (*PM* 1.3). But what does caricature do to the heart? He wonders and fears the worst. Then he learns by the example of his own son that caricature and sensibility are related. He can see that laughter resides in a heart of sensibility. What Sir George eventually discovers regarding caricature and sensibility is, I argue in this dissertation, part of a larger cultural phenomenon in the period, and my own aim here is partly also to persuade my readers of something like the lesson learned by Sir George.

Chapter 1

"[A] very proper object of laughter": Realism and the Ridiculous in Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*

Henry Fielding does not employ the terms "realism" or "realistic," or even the word "novel," to describe *Joseph Andrews*, but the book features a preoccupation with the natural and the everyday that would become by the end of the eighteenth century firmly situated in the category of the novel and its *real* pictures of life. In the preface to *Joseph Andrews*, the novelist claims that the natural and the ridiculous are intertwined in everyday experience: "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."[1] Here Fielding asserts a connection between comic writing and the natural, which as we will later see is, for the author, both an aesthetic and an ethical imperative. He implies that comic writing more than works of the "serious poet" provides a greater and more natural variety of characters, a larger swath of real life in all its variety of high and low. Fielding advances his stance in additional writings, including his later novels, *Tom Jones* (1749) and *Amelia* (1751), and his "Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men" (1743). The knowledge of real character comes from correctly discerning the difference between the natural and the unnatural, the comical versus the burlesque.

In *Tom Jones*, Fielding's narrator describes himself as "a Writer whose Province is Comedy," and he states "that Kind of Novels, which, like this I am writing, is of the

[1] Henry Fielding, *Joseph Andrews* (New York: Penguin, 1960), vi. Hereafter cited as *JA*.

Comic class."[2] The juxtaposition of the words "Comic" and "class" is striking in that so much of Fielding's fiction centers on the unsteady economic, moral, social, and aesthetic divisions of high and low. Here in *Tom Jones*, Fielding seems to distance his work from the "Upper Life," as he does at the end of *Joseph Andrews*.[3] It may appear that Fielding aligns the comic with the low since he separates it from the "highest Life," which "is much the dullest, and affords very little Humour or Entertainment" (*TJ* 568). And yet within Fielding's fiction, there is a distancing of the comic from the lowness or vulgarity of the burlesque.

The narrator's description of the monstrosity of the "highest life" in *Tom Jones* is strikingly similar to the discussion of the burlesque in the preface to *Joseph Andrews*.[4] In *Tom Jones* overly dressed men and women are depicted as unnatural, as players with "no Character at all": "[T]hose strange Monsters in Lace and Embroidery, in Silks and Brocades, with vast Wigs and Hoops; which, under the Name of Lords and Ladies, strut the Stage, to the great Delight of Attornies and their Clerks in the Pit, and of the Citizens and their Apprentices in the Galleries; and which are no more to be found in real Life, than the Centaur, the Chimera, or any other Creature of mere Fiction" (*TJ* 568). In the preface to *Joseph Andrews*, comic writing is natural, "just imitation," while the burlesque is "unnatural and monstrous" (*JA* vi). Yet, Fielding's staunch allegiance to comic writing

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[2] Henry Fielding, *Tom Jones* (W.W. Norton & Company: New York, 1973), 568. Hereafter cited as *TJ*.

[3] At the end of *Joseph Andrews*, "Joseph remains blessed with his Fanny, whom he dotes on with the utmost tenderness, which is all returned on her side. The happiness of this couple is a perpetual fountain of pleasure to their fond parents, and, what is particularly remarkable, he declares he will imitate them in their retirement, nor will be prevailed on by any book-sellers, or their authors, to make his appearance in high-life" (297-298).

[4] In *Natural Masques: Gender and Identity in Fielding's Plays and Novels* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), Jill Campbell cites a line from Fielding's *The Masquerade* in which "a face is exaggerated to the point of 'Burlesque,'" demonstrating Fielding's tendency to refer to the burlesque as unnatural (13).

is filled with qualifications.[5] Although the author declares, "no two species of writing can differ more widely than the comic and the burlesque," he admits that sampling the burlesque within comic writing can serve a beneficial purpose. He states that the burlesque can enhance comic writing's affective power as long as the burlesque is only found in the diction, set apart from character and sentiment. Despite acknowledging the burlesque as useful, Fielding distances his fiction from that genre, comparing the burlesque to visual caricature: "Now, what *caricatura* is in painting, burlesque is in writing, and in the same manner the comic writer and painter correlate to each other" (*JA* vii).

The terms "caricature" and "burlesque" were often used interchangeably in the eighteenth century.[6] According to Fielding, caricature, like the burlesque, allows all license of distortion. "[A] more useful and rational pleasure," Fielding insists, comes from the comical. Recognition of caricature or the burlesque, however, seizes the body before the mind—it "can strongly affect and agitate the muscles" (*JA* vii.) In his assessment of the comical and the burlesque, Fielding sets up a contrast between the

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[5] The narrator's claim that the "highest life" is "entirely made up of Form and Affectation….and affords very little Humour or Entertainment" appears to be one of those moments, so often found in Fielding's writings, that wittingly or unwittingly contradicts other assertions. For example, in the preface to *Joseph Andrews*, Fielding states: "affectation appears to me the only true source of the ridiculous" (x). But in *Tom Jones* the narrator observes that individuals entirely made up of affectation are hardly funny at all.

[6] In Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), burlesque, as an adjective, is defined as "Jocular; tending to raise laughter, by unnatural or unsuitable language." As a noun, burlesque means "Ludicrous language, or ideas; ridicule." The verb "to burlesque" is "to ridicule." For an introductory survey of the burlesque, see John D. Jump's *Burlesque* (London: Methuen & Co, 1972). Ronald Paulson, *Don Quixote in England: The Aesthetics of Laughter* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998): "By burlesque, Fielding means 'appropriating the Manners of the highest to the lowest, or *e converso*'—as opposed to the 'ridiculous,' which is confined 'strictly to Nature,'" 59.

physical sensation of "out-of-bounds *caricatura*" and circumscribed rational thought.[7] He praises the artist William Hogarth for his ability to visualize consciousness:

> He who should call the ingenious Hogarth a burlesque painter would, in my opinion, do him very little honour; for sure it is much easier, much less the subject of admiration, to paint a man with a nose, or any other feature, of a preposterous size, or to expose him in some absurd or monstrous attitude, than to express the affections of men on canvas. It hath been thought a vast commendation of a painter to say his figures seem to breath, but surely it is a much greater and nobler applause that they appear to think. (*JA* vii-viii)[8]

In *Characters and Caricaturas* (see fig. 1 on page 3), Hogarth returns Fielding's compliment by inscribing below his picture the following instructions: "For a farthar Explanation of the Difference Betwixt *Character & Caricatura* See ye Preface to Jo[h]. Andrews."[9] In the lower right corner of the print, Hogarth features *caricaturas* based on

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[7] Regarding "out-of-bounds *caricatura*": "The antiquarian and amateur draftsman [Francis Grose] warned artist[s] not to 'overcharge' with oddities the peculiarities of their subjects, for, rather than producing the ridiculous, they would engender only the horrible and a sort of vulgar ugliness." Barbara Maria Stafford, *Body Criticism: Imaging the Unseen in Enlightenment Art and Medicine* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 217.

[8] Fielding's phrasing "The Ingenious Hogarth" echoes an earlier assessment of Hogarth's prints in the *Universal Spectator*: "Painting, like poetry, is divided into several classes. The Grotesque, in which the Dutch are said to excel, generally exhibits the Humours of a Country-Fair, a Wedding, a Drinking-bout etc. In this species, we have at present a Gentleman of our own country very excellent, I mean the Ingenious Mr Hogarth, who has given the Town a new piece of Humour in his Harlot's Progress, and in that of the Rake, which will shortly appear. These grotesque painters I take to be exactly the same with the Burlesque poets, the Design of both being to please, and move laughter." Fielding incorporates the comparison between "grotesque painters" and "Burlesque poets" into his own fiction, but he rejects the designation of Hogarth as a "grotesque painter." *Universal Spectator* essay published on 16 March 1734. Qtd. in Mark Hallett's *Hogarth* (London: Phaidon, 2000), 139-140.

[9]"In the picture itself…[Hogarth] not only illustrated Fielding's theory, but mischievously accepted Fielding's dare to show the world how easy it was to paint men with preposterous features in absurd attitudes: for at the very of the crowd of faces, Hogarth placed Fielding and himself, *vis-à-vis*, their features

images by the Italian artists Annibale Carracci, Leonard da Vinci, and Pier Leone Ghezzi, including a head from a print after Ghezzi of Dr. Tom Bentley (fig. 7), the nephew of the classical scholar Richard Bentley.[10] In a later print, *The Bench* (1758) (fig.8), Hogarth maintains the division between character and caricature. Recalling Fielding's own phrasing "no two species of writing can differ more widely than the comic and the burlesque," the artist provides the following caption to the print: "There are hardly any two things more essentially different than *Character* and *Caractura*, nevertheless they are usually confounded and mistaken for each other."

Figure 7: After Pier Leone Ghezzi, *Dr. Tom Bentley* (c.1700-1760)

contorted with laughter, loud, it would seem and irrepressible." Martin C. Battestin (with Ruthe R. Battestin), *Henry Fielding: A Life* (London: Routledge, 1989), 366.

[10] The German philosopher and dramatist Gotthold Ephraim Lessing disparaged caricature as unbeautiful and unnatural. "[Ancient Greeks]," he writes, "condemned the Greek Ghezzis, that unworthy artistic device through which a likeness is obtained by exaggerating the ugly parts of the original—in a word, the caricature." Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry* trans. Edward Allen McCormick (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 13.

Figure 8: William Hogarth, *The Bench* (1758)

"The strong claim about difference is so much bravado," Deidre Lynch wittily observes.[11] Still, why is Fielding, like Hogarth, so determined to categorize humor in terms of comic versus burlesque, natural versus unnatural?[12] Why is Fielding so

[11] Deidre Shauna Lynch, *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 62: "Hogarth's polemicizing identifies, or more precisely *invents*, a confusion of categories specifically so as to correct it, and through the fine-tuning alter the position in the cultural hierarchy that might be assigned to Hogarth's own [works]."

[12] Roger Lund suggests that readers should not take too seriously Fielding's negative pronouncements about the burlesque given that J*oseph Andrews* is a comically imitative work containing multiple allusions

concerned with demarcating accurate observers from the inaccurate ones, those who, like the "Attornies and Clerks in the Pit" and "the Citizens and their Apprentices in the Galleries," laugh at the wrong kinds of folly? Finally, why does Fielding find burlesque writing to be so problematic given the success he attained in the 1730s from writing burlesque plays?[13] Fielding's motives are, somewhat paradoxically, self-serving and altruistic. He is motivated by social concerns, but he is also a novelist establishing his authority in a relatively new medium. As such, he seeks to set standards—aesthetic and moral—that will most favorably position his own writing in the literary hierarchy.

I. "The Exact Picture of Human Life"

What Fielding does not explicitly state in the preface to *Joseph Andrews*, but what becomes clearer when his fiction and his essays are read together, is that he believes that comic writing more than other genres prepares knowledgeable readers, or "accurate observer[s]," for the vagaries of life outside of texts. That is, Fielding's comic writing, with its good-natured innocents prey to the ridicule of ill-natured schemers, reproduces life on the page in a way that is more lifelike than, say, the serious writing of a Samuel

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to burlesques texts like Cervantes' *Don Quixote* and Samuel Butler's *Hudibras.* See Roger Lund, "Augustan Burlesque and the Genesis of *Joseph Andrews*," *Studies in Philology* 103.1 (2006): 88-119. Samuel Butler's *Hudibras* operates as an important influence on Fielding's comic fiction. For example, Fielding explicitly references *Hudibras* in book ten of *Tom Jones* (427). Additionally, in *Characters and Passages from Note-books*, one observes a clear connection between Butler's "A Modern Politician" and Fielding's *Jonathan Wild* (1743). Butler's Modern Politician "finds the World has been mistaken in all Ages, and that Religion and Morality are but vulgar Errors, that pass among the Ignorant, and are but mere Words to the Wise" (1). Near the beginning of the eighteenth century, Edward Ward produced *Hudibras Redivivus: or, a A burlesque poem on the times* (1705), a work the author declares "tickles as it hurts." The adjective "hudibrastick" was repeatedly employed in the first half of the century to describe humorous texts.

[13] Harold Pagliaro, *Henry Fielding: A Literary Life* (London: Macmillan Press, 1998): "His genius as a playwright was in topical burlesque, and it was in his short pieces, brilliant and full of energy, that he won great success" (117).

Richardson. In pitting Fielding against Richardson, I am positioning this chapter alongside many previous scholarly investigations of that literary rivalry in order to highlight how earlier discussions of Fielding's realism versus Richardson's realism sometimes lack what I consider to be a crucial consideration: the aesthetics and ethics of laughter. Ian Watt's framing of the Fielding versus Richardson divide in *The Rise of Novel* presents Fielding's realism as defective or incomplete compared to the psychological realism of Richardson, a perspective that is still influential given that so many scholars, including Michael McKeon, William Warner, and Jill Campbell, still expand on Watt's framework or resist it.[14]

Within the Fielding-Richardson rivalry, the former's lack of realism versus the latter's superior psychological realism is for some critics redeemed by the comical. For example, in Martin C. Battestin's biography of Fielding: "[T]he triumph of *Joseph Andrews* is not owing to…strokes of personal ridicule, but rather to its great good humor—the delight Fielding takes in the comedy of humankind. In this novel, as later in *Tom Jones*, the Comic Spirit is a genial and sociable Muse, capable of redeeming for us

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[14] See Chapter 8 "Fielding and the Epic Theory of the Novel" and Chapter 9 "Fielding as Novelist: '*Tom Jones*' in Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). It is noteworthy that Watt attempts to redeem his dismissal of the lack of psychological realism in Fielding's fiction (which he presents as similar to Samuel Johnson's own dismissal of Fielding "characters of manners" in favor of Richardson's "characters of nature") with his contention that, although Richardson "takes us deeper into the inner workings of the human machine," Fielding "was engaged in the exploration of a vaster and equally intricate mechanism, that of human society as a whole" (289). Also see Chapter 12, "The Institutionalization of Conflict (II): Fielding and the Instrumentality of Belief," in Michael McKeon's *The Origins of the English Novel* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1987), Jill Campbell's *Natural* Masques, particularly pages 2-5, and Chapter 6, "*Joseph Andrews* as Performative Entertainment" in William Warner's *Licensing Entertainment: The Elevation of Novel Reading in Britain, 1684-1750* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). Some might argue that this literary rivalry is more imposed than descriptive of how eighteenth-century readers viewed the two authors. For example, Robert Hume states that the "relationship is mostly a critical fabrication and the rivalry notion distracts us from more fruitful ways of viewing Fielding's work." See Robert D. Hume, "Fielding at 300: Elusive, Confusing, Misappropriated, or (Perhaps) Obvious?" *Modern Philology* 108:2 (2010): 236. Even still, discussions about the rivalry remain a fixture of literary scholarship; "the rivalry notion" does not seem to be disappearing any time soon.

the mess of life."[15] Similarly, Susan G. Auty views the comical as life affirming. In *The Comic Spirit of Eighteenth-Century Novels*, Auty connects liberty and laughter, describing comedy as promoting a "liberal spirit."[16]

For a twentieth-/twenty-first century debate centered on Fielding and Richardson that is at its core preoccupied with stabilizing or destabilizing definitions of realism, it is important to mention that this debate about realism was in many ways just as pervasive within mid- and late-eighteenth-century British literature.[17] The terminology may have been different—instead of today's key terms, realism and interiority, we would find in novels produced two and half centuries ago the language of "natural pictures of human life."[18] Repeatedly, within the literature of the period, the verbal text that records the natural or lifelike is positively compared to a visual image or described in visual terms as a portrait; in some cases, particularly in the late eighteenth century, the language is of "private portrait,"[19] which one might anachronistically define as interiority or

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[15] Battestin, 331. The theme of "comedy as redemptive" is explored in Peter L. Berger's *Redeeming Laughter: The Comic Dimension of Human Experience* (Walter De Gruyter: New York, 1997), but he sees the comic as "intrusion" (6). Berger interprets the comic as revealing an alternative view of reality that intrudes on standard reality. For Berger the comic "is primarily *a form of perception*, a uniquely human one. The comic is perceived as the perception of an otherwise undisclosed dimension of reality—not just of its own reality…" (14). Berger further notes: "The comic experience provides a distinctive diagnosis of the world. It sees through the facades of ideational and social order, and discloses other realities lurking behind the superficial ones" (34): the comical as providing a lens to see social order.

[16] Susan G. Auty, *The Comic Spirit of Eighteenth-Century Novels* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1975), 6.

[17] In his introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), John Richetti views the eighteenth-century "hunger for actuality" in terms of fluid concepts like fact and fiction (2). Richetti discusses *Don Quixote*, which is a key text for Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*, but its comedy does not seem to hold for Richetti a key means for fulfilling that hunger for actuality.

[18] For example, Boswell asks Johnson: "Will you not allow, Sir, that [Fielding] draws very natural pictures of human life?" Qtd. in McKeon, 416.

[19] For an overview of this "tradition of literary pictorialism" see William V. Holz's *Image and Immortality: A Study of* Tristram Shandy (Providence: Brown University Press, 1970).

"roundness," but this deemphasizes the significance of an historicized account of character.

Within the debate of Fielding versus Richardson, the traditional assumption has been that Fielding's characters were too often flat types and Richardson's were round psychologies—that is, full representations of thinking, feeling human beings. In *Aspects of the Novel* (1927), E.M. Forster categorizes the division between caricature and character in terms of the flat and the round: "Flat characters were called 'humours' in the seventeenth century, and are sometimes called types, and sometimes caricatures. In their purest form, they are constructed around a single idea or quality: when there is more than one factor in them, we get the beginning of the curve towards the round."[20] According to Forster, round characters are full representations because we as readers have access to their interiority. Fielding's characters, though, are often very similar to Theophrastan characters, which Forster characterized as flat caricatures in his negative assessment of seventeenth-century types.[21] For Fielding's contemporary, the novelist Francis Coventry, the comically "exact" rather than the "round" most fully captures "human life."

In "The New Species of Writing Founded by Mr. Fielding," Coventry praises the originality of Fielding's fictional productions. He finds fault with works like *The History*

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[20] E.M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World Inc., 1954), 103-104.

[21] Deidre Lynch remarks: "*character* can, opportunely, designate both the person described and the verbal portrait that does the describing. It is a word that, like landscape or history, trades on similitudes that blur the distinctions between human institutions and nature…This is also the program of the Theophrastan characters of the period, which foreground the homology between characters that we read off the body of the person and the characters that compose the discourse we use to designate him" (40). See J.W. Smeed's *The Theophrastan 'Character': The History of a Literary Genre* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985) for an account of the development of Theophrastan character writing from seventeenth century to the twentieth. Also see, Aaron Kunin,"Characters Lounge," *Modern Language Quarterly* 70.3 (2009): 291-317. Kunin explores the seventeenth-century popularity of Theophrastan-type characters by juxtaposing them with nineteenth-century characters: "what used to be called character has to be renamed caricature or stereotype" (299).

of Charlotte Summers (1749) that align themselves with Fielding's novels, but are not as aesthetically accomplished: "The many Histories of this kind that lately have been publish'd, which undoubtedly owe their Rise to the extraordinary Success of Mr. *Fielding*'s Pieces, make it more necessary to remark on these Performances."[22] Also, at times, Coventry denounces exaggerated naturalism and the "wild imagination" presented by romance in favor of the natural and ordered comic writing of Fielding:

> [T]he Romances it was intended to ridicule, were a kind of extravagant Lanskape [sic], in which the Painter had represented purling Streams and shady Groves; or brazen Towers, and Mountains of Adamant, just as they were uppermost in his wild Imagination; so this kind of Writing [by Fielding] is the Work of a more regular Pencil, and the exact Picture of human Life; and though a Novice in Painting may be more struck with the false Glare of the first, a Connoisseur will be more charm'd with the beautiful Plainness, and exact Similitude of the last. (*NS* 28-30)

The juxtaposition of comic writing versus romance is, of course, found in Fielding's preface to *Joseph Andrews* (although in Fielding's contradictory manner he classifies his comic epic poem in prose as "comic romance"). Near the beginning of the preface to *Joseph Andrews*, Fielding states:

> Now a comic romance is a comic epic poem in prose, differing from comedy as the serious epic tragedy, its action being more extended and comprehensive,

[22] [Francis Coventry], *An Essay on New Species of Writing Founded by Mr. Fielding* (London, 1751), 30. Hereafter cited as *NS*. In the Introduction to *The History of Charlotte Summers* the narrator states: "I am the first Begotten, of the poetical issue, of the much celebrated Biographer of *Joseph Andrews*, and *Tom Jones*; I dare not pretend to be legitimately begotten; I believe I must content myself with the Honour of being a natural Brat of the facetious Gentleman" (3). In a way this beginning plays on the jokes of parentage that appear in those two comic novels by Fielding.

> 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. (*JA* vi)

Near the end of the preface, Fielding's explicitly states that his comic writing is different from romance: "Having thus distinguished *Joseph Andrews* from the productions of romance writers on the one hand and burlesque writers on the other, and given some few very short hints (for I intended no more) of this species of writing, which I have affirmed to be hitherto unattempted in our language" (*JA* x). Obviously, the divisions are not hard and fixed, but in place to support Fielding's agenda of promoting his own comic writing in opposition to other forms. He has dismissed the aesthetics and ethics of these other forms in order to construct an aesthetics and ethics of the comical. Within his essay, Coventry echoes Fielding's own assertions about the naturalism of the comical. He repeatedly contrasts Fielding's "new Vein of Humour"—comical writing filled with "Characters which really existed" that presents "a lively Representative of real Life," "what we experience every Day"—against the "Impossibility" of romance (*NS* 15-16). For Fielding and Coventry, capturing real life requires capturing the variety of characters found "every Day," including the "low." But the inclusion of low characters doesn't necessarily make Fielding's fiction low itself, which both authors insist upon. This

incorporation of the "low" for the sake of the "real" may explain why Fielding (and his supportive anonymous critic) elevates the comic through criticism of romance;[23] it may also shed light on why Fielding distinguishes his comic writing from the burlesque, which he presents as the wrong kind of comedy, a "low" form for undiscerning audiences.

Throughout the "The New Species of Writing" the comical—in its reproduction of the natural and its ridicule of romance—is positioned as a defining feature of the novel, or what the author calls "Biography" or "History," highlighting the genre's focus on providing a record of an individual's life: "The Story should be probable, and the Characters taken from common Life, the Stile should be easy and familiar, but at the same Time sprightly and entertaining; and to enliven it the more, it is sometimes heightened to the Mock-heroic, to ridicule the Bombast and Fustian, which obtain'd so much in the Romances" (*NS* 19-20). Here we see the "Mock-heroic" or the burlesque employed for heightening the comical representation of the "common Life."

II. "Laughter, in a good and delicate Mind"

Correctly reading the comical is of the utmost important to Fielding, and yet his fiction displays contradictory instructions and representations as to what qualifies as natural and comical. In "An Essay on Knowledge of Character of Men," he restates a familiar stance regarding the "sudden glory" of Hobbesian laughter as "far from being a

[23] Cf. In *The Progress of Romance* (Colchester and London, 1785), Clara Reeve remarks: "The learned men of our own country have in general affected a contempt for this kind of writing, and looked upon Romances, as proper furniture only for a lady's Library" (xv-xvi).

good-natured Passion."[24] Fielding distances laughter from the good-natured individual. This stance seems problematic for an author who produces comical productions. And this may be why Fielding goes on assert that laughter can be transformed into good-natured compassion:

> [S] uppose a Person well drest should tumble in a dirty Place in the Street; I am afraid there are few who would not laugh at the Accident: Now what is this Laughter other than a convulsive Extasy, occasioned by the Contemplation of our own Happiness, compared with the unfortunate Person's! a Pleasure which seems to savour of Ill-nature: but at this is one of those first, as it were, spontaneous Motions of the Soul, which few, as I have said, attend to, and none can prevent; so it doth not properly constitute the Character. When we come to reflect on the Uneasiness this Person suffers, Laughter, in a good and delicate Mind, will begin to change itself into Compassion; and in Proportion as this latter operates on us, we may be said to have more or less Good-Nature: but should any fatal Consequence, such as a violent Bruise, or the breaking of a Bone, attend the Fall, the Man who should still continue to laugh, would be entitled to the basest and vilest Appellation with which any Language can stigmatize him. (*EKCM* 160)

Fielding describes laugher as a force that is uncontrollable at times. He claims that involuntary laughter "doth not properly constitute the Character." At times, laughter—in response to the ridiculous in another person—can reveal knowledge of character and

[24]Henry Fielding, "An Essay on Knowledge of Characters of Men," in *Miscellanies* ed. Henry Knight Miller (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), 159. Hereafter cited as *EKCM*. In Chapter 1, "Staged Identities," of *Character's Theater: Genre and Identity on the Eighteenth-Century English Stage* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), Lisa A. Freeman provides an engaging discussion of "An Essay on Knowledge of Characters of Men": "Setting himself up as a benevolent defender of the less perceptive, and therefore more vulnerable, Fielding points out the perils that face one who cannot properly discern 'character'" (25).

uncover the true identity. At other times, the laughter is invalidated when it is an involuntary, irrational response ("spontaneous Motions of the Soul, which…none can prevent").

In the preface to *Joseph Andrews* Fielding also asserts that ridiculous and the sympathetic are clearly distinguishable:

> Now from affectation only, the misfortunes and calamites of life, or the imperfections of nature, may become the objects of ridicule. Surely he hath a very ill-framed mind who can look on ugliness, infirmity, or poverty as ridiculous in themselves, nor do I believe any man living who meets a dirty fellow riding through the streets in a cart is struck with an idea of the ridiculous from it; but if he should see the same figure descend from his coach and six, or bolt from his chair with his hat under his arm, he would then begin to laugh, and with justice. (*JA* ix)

For Fielding, the object of ridicule necessarily has an aspirational quality: a person yearns to be something he or she is not (for example, a dirty fellow incongruously plays the part of a dignified gentleman) that stems from hypocrisy or vanity, but it is the ridiculous originating in hypocrisy that "strikes the reader with surprise and pleasure…in a higher and stronger degree." It is a perspective that views individuals and their natures in fixed terms. A person's character, his or her place in society, is a known and static quality that can be masked into something it is not, but the mask of affectation does not change the true identity that can be ultimately perceived by "any man living."[25] And yet, in "Essay

[25] Of course, an alternative attitude towards the performance of character existed in the eighteenth century in which playing parts could be viewed as liberating. For example, the "self-fashioning" that Boswell offers in his life writing presents character as transferable: "Since I came up, I have begun to acquire a composed

on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men," Fielding states that judging character is not so easy to discern for the majority of people. It would seem that Fielding privileges a select minority over "any man living." Few people are perceptive enough to differentiate between affectation and true character. For Fielding everyone is playing a character, but some are overacting their part or, worse, taking on the wrong roles. Consequently, reality is theatrical, performative, but false and ridiculous when a role is overplayed.

Fielding employs the idea of "life is a stage" in order to construct a binary between the ridiculous and the burlesque, the natural and the unnatural, the comical and caricature:

> The Truth is, Nature doth really imprint sufficient Marks in the Countenance, to inform an accurate and discerning Eye: but as such is the Property of few, the Generality of Mankind mistake the Affectation for the Reality: for as Affectation always over-acts her Part, it fares with her as with a Farcical Actor on the Stage, whose monstrous over-done Grimaces are sure to catch the Applause of an insensible Audience; while the truest and finest Strokes of Nature, represented by a judicious and just Actor, pass unobserved and disregarded. (*EKCM* 161-162)

Once again, we see that "Nature" supplies "sufficient" examples for judging. One reads a person's internal character, his or her mind, through the external features of the body. In this case, Fielding discusses physiognomy, "Marks in the Countenance," as opposed to the ridiculous, but physiognomy and the ridiculous are similar in that everywhere one looks one finds evidence for making judgments. However, "accurate" judgment is the

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genteel character very different from a rattling uncultivated one which for some time I have been fond of. I have discovered that we may be in some degree whatever character we choose" (*Boswell's London Journal 1762*-1763, 2nd ed., 47).

crucial term from the preface ("accurate observer") and from the essay ("accurate and discerning eye"). Early in the preface, Fielding claims that correctly judging the ridiculous is only available to the accurate observer, but a few pages later he states that any man living has access to correctly determining what is laughable. He explains: "when ugliness aims at the applause of beauty, or lameness endeavours to display agility, it is then that these unfortunate circumstances, what at first moved our compassion, tend only to raise our mirth (*JA* ix-x).

In "An Essay on Knowledge of Characters of Men," Fielding separates the "accurate and discerning" from the "insensible Audience." He is preoccupied with demarcating different kinds of spectators, the sensible from the insensible, those who appreciate the subtleties of performance versus those who desire the over-the-top exaggerations of the "Farcical Actor" with "monstrous over-done Grimaces."[26] In combining the everyday with the stage, Fielding appears to indicate that there is little difference between reading the ridicule in everyday life and fictional productions. Therefore, it would seem that the "insensible" who "laugh at over-done Grimaces" are the same who laugh in real life at "natural imperfections." It is as if those who lack aesthetic sensibility also lack moral sensibility, and for Fielding, the two temperaments are entwined.

The tension between the obvious and the equivocal may be a manifestation of the larger tension existing within the period concerning ethical ideals and practical realities. Simon Dickie argues that so many repeated assertions of a universal understanding of

[26] In *The Adventures of a Hackney Coach* (1781) caricature is associated with the low, but enjoyed by those in high life, who laud a player's performance: "From this singularity of taste, his representations of characters in low life were beyond any ever seen; he could cast his flexible features to any situation; and his audiences of the upper gallery saw the caricatura so very strong, that they never failed to bestow on him their loudest peals of applause" (125-126).

what qualifies as ridiculous vs. sympathetic (for example, the poor man buffoonishly dressing up as opposed to the long-suffering poor man) indicates that many men and women in the period struggled to avoid cruelly laughing at the ugly, the infirm, or the poor.[27] Dickie tracks Fielding's own contradictions concerning moral and immoral laughter by focusing his analysis on Parson Adams's encounter with the Roasting-Squire and his "dogs" in the second half of book three of *Joseph Andrews*:

> The master of the pack was just arrived…when Adams set out…This [Squire] was generally said to be a great lover of humor, but, not to mince the matter, especially as we are upon this subject, he was a great hunter of men; indeed he had hitherto followed the sport only with dogs of his own species, for he kept two or three couple of barking curs for that use only. However, as he thought he had now found a man nimble enough, he was willing to indulge himself with other sport, and accordingly crying out, stole away, encouraged the hounds to pursue Mr. Adams, swearing it was the largest jack-hare he ever saw, at the same time hallooing and hooping as if a conquered hero was flying before him. (*JA* 203)

"One cannot avoid the sense that Fielding is enjoying knocking Adams around, even as he pities him," Dickie discerns.[28] "The grimace of fright, the bald head, the terrified flight from the hounds—these are straight out of farce." The Squire, though, forces a kind of "unnatural" humor to appear: "What distinguished [the Squire] chiefly was a strange delight which he took in everything which is ridiculous, odious, and absurd in his own

[27] See Simon Dickie, *Cruelty and Laughter: Forgotten Comic Literature and the Unsentimental Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 58.

[28] Dickie, 160.

species" (*JA* 208). The Squire employs "a dull poet, a quack doctor, a lame…dancing master," the stock figures of contemporary jokes who, themselves, play a series of jokes on Adams (*JA* 208). Fielding indicates the extreme absurdity of the Squire's search for absurdity. Still, Dickie notes: "Much as [Fielding] might claim to deride the evils of malicious laughter, Fielding invented the humiliations to which Adams is subjected and put the jokes into the mouths of his tormentors. And his readers laughed, delighting where they were apparently intended to deplore."[29]

In the preface to *Joseph Andrews*, Fielding states that affectation is the source of the ridiculous. Although Adams may appear affected at times in the novel through his conspicuous erudition—his extended pronouncements about pedagogy or classical literature—there is nothing affected about what Adams suffers at the hands of the Roasting-Squire. It is not natural folly that renders Adams's actions ridiculous, but instead the mechanisms of a manipulating Squire; such scheming played out on a larger societal role represents the even greater impact of ill-natured ridicule. In many ways, the good-natured Adams is similar to the good-natured Heartfree who suffers from the manipulations of the eponymous Jonathan Wild in Fielding's second novel.

Still, why would Fielding evoke laughter and sympathy for the parson? Perhaps, as Dickie observes, it is Fielding's attempt at roundness, though, of course, this is an anachronistic way to describe Fielding's characterizations.[30] One might infer, as Dickie does, that to some extent the mockery of Adams is very much in the tradition of *Don*

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[29] Ibid., 166-167.

[30] Dickie observes: "We are invited to laugh…at Adams's various faults and blind spots—his pomposity, vanity, and so on. In retrospect, the parson can be identified as an early 'round character'—a mixture of faults and virtues, one who deserves satiric correction but also elicits sympathy and affection (Falstaff is a still earlier example)" (172).

Quixote, whose hero is both an object of ridicule and sympathy. Yet, Dickie still finds the roasting of Adams in tension with Fielding's own emphasis on "Good-Nature." Jill Campbell also notes the intentional inconsistency within Fielding's text: "[T]he Squire shows the satiric impulse used irresponsibly and even violently, creating imperfections where it cannot find them, and contradicting Joseph's assurance that laughter is necessarily moral in its choice of objects."[31] Joseph's comment about ridicule in the Roasting-Squire episode is noteworthy because the eponymous character asserts: "I defy the wisest Man in the World to turn a true good Action into Ridicule" (*JA* 200). This may simply be Fielding's way of exposing the young man's innocence, an innocence that Fielding seems to validate and admire in his writing. Well-meaning subjects like Joseph, Fanny, and Parson Adams are susceptible to the schemes of the ill natured who unnaturally target them as ridiculous. Despite their appearance as ridiculous at times, these good-natured characters are meant to be aesthetically and ethically appealing.[32]

III. The "Proper Time of Mirth"

Fielding's *Amelia* is typically viewed as a sentimental novel; if it is ever classified as comedy then it is due to its *deus ex machina* happy ending, which many critics view with dismay or skepticism as one of the major problems of this "problem novel."[33]

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[31] Campbell, 102.

[32] Harold Pagliaro comments: "Throughout *Joseph Andrews*, we are made to laugh at Parson Adams, sometimes at Joseph. But while we laugh, we earnestly cheer them on because we want the causes they represent to triumph...Fielding sees to it that our amusement is hardly impartial" (145).

[33] For example, George Haggerty does mention the word "comedy" and *Amelia* in the same sentence, but the novel is viewed in terms of tragedy transformed into comedy—a world turned upside down is turned right side up again: "*Amelia* has a happy ending, of course, but its comic structure is so different from that of *Tom Jones* as to begin to challenge the comic description itself." See "Fielding's Novel of Atonement: Confessional Form in *Amelia*," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 8:3 (1996): 385.

However, my contention is that *Amelia* has elements of comic writing that demonstrate Fielding's continuing interest in the ethics of ridicule. There are many moments in *Amelia* in which characters laugh heartily, laugh involuntary, or hold back laughter. For example, in book three of *Amelia,* Booth, the hero of the tale and Amelia's husband, sits in prison, recounting to his fellow inmate Miss Matthews a comical incident in which he came upon his colleague Major Bath undressing. Booth has caught Bath in women's apparel after the major has spent time nursing his sick sister Miss Bath: "[Major Bath's] dress was whimsical enough, having on a woman's bed-gown, and a very dirty flannel night-cap, which being added to a very odd person (for he is a very aukward thin man near seven feet high) might have formed, in the opinion of most men, a very proper object of laughter."[34] Reflecting on the encounter, Booth confesses to Miss Matthews: "Upon the whole, I could not easily refrain from laughter; however, I conquered myself" (*A* 124). Still, the major assumes he will be made the butt of a joke, stating to Booth, "Do you then take my character for a jest!" (*A* 125). Bath is concerned that his manly character is on the line. Ultimately, his exaggerated defense of his manhood is what makes him most ridiculous, and not the female attire he wears while assisting his sister. A few pages earlier, Amelia is described by her husband as "who of all persons in the world hath the truest taste and enjoyment of the ridiculous" (*A* 121). Amelia can ridicule the affectations of Bath—his overly masculine affectation—and still feel moved by his good-hearted qualities, his thoughtfulness for his sister. Amelia's true taste for the ridiculous is linked to her knowledge of real character: " 'If I had the same neglect,' said she, 'for ridiculous people with the generality of the world, I should rather think them the objects of tears than laughter; but in reality, I have known several who in some parts of their

[34] Henry Fielding, *Amelia* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), 123. Hereafter cited as *A*.

characters have been extremely ridiculous, in others have been altogether as amiable" (*A* 121-122).

Earlier in the novel, in book two, Fielding prepares his readers for the moral and social significance of "proper mirth" through Booth's account of Amelia's injured nose ("by the overturning of a chaise…her lovely nose was beat all to pieces," *A* 57). Booth sadly recalls to Miss Matthews: "poor Amelia's accident was the subject of much mirth and pleasantry" (*A* 58). Amelia's closest female friend, a Miss Osborne, along with "several young ladies, or rather young devils," as Booth calls them, target Amelia as an "object of laughter" (*A* 63). Amelia grieves over the treachery of false friends who have no just cause for mocking her, as she is without vanity or affectation.

Booth admires Amelia's "magnanimity of mind" in response to the misfortune and cruel laughter she endures (*A* 58). She first demonstrates her fortitude after her injury. With "patience and resignation" she "submit[ted] to the loss, of exquisite beauty, in other words to the loss of fortune, power, glory…what must be the mind, which can bear to be deprived of all these in a moment." Miss Matthews dutifully listens to Booth rhapsodize. But the surface of Miss Matthews's agreeable demeanor—she secretly (and later, quite openly) lusts after Booth—is often punctured by improper laughter. Miss Matthews is repeatedly shown in the first part of the novel as inappropriately laughing and jesting in response to Booth's story of trials and tribulations. Amelia, however, is presented as the feminine ideal, a woman who virtuously and sentimentally weeps over her husband's suffering, but also laughs with him. The novel juxtaposes the laughter of Miss Mathews and other female characters (Amelia's learned friend, Mrs. Bennet, who

delights in spouting her knowledge of classical literature, is also an object of laughter in *Amelia*) against Amelia's more whole-hearted laughter.

When the "several young ladies, or rather young devils" exchange jests over Amelia's deformed nose they display false judgment. For Fielding, their derision resembles the thoughtless laughter of the "insensible" who delight in the caricature of a "preposterous" nose, or "some absurd or monstrous attitude." Booth, however, correctly judges Amelia's character, seeing through the literal mask she wears to cover her injured nose. (Booth and Amelia are just acquaintances at this point in the plot. Still, they share a similar sensibility.) Eventually, Amelia removes her physical mask in Booth's presence. "About a month after the accident, when Amelia began to see company," Booth visits her (*A* 59), and asks to see her face. Amelia answers "in a most obliging manner. 'Perhaps, Mr. Booth, you will as little know me as when my mask is off as when it is on;' and at the same instant unmasked." Booth is "unable to contain [him]self, and eagerly kissing her hand…crie[s]—'Upon my soul, madam, you never appeared so lovely as at this instant.'" Amelia's unmasking is significant in a novel in which false characters, like the duplicitous Miss Matthews, threaten to destroy Booth and Amelia's happy marriage.

For Fielding, judging character is deeply intertwined with judging the right moment to laugh. The novelist privileges comic writing over caricature not only because he believes caricature is unnatural but because he views it as producing the wrong kind of laughter—a laughter that is unthinking and incapable of judgment—devoid of the true knowledge of the characters of men and women.

Chapter 2

Sterne, Bunbury, and the Sentimental Journey of Laughter

Towards the beginning of volume two of Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759-1767), Tristram's father, Walter Shandy, orders his servant Obadiah to "saddle a horse" and "go directly for Dr. *Slop*, the man-midwife" because Tristram's mother, Elizabeth Shandy, has "fallen into labour."[1] Unbeknownst to Walter, Dr. Slop has already "taken a ride to *Shandy-Hall*" to "see how matters went on with" with Mrs. Shandy (*TS* 2.10.87). While Obadiah rides off "mounted upon a strong monster of a coach-horse," Dr. Slop is "coming slowly along, foot by foot, waddling thro' the dirt upon the vertebrae of a little diminutive pony" (*TS* 2.9.85). The two men almost collide near the garden wall outside of Shandy Hall: "*Obadiah* and his coach-horse turn'd the corner, rapid, furious,---pop,---full upon [Slop]!" In Tristram's "Minute Account," this mock-horrific "Rencounter"—"Nothing, I think, in nature, can be supposed more terrible"—becomes an intricately staged comedy of errors.[2] Shocked by the sight of Obadiah's monstrous horse galloping towards him, the Catholic Dr. Slop crosses himself:

> [I]n crossing himself he let go of his whip,—and in attempting to save his whip betwixt his knee and his saddle's skirt, as it slipp'd, he lost his stirrup,—in losing which, he lost his seat;—and in the multitude of all these losses, (which, by the

[1] Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman.* ed. Ian Campbell Ross (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009), 2.6.80-81. Hereafter cited as *TS.*

[2] In a 1759 letter, Sterne comments: "I will reconsider Slops fall & my too Minute Account of it – but in general I am perswaded that the happiness of the Cervantic humour arises from this very thing – of describing silly and trifling Events, with the Circumstantial Pomp of Great Ones." Laurence Sterne, qtd. in *Sterne, The Critical Heritage*, ed. Alan B. Howes (London: Routledge, 1974), 40.

> bye, shews what little advantage there is in crossing) the unfortunate Doctor lost his presence of mind. (*TS* 2.9.85-86)

The terrified Slop tumbles from his pony, and he lands about "twelve inches deep in the mire." The scene suggests a comic correlation between mind and body: Dr. Slop has "lost his presence of mind" and he has lost control over his body. This mind-body dysfunction is representative of the novel as a whole.[3] All sorts of mental and bodily misadventures—for example, Walter Shandy's theory of Christian names and Tristram's mangled nose—occur in *Tristram Shandy* as a result of horses, or rather hobby-horses. Slop and Obadiah's chaotic encounter is just one of many confrontations that take place in the narrative that highlight Sterne's fascination with the comical collisions (or near collisions) of his fictional figures' lives and opinions.[4]

In *The Overthrow of Dr. Slop* (1773) (fig. 9), Henry William Bunbury illustrates the aftermath of that near collision of Slop and Obadiah. The paunchy man-midwife lies on his back, arms outstretched. Right above him, a wooden hand-shaped sign—reminiscent of the pointed hands that appear throughout *Tristram Shandy*[5]—directs the viewer's eye to Obadiah straddling his monstrous horse. Unlike Slop, Obadiah has

[3] As Juliet McMaster notes, paraphrasing Sterne's allusion to John Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), "the history of what passes in a man's mind is the history of what passes in his body too." See Juliet McMaster, " 'Uncrystalized Flesh and Blood': The Body in *Tristram Shandy*," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 2.3 (1990): 201.

[4] For example, Melvyn New observes, "Having set the hobby-horses of Walter and [Uncle] Toby in motion in the first volumes, Sterne sets about, in [later volumes], to demonstrate the various confusions and collisions which result when two men, both well mounted, travel the same roads." See Melvyn New, *Laurence Sterne as Satirist: A Reading of* Tristram Shandy (Gainseville: University of Florida Press, 1969), 124.

[5] For more on the typography of the pointed hand, see Helen Williams, "Sterne's Manicules: Hands, Handwriting, and Authorial Property in *Tristram Shandy*," *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 36.2 (2013): 209-223.

managed to hold onto his whip and his hat, which he doffs out of respect for the doctor. Obadiah's actions are both decorous and ridiculous. The concluding line of the print's caption reads (omitting much of Sterne's original punctuation): "Obadiah pull'd off his cap twice when [Slop] was falling and again when he saw him seated." "Ill-timed complaisance!" Tristram exclaims. His imaginary reader sensibly asks, "had not the fellow better have stopp'd his horse, and got off and help'd him?" Obadiah couldn't help it, Tristram explains, "he rode in a circle three times round Dr. *Slop*, before he could fully accomplish it any how;—and at the last, when he did stop his beast, 'twas done with such an explosion of mud, that *Obadiah* had better have been a league off" (*TS* 2.9.86).

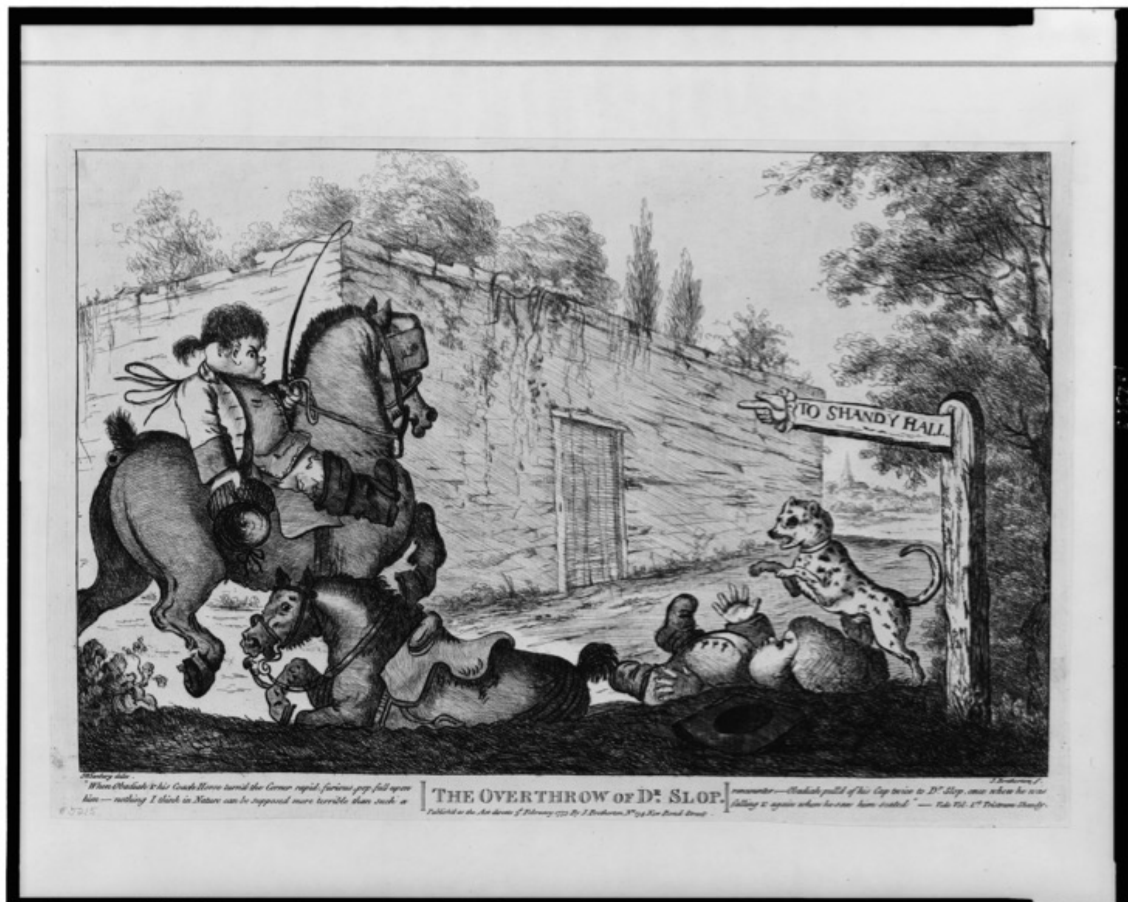

Figure 9: John Bretherton after Henry William Bunbury,
The Overthrow of Dr. Slop (1773)

By visually recreating several details from Sterne's text—Obadiah's doffed cap, Slop stuck in the mire—Bunbury's *The Overthrow of Dr. Slop* captures the comedic tone of the scene. But the artist adds "Shandean details," David Brewer observes, "most conspicuously, a muddy dog" who towers over the helpless Slop.[6] By adding his own touches, Bunbury has, according to Brewer, answered Tristram's call for the reader to imagine. Right before the Slop-Obadiah escapade, Tristram instructs "Sir" reader to "Imagine to yourself a little, squat, uncourtly figure of Doctor *Slop*" (*TS* 2.9.84). In the next paragraph, he tells the reader, "Imagine to yourself, Obadiah." Two short chapters later, Tristram claims, "The truest respect which you can pay to the reader's understanding is to…leave him something to imagine, in his turn, as well as yourself" (*TS* 2.11.87). "Writing," Tristram explains, "when properly managed (as you may be sure I think mine is), is but a different name for conversation: As no one, who knows what he is about in good company, would venture to talk all;— so no author, who understands the just boundaries of decorum and good breeding, would presume to think all." At various times, Tristram announces his intention to expand or contract his narration in order to make room for the reader's own imagination. Indeed, at the end of chapter eleven, the reader is told, " 'Tis his turn now…his imagination must now go on with it for a while" (*TS* 2.11.88).

Tristram's constant desire for "imaginative expansion," what he portrays as "the quintessence of polite sociability" is intentionally comical, but his assertion about boundaries is also somewhat disingenuous.[7] *Tristram Shandy* abounds with jests, puns,

[6] David Brewer, *The Afterlife of Character, 1726-1825* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 160.

[7] Brewer, 157.

and humorous asides about sexual bodies that to many of Sterne's readers violated the "just boundaries of decorum and good breeding." For example, in June 1760, after reading Sterne's "short volumes thro" which "sometimes made [her] laugh," Lady Dorothy Bradshaigh wrote to Samuel Richardson, "It is a pity a man of so much humour, cou'd not contain himself within the bounds of decency. Upon the whole, I think the performance, mean, *dirty* Wit."[8] Almost two decades later, the educator and clergyman Vicesimus Knox voiced similar concerns: "The admirers of Sterne extol his wit. But I believe it will be found that his wit is of the lowest kind, and the easiest of invention; for is it not for the most part allusive obscenity? a species of wit to be found in the vulgarest and vilest haunts of vice?"[9] Sterne's "allusive obscenity" was leaving too much to the imagination.

Yet, other eighteenth-century readers embraced Sterne's call to "imagine to yourself," including John Hope, a writer for *The Westminster Magazine*, who "painted [the "Rencounter" of Slop and Obadiah] so strongly on [his] imagination that [he] laughed most immoderately loud."[10] Hope's ability to "paint" the scene in his mind's eye presumably demonstrated his "true feeling," which was further validated by his desire to share his laughter with others.[11] When Hope reads the scene out loud, one of his two companions joins him "very heartily in the laugh." Brewer comments, "Shared visualization would thus seem to work in the way that Tristram had claimed it would. It

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[8] Lady Dorothy Bradshaigh, qtd. in *Sterne, The Critical Heritage*, 90.

[9] Vicesimus Knox, qtd. in *Sterne, The Critical Heritage*, 253.

[10] John Hope, qtd. in *Sterne, The Critical Heritage*, 242.

[11] Brewer, 164. In a February 1768 letter to Dr. John Eustace, an American correspondent, Sterne writes: "[I]t is not in the power of any one to taste humor, however he may wish it—'tis the gift of God—and besides, a true feeler always brings half the entertainment along with him." Laurence Sterne, qtd. in *Sterne, The Critical Heritage*, 195.

prompts a laughter which furthers readerly sociability."[12] Hope's second companion, however, does not see "any thing so very witty in the misfortune of a poor, harmless, inoffensive man-midwife."[13] Moreover, he finds it "cruel and insulting to laugh at [Dr. Slop's] distress." Hope, though, is not dismayed by his companion's response: "I need not tell my readers, that my grave friend, though a man of good solid understanding, had neither a sprightly imagination, any taste for humour, nor the least turn for the burlesque." Here, we see Hope align good taste and good humor in a way that connects him to other fellow-feeling friends, but distances him from others who lack a sense of humor and imaginative capacity.

In this chapter I explore how comic scenes functioned for Sterne's readers as a barometer to measure "true feeling" and sensibility. Of course, not all of the novelist's contemporaries (or near contemporaries) embraced his humor—later I will return to Vicesimus Knox's criticisms, among others—but a significant body of readers sought and found sentimental laughter in Sterne's fiction. We can find commentary on this desire to merge laughter and sensibility in the later editions of *The Beauties of Sterne*, the popular anthology of Sterne's fiction, sermons, and letters, which was first published in 1782 and went through thirteen editions by the end of the century. The tenth to thirteenth editions place a premium on "delicate" laughter for the "heart of sensibility." In the preface to the tenth edition, the editor remarks:

> It has been a matter of much general complaint, that the selections hitherto made were of rather too fine a cast…it dragg'd on rather too serious a system of

[12] Ibid., 158.

[13] John Hope, qtd. in *Sterne, The Critical Heritage*, 242.

> grave morality, unmix'd with those sprightlier sallies of fancy, which the great Original knew so judicially and equally to scatter in our way.
>
> It hath been…observed, that the dread of offending the ear of Chastity, so laudable in itself, has, in the present case, been carried to an excess, thereby depriving us of many most laughable scenes, though in themselves totally free from any objections on the score of indelicacy.[14]

The editor alludes to *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy* (1768), in which Sterne's alter ego, Yorick, comments that "there is nothing unmixt in this world," when he advocates the importance of mixing the serious with the humorous, the "grave" with the "gay."[15] Furthermore, he implies that excessive sensibility may be the consequence of too much emphasis on "grave morality." If one is to understand how to live well, with "true feeling," as ordained by God, the "great Original"—let alone Sterne, the "Original" author—one needs to know how to have a good laugh. Laughter, along with those "sprightlier sallies of fancy," is the antidote to the grave/death: it keeps the "heart of sensibility" beating. "I live in a constant endeavour to fence against the infirmities of ill health, and other evils of life, by mirth," Tristram/Sterne declares in the dedication to the first volume, "being firmly persuaded…when [a man] laughs…it adds something to this Fragment of Life" (*TS* 3). Laughter enhances one's life, but it also, Sterne punningly hints, adds to Tristram's *Life and Opinions*.

[14] Laurence Sterne, *The Beauties of Sterne; Including Several of His Letters and Sermons, All His Pathetic Tales, Humorous Descriptions, and Most Distinguished Observations on Life. Selected for the Heart of Sensibility*, 10th ed. (London, 1787), v-vi. Hereafter cited as *TBS*.

[15] Laurence Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey and Other Writings*. ed. Tim Parnell and Ian Jack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 74. Hereafter cited as *ASJ*.

In addition to foregrounding the life-giving attributes of Sterne's "most laughable scenes," the *Beauties of Sterne* editor characterizes the laughing reader as a connoisseur of fine feeling and good taste: "the sprightly reader will find, now for the first time, several scenes of such exquisite fancy—such true Shandean coloring, that he will be astonish'd, they could be overlook'd by any who professed to enumerate the 'Beauties of Sterne.'—Such are, Mr. Shandy's Beds of Justice—Dr. Slop and Susannah—Parson Yorick's Horse—and many other pictures of the same tint" (*TBS* vi-vii). Here, we see "the heart of sensibility" aligned with aesthetic sensibility. Drawing from Tristram/Sterne's own use of visual language, the editor remarks that "sprightly" readers will discern "true Shandean coloring" and "pictures of the same tint," unlike those who "overlook'd" comical "scenes of such exquisite fancy."[16] Sterne is an author who portrays himself as an artist—he repeatedly discusses "out-lines" and "strokes"—in part because the blurring of visual-verbal boundaries reinforces his objective of leaving something to the imagination. For example, in chapter six of volume two, Tristram expounds on the importance of the "*Poco piu* and the *Poco meno* of the *Italian* artists," the "more and less" of "slight touches" and the "small particles." According to Tristram, the "more and less"—or the "overdone" and the "underdone," as Jonathan Lamb describes the *poco piu* and the *poco meno*—"determines the precise line of beauty in the sentence."[17] The allusion here to William Hogarth's treatise *Analysis of Beauty* (1753) highlights Sterne's fascination with the visual. Throughout *Tristram Shandy*, Sterne attempts to transform his verbal composition into spectacle, by including typographic symbols, black pages, marbled pages, engravings by Simon François Ravenet after

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[17] Lamb, 85.

Hogarth, and a series of curved and straight lines that trace the "out-lines" of his own narrative.[18] Furthermore, Sterne encourages readers to add "slight touches" to his narrative by visually constructing in their mind's eyes his scenes.

W.B. Gerard, though, cautions against viewing Sterne's writings as a "mimetic type of pictorialism carried over from the easel" because the novelist intentionally leaves much to the imagination.[19] "A mode of image-making does exist, however," Gerard notes, "a more subjective, less visually comprehensive practice dependent on the establishment of comic, erotic, or pathetic sympathy to function in the minds of readers. This sympathetic appeal is the true operative force behind Sterne's pictorialism." These observations underscore a central argument of this chapter: Sterne's desire to leave his readers something to imagine lies at the heart of his vision of sensibility. Gerard connects the comical to the sympathetic imagination—and my analysis will build on this insight—but my specific objective is to investigate how the comedy of caricature can evoke for Sterne's readers sentimental spectacle.

According to William Holtz, "Caricature is not typical of *Tristram Shandy*, but the comic is its essence." Holtz minimizes the significance of caricature largely because he draws on "Hogarth's distinction between caricature and the comic,"[20] which I discussed in the previous chapter. However, my contention here is that caricature is "more and less" typical of *Tristram Shandy*. When Tristram introduces the caricature of

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[18] For more on the literary pictorialism tradition and *Tristram Shandy*, see William Holtz, *Image and Immortality: A Study of* Tristram Shandy *(*Providence: Brown University Press, 1970).

[19] W.B. Gerard, *Laurence Sterne and the Visual Imagination* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 30.

[20] Holtz, 29.

Dr. Slop, he presents his description as a dialogue (though he dominates the conversation), as a kind of imaginative exchange between himself and the reader:

> Imagine yourself a little, squat, uncourtly figure of Doctor *Slop*, of about four feet and half perpendicular height, with a breadth of back, and a sesquipedality of belly, which might have done honour to a Serjeant in the Horse-Guards.
>
> Such were the out-lines of Dr. *Slop*'s figure, which,—if you have read *Hogarth*'s analysis of beauty, and if you have not, I wish you would; you must know, may as certainly be caractur'd, and convey'd to the mind by three strokes as three hundred.
>
> Imagine such a one, for such, I say, were the out-lines of Dr. *Slop*'s figure…(*TS* 2.9.84)

Tristram has described "less," so his reader can imagine "more," the "slight touches" and "small particles." The formal features of caricature, which allow an artist to impress an image upon the mind "by three strokes as by three hundred," appeal to Tristram's—as well as Sterne's—aesthetic sensibility.

M.C. Newbould views caricature as integral to *Tristram Shandy*: the novel "incorporates alternative ways of 'drawing' its characters across its nine volumes that move away from the ridiculing satire figured in Slop-as-caricature, but which nonetheless draw on the vocabulary belonging to this visual-verbal art-form."[21] She sees, for example, Sterne applying the "three strokes technique" to Tristram's description of Uncle

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[21] M.C. Newbould, "A 'New Order of Beings and Things': Caricature in Sterne's Fictional Worlds," in *Hilarion's Asse: Laurence Sterne and Humour*, ed. Anne Bandy-Scubbi and Peter de Voogd (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 42.

Toby. While “Tristram’s sketch of Slop verges on the grotesque to create a caricature who invites the contemptuous laughter of cruel ridicule,” Toby is “one of the narrative’s strongest candidates for an alternative kind of caricature that, unlike the type that invites biting ridicule by exaggerating ugliness, enjoys eccentricity so as to celebrate what [Stuart] Tave describes as…“amiable humor.”[22] Newbould gestures towards a correspondence between sentimental laughter and caricature, acknowledging Gerard’s observations about Sterne’s “image-making,” but, ultimately, she maintains a division between the “visceral physicality embodied in some of the caricatures pictures” of *Tristram Shandy* and the sentimental spectacles of Yorick’s *Sentimental Journey*.[23] According to Newbould, Yorick alternates between perceiving the humorous in his adventures, seeing with a “caricaturist’s eye,” and perceiving through the lens of the sympathetic imagination. In her eyes, the caricatural spectacle is distinct from sentimental spectacle.[24]

Contrary to Newbould, I will argue that Sterne views the “caricaturist’s eye” as receptive to sentimental insight. To support my argument, I will focus on Alexander Bicknell’s *Painting Personified or, the Caricature and Sentimental Pictures, of the Principal Artists of the Present Times, Fancifully Explained* (1790). Bicknell, like *The Westminster Magazine* columnist John Hope, responded to Sterne’s appeal to “Imagine to yourself.” Bicknell’s imaginings include allusions to Sterne’s fiction in response to the

[22] M.C Newbould, “Caricature in Sterne’s Fictional Worlds,” 41, 43. See the introduction for an overview of Stuart Tave’s *The Amiable Humorist: A Study in the Comic Theory and Criticism of the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries.*

[23] Ibid., 51.

[24] M.C. Newbould, “Character or Caricature? Depicting Sentimentalism and Richard Newton’s Illustrations of Laurence Sterne’s *A Sentimental Journey,*” *Word & Image*, 25.2 (2009): 122.

"Principal Artists of the Present Times," like the caricaturist Henry William Bunbury,[25] but Bicknell's musings extend beyond Sterne's novels. In *Painting Personified*, which is mostly composed of vignettes, verbally recreates the characters, events, and "minutiae" he sees *and* hears in pictures. The sensibility that Bicknell seeks to cultivate in his own readers equally privileges laughter and tears, caricature and the sentimental, the visual and the verbal. He encourages the "common observer" to follow his example, to give "Fancy the Reins" and to acquire fellow-feeling for pictures in the way that one might have a sentimental response to another human being.[26]

In the first part of this chapter I explore how Bicknell incorporates Sterne's call for the reader "to imagine to yourself" into his own writings. Bicknell's elaborate readings of images by Henry William Bunbury, Thomas Rowlandson, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and others, are "Flights of Fancy" that venture far from their visual origins, though Bicknell emphasizes in his introduction that he is simply putting into words what the original artists intended. He categorizes himself as an uncommon individual through his ability to imagine the interiority of images—what the caricatures and sentimental pictures "*seem to say*." Furthermore, Bicknell portrays himself (in the third person) as a connoisseur of good taste and an author of serious moral instruction: "While he indulges his *Flights of Fancy*, he would wish to mingle *Instruction* with *Amusement*" (*PP* 1.184). In the second section, I focus on Bicknell's verbal adaptation of a sentimental image by Bunbury: the 1788 print *Misery*. Bicknell's account of the engraving alludes to Sterne's

[25] Timothy Clayton notes that Bunbury's contemporaries "recognized his comic talent, his informed enthusiasm for literature, and his ability to draw a momentary pang with something of the sensitivity with which Sterne could write it." See Timothy Clayton, *The English Print, 1688-1802* (New Haven: Published for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art by Yale University Press, 1997), 245.

[26] Alexander Bicknell, *Painting Personified; or, the Caricature and Sentimental Pictures of the Principal Artists of the Present Times, Fancifully Explained* (London, 1790), 1.8. Hereafter cited as *PP*.

fictional Maria. Bicknell's allusion to Maria highlights her cultural significance. As Gerard notes, Maria "became a popular phenomenon in late-eighteenth-century England (and, to a certain extent, Europe), the product of a thriving interest in sentimental stories."[27] Through his allusion to Sterne's Maria, Bicknell reimagines Bunbury's design as an image that speaks to the "heart of sensibility." However, by bridging the visual and the verbal through his "Flights of Fancy," Bicknell also demonstrates the problematic aestheticization of sentimental spectacle.

I. "Flights of Fancy"

In the years following Sterne's death from consumption in March 1768, a number of tributes, comical and serious, appeared affirming the novelist's "great natural genius" and "most exquisite sensibility."[28] Even Sterne's critics, like Vicesimus Knox, attested to his genius: "That Sterne possessed a fine particle of real genius, if our reason disposed to deny it, our sensations on perusing him will fully evince."[29] Although Knox praises "the pathetic [stories] interspersed throughout all [Sterne's] works," particularly those stories found in *A Sentimental Journey*, his appreciation for Sterne's writings does not extend to the comedy or "chaotic confusion" of *Tristram Shandy*. Like John Hope's displeased friend who calls Hope and his like-minded companion a "couple of idiots for being

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[27] Gerard, 139. One contemporary commentator remarked in an Edinburgh periodical: "Every one must have observed the utility of proper selection of names to a play or a novel…*Maria* contains a sentiment in the very title." See [Henry Mackenzie], *The Mirror. A Periodical Paper, Published at Edinburgh in the Years 1779 and 1780*. 3 vols. 10th ed. (London, 1794), 1.41.

[28] *Yorick's Skull; or, College Oscitations. With Some Remarks on the Writings of Sterne, and a Specimen of the Shandean Stile* (London, 1777), 34

[29] Vicesimus Knox, qtd. in *Sterne, The Critical Heritage*, 252.

diverted with such silly conceits," Knox is unamused by Sterne's attempts at humor.[30] Even though many may "admire Uncle Toby, Doctor Slop, and Corporal Trim, as natural characters, or as exhibiting true humour in their manners and conversations," Knox remarks that such readers "have no just taste for genuine humour."[31] As the preface to the tenth edition of the *Beauties of Sterne* shows, many of Sterne's readers did not agree with Knox's assessment. Yet, one can discern a desire in the editor's comments to interpret what Knox perceived as unnatural humor as natural, sprightly humor through the language of "true feeling." The readers of the *Beauties of Sterne* seek affirmation of their good taste through tears and laughter. They also yearn for recognition of the genius of their imagination. As one of many imitators of the "great Original" Sterne, Bicknell also attempts to distinguish himself as an imaginative genius in *Painting Personified*.

In Charles Jenner's 1770 sentimental novel *The Placid Man*, the narrator dismisses the notion that one should aspire to be an imitator of Sterne. The narrator considers himself an "imitator of Fielding" who follows Fielding's "steps through the most difficult part of his method"—which are, according to Jenner's narrator, introductory chapters full of observation and reflection.[32] About halfway through book

[30] John Hope, qtd. in *Sterne, The Critical Heritage*, 242.

[31] Vicesimus Knox, qtd. in *Sterne, The Critical Heritage*, 252.

[32] Charles Jenner, *The Placid Man, or the Memoirs of Sir Charles Belville*, (London, 1773), 1.73. Hereafter cited as *PM*. The chapter is appropriately titled: "A Word in favour of introductory Chapters. Some Thoughts on Imitation and Imitators." The narrator insists that a "good imitation" by a "moderate genius" (presumably Charles Jenner refers to himself) is preferable to a bad original (*PM* 1.75) The narrator's insistence that he is a true follower of Fielding seems to stem in part from Jenner's own concern that his work will be dismissed as just another of many imitations of Fielding's "new species of writing." In order to differentiate himself from the "generality of modern novelists," he claims that writers who lack genius or "moderate genius" are "utterly incapable of reflection."

two's introductory chapter, the narrator acknowledges Sterne's genius, while also stressing how difficult it is to follow in Sterne's footsteps:

> [W]e find even men of genius stretching their imagination to the very verge of folly, for something new and uncommon. Where a writer happens to have a natural and inexhaustible fund of humour, he may very often succeed in his design of making his readers laugh, by some trick or others, which, in another man, would have been insupportable: a black page, a white page, or a marble page, has done it. But this is a talent which seldom to be met with; and is perhaps the only one which is, strictly speaking, inimitable; such eccentric geniuses move in an orbit of their own, for others to gaze at. (*PM* 1.75)

The narrator suggests that there are boundaries to the imagination that some creative minds attempt to overstep at their own peril. To some extent, this perspective echoes the remarks of Sterne's own narrator Tristram Shandy who asserts in volume two of the novel that good writers are subject to "just boundaries of decorum and good breeding." As we have seen, Tristram describes writing as a form of conversation, implying a correspondence in status between interlocutors. But this conceit is rather faulty, as the narrator of *The Placid Man* observes because Sterne "move[s] in an orbit of [his] own." Furthermore, there is a dismissive tone surfacing in the seeming praise of Sterne. His genius may be "inimitable," but it is a genius that draws the attention of gawking admirers who delight in "some trick or others."[33] This characterization of Sterne's would-

[33] Jenner's narrator does not consider how Sterne's so-called tricks are a kind of imitation of Fielding's fiction. For more on the similarities between Fielding's and Sterne's novelistic methods, see Thomas Keymer's *Sterne, the Moderns, and the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), in which he observes, "Much of *Tristram Shandy* can be explained as a creative exaggeration of jokes already inherent

be imitators as passive gazers offers a sharp contrast to the imaginatively productive creations of readers like John Hope and Alexander Bicknell.

In *Painting Personified*, Bicknell presents himself as a literary model for his own readers to imitate. In Bicknell's account, the rather common late eighteenth-century experience of looking at prints in a shop window transforms into an uncommon one through visual-verbal sensibility:

> "Can one in a thousand," thought I, of those who view the sentimental Prints before me, tell what the Figures *seem to say?*—Do they comprehend *the whole* of their *Meaning?*—Do not the much greater Part of the interesting Minutiae, meant to be expressed by the Artist, or which the Imagination may fashion, pass unobserved?—And are not the Documents to be drawn from them as unintelligible to most of the Observers, as Hieroglyphicks? (*PP* 1.5)

Bicknell identifies the experience of seeing images without hearing them as a nearly universal phenomenon. Unlike the rest of the insensible gazers, he has full access to the sentiment in these images, and understands that the pictures before him are not merely silent objects. Bicknell portrays his own viewing of sentimental prints, including caricatures like Bunbury's *A Family Piece*,[34] as an imaginative encounter, rather than as absentminded spectatorship.

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in Fielding...The difference is that, whereas Fielding repeatedly offers his reader's imagination a generous but circumscribed field over which to roam, Tristram oscillates wildly between garrulous domination of his with the reader and baffling intractable silence" (47-48).

[34] See the introductory chapter for my analysis of Bicknell's account of *A Family Piece*.

Like the later editions of the *Beauties of Sterne*, *Painting Personified* is an anthology that endorses the mixing of the serious and the comical. As such, these anthologies educate readers while validating their imaginative capacity and their sensibility.[35] The sentimental educations such texts provide, though, adhere to certain imaginative boundaries. For example, the tenth edition of the *Beauties of Sterne* is advertised as a faithful copy of the Sterne's "Original," while discreetly omitting "a black page, a white page, or a marble page" from its own pages; similarly, Bicknell's text draws the readers' attention to prints and paintings filled with "Minutiae" in place of the abstract spaces of black, white, and marbled pages. The "inimitable" elements of Sterne's genius have been eliminated or disregarded. Although these limitations to "imaginative expansion" are not addressed in *Painting Personified* or in the *Beauties of Sterne*, they provide an alternate assessment of Sterne's genius. These texts contradict the proposition advanced in *The Placid Man* that fascination for Sterne's fiction primarily stems from his "eccentric" experimentation. Instead, they show that the spectacle of Sterne's literary powers is more substantial than "some trick or others." By focusing on the spectacle of white, black, and marbled pages, Jenner's narrator may have obscured the ways in which *The Placid Man* is actually imitative of Sterne's own attempts to enhance the sentimental experience through tears *and* laughter. As I discussed in the introduction to the dissertation, *The Placid Man*'s Charles Beville is a "man of feeling" and an amateur caricaturist. The sentimental laughter of the young, handsome, imaginative hero surely would have resonated with many readers of *Painting Personified* and the later editions of

[35] For more on eighteenth-century readers of anthologies, see Barbara M. Benedict, "Choice Reading: Anthologies, Reading Practices and the Canon, 1680–1800," *The Yearbook of English Studies* 45 (2015): 35-55, as well as her monograph *Making the Modern Reader: Cultural Mediation in Early Modern Literary Anthologies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) Also, see Leah Price, *Anthology and the Rise of the Novel: From Richardson to George Eliot* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

the *Beauties of Sterne*. Furthermore, Belville exhibits an Addisonian delight in the "pleasures of the imagination" that followers of Sterne, like Bicknell, aspire to.

Given the cultural significance of *The Spectator* (1711-1712, 1714)—multiple editions of Richard Steele and Joseph Addison's periodical appeared throughout the eighteenth century—it is not difficult to imagine Bicknell drawing from Addison's first essay on the "pleasures of the imagination" (No. 411, June 21, 1712). In the essay, Addison argues for the primacy of visual experience. "Our sight," he declares, "is the most perfect and most delightful of all our senses."[36] According to Addison, vision expands an individual's connection to the world: "it brings into our reach some of the most remote parts of the universe." In a later essay (No. 416, June 27, 1712), he explores the "secondary pleasures of the imagination" which arise in the mind's eye in response to visual stimuli. Statues, paintings, and natural landscapes arouse the imagination, but in Addison's opinion language can evoke the "power of the imagination" to an even greater degree: "Words, when well chosen, have so great a force in them, that a description often gives us more lively ideas than the sight of things themselves. The reader finds a scene drawn in stronger colours, and painted more to the life in his imagination, by the help of words, than by the actual survey of the scene which they describe."[37] In *Painting Personified*, Bicknell characterizes himself as a man with "Traits of…Genius" who attempts, through his own words, to bring paintings and prints to life (*PP* 1.iii). His claims about his exceptional ability to comprehend the "*whole… Meaning*" of an image reaffirms Addison's own stance: "A man of polite imagination is let into a great many

[36] [Joseph Addison and Richard Steele], *The Spectator*, vol. 6 (London, 1765), 62.

[37] [Joseph Addison and Richard Steele], *The Spectator*, 83.

pleasures, that the vulgar are not capable of receiving."[38] Furthermore, Bicknell's ear for what "Figures *seem to say*" echoes Addison's own assertion that a "man of polite imagination" can "converse with a picture, and find an agreeable companion in a statue…he looks upon the world, as it were in another light, and discovers in it a multitude of charms, that conceal themselves from the generality of mankind."

Although Addison does not mention the words "caricature" or "caricatura"[39] in his essays, he does employ other terms—the "new or uncommon"—that resonate with Bicknell's own aesthetic ideas. "Every thing that is *new* or *uncommon*," Addison observes, "raises a pleasure in the imagination, because it fills the soul with an agreeable surprise, gratifies its curiosity, and gives it an idea which it was not before possest [sic]."[40] After looking at prints in a shop window, Bicknell is inspired to "try [his] Abilities in a Line so *nouvelle*; and to attempt, not only to describe the Circumstances as they appear to the Conception of a common Observer, but giving Fancy the Reins, likewise *to imagine* those *Minutiae*, the Artist may be supposed to have intended to represent" (*PP* 1.viii; emphasis in original). Throughout *Painting Personified*, Bicknell aims to delight and instruct his readers through the "nouvelle" and uncommon qualities of his "Indulgence of Fancy" (*PP* 1.x). One contemporary reviewer, though, expressed concern about such imaginative license: "We have no objection to this *fanciful* and

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[38] Ibid., 64. For further discussion of Addison's "polite man of imagination," see John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 83-94.

[39] The word "caricatura" had only recently appeared in English usage at the time, but Addison must have been familiar with the term. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word "caricatura" first appears in an English-language publication in Sir Thomas Browne's *Certain Miscellany Tracts* (1683). Interestingly, the OED notes that term also appears in *Spectator* No. 537 by John Hughes: "Those burlesque Pictures, which the Italians call *Caracatura's*; where the Art consists in preserving, amidst distorted Proportions and aggravated Features, some distinguishing Likeness of the Person."

[40] Ibid.,66.

arbitrary mode of interpreting or accommodating our best paintings than the sanction it may afford to licentious comment, violent construction, or impertinent and invidious application" (emphasis in original).[41] In this anonymous reviewer's assessment, we see a familiar fear surfacing—too much may be left to the imagination.

Bicknell insists his "Flights of Fancy" will carry his readers on a sentimental journey that is both morally and aesthetically edifying. "It would be rendering no very inessential Service to the Public," he pronounces, "to put into Language what is meant to be said by the *Personae* of the principal Productions of the most celebrated Artists of the present Times; as thereby they may become more instructive, and their Utility be increased" (*PP* 1.10). Bicknell's attempt to present the print shop window as a polite space for moral reflection speaks to some of the concerns Vicesimus Knox voices in "On the Effect of the Caricaturas Exhibited at the Windows of Printsellers" (1790). In his essay, Knox warns that "the lower classes in London" who "loiter at a window, with a burden on their backs, and gape" may be morally poisoned by the "ungenerous" satire of caricatures found in print shop windows.[42] "Every benevolent man," he implores, "must wish, that whatever representations have a tendency to corrupt and mislead them, might be kept out of sight; and only such exhibited in the window, as may divert them innocently, or convey some useful instruction."[43]

Later in the essay, Knox rails against contemporary caricaturists whose work steers away from Hogarth's model of moral correction, appealing to men and women's

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[41] Review of *Painting Personified* by Alexander Bicknell. *The English Review or, an Abstract of English and Foreign Literature, For the Year MDCCXC* (London, 1790), 68.

[42] Vicesimus Knox, *Winter Evenings: or, Lucubrations on Life and Letters*, vol. 1 (London, 1790), 220.

[43] Vicesimus Knox, *Winter Evenings*, 221.

baser instincts: "Hogarth finely moralized with his pencil. His imitators have not reached his excellence in art, they have scarcely aimed at his morality, but they have abused their petty talents in lowering every thing great and venerable."[44] Published the same year as Knox's essay, Bicknell's *Painting Personified*, however, finds moralization and inspiration in imitators of Hogarth, like Bunbury and Rowlandson. For example, while reflecting on Rowlandson's *A Kick-Up At a Hazard Table!* (1790) (fig. 10), Bicknell extols the virtues of the caricaturist ("What Praises are not due to the Artist who has thus endeavoured to lash the VICE OF THE AGE!" *PP* 1.183). He determines that Rowlandson's caricature "is of too serious a Nature to be treated with Levity…it calls for the most corrective Strokes both of the Pencil and the Pen"(*PP* 1.184-185). The author conveniently overlooks the comedic chaos Rowlandson intended, and instead focuses on the lack of "happiness" represented in the image in order to underscore the moral "hazard" found in a "Mixture of Characters" at a "Public Gaming Table" (*PP* 1.180,185): "[T]he varied Distortions of the different Gamesters;—speak, and speak most forcibly, the perturbed State of their Minds.—Inexorable Rage, hoodwinked Fury, insatiate Revenge, and every diabolical Passion…appear to agitate some of the Groupe [sic]; while the rest, overwhelmed with Terror and Dismay, show by the apprehensive Convulsions, the utmost Anxiety to avoid the Direful Effects" (*PP* 1.181-182). Throughout his account of Rowlandson's image, Bicknell exhibits a preoccupation with feeling—his awareness of how the figures feel—in response to what the figures "speak most forcibly." This

[44] Ibid., 226. Texts from the mid- and late-Georgian era (as well as later in the Victorian period) often assert the moral superiority of Hogarth's designs in comparison with the work of other eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century caricaturists. For example: "Hogarth was the man destined by the favour of Heaven to convert the powers of the pencil and graver into rods of correction for vice…The success which attended Hogarth's labours as a moral Caricaturist, both in his native country and in every part of Europe, might serve as a useful lesson to future artists, and induce them to select their subjects from the fruitful sources of folly and misconduct." James Peller Malcolm, *An Historical Sketch of the Art of Caricaturing* (London, 1813), 55.

imaginative process, in which Bicknell's attunement to "*Expression of Sentiment*" (*PP* 1.x), guides his literary adaptations. For Bicknell, the spectacle of caricature becomes sentimental spectacle.

Figure 10: Thomas Rowlandson, *A Kick-Up At a Hazard Table!* (1790)

Painting Personified is fittingly dedicated to Henry William Bunbury ("the Inspirer of the following Flights of Fancy," *PP* 1.ix), an amateur artist who produced caricatures and sentimental images. As a young man in the late 1760s, Bunbury made the Grand Tour, acquiring his knowledge of drawing caricatures in Italy.[45] The son of a baronet, Bunbury moved in upper class circles; his gentleman status appears to have

[45] For a biography of Bunbury, see John C. Riely, "Horace Walpole and 'The Second Hogarth,' *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 9.1 (1975): 28-44 and Karen Marie Roche, "Picturing an Englishman: The Art of Sir Henry William Bunbury, 1770-1787" (PhD diss., University of Exeter, 2008).

increased his appeal to elite collectors, like Horace Walpole and Joseph Gulston, as well as to middle-class consumers.[46] Contemporaries emphasized the genteel qualities of his designs. In *An Historical Sketch of the Art of Caricaturing* (1813), James Peller Malcolm describes Bunbury as "one of the few caricaturists who might look over a collection of his productions without experiencing a sensation of remorse."[47] Nearly two decades after Bunbury's death in 1811, the memoirist Henry Angelo recollects that the artist "never used his pencil at the expense of personal feeling."[48] In popular comic works, like *A Family Piece* (see fig. 4), *The Propagation of a Lie* (first published in 1787) (figs. 11 and 12) and *Evening, or, The Man of Feeling* (first published in 1781) (fig. 13), Bunbury drolly mocks individual quirks and social foibles. In *Painting Personified*, Bicknell creates "Personae" and elaborate storylines for these comic prints that are just as detailed as his descriptions for serious images, like Sir Joshua Reynolds's *The Infant Samuel* (1776).[49]

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[46] Over the course of the 1770s, Joseph Gulston, the husband of the amateur artist Elizabeth Bridgetta Gulston (see fig. 6), acquired one of the largest print collections in England. In 1786, as a result of extensive debts, he sold off his prints, which included "Two volumes of the entire Works of Mr. Bunbury, with all the proofs and variations." See John Nichols, *Illustrations of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1828), 31.

[47] Malcolm, 89.

[48] Henry Angelo, *Reminiscences of Henry Angelo With Memoirs of His Late Father and Friends* (London, 1828), 412. David Alexander notes: "On account of the raffish association of satirical prints, exceptional efforts were made to present Bunbury's prints as not only genteel but also moral." *Richard Newton and English Caricature in the 1790s* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 11.

[49] Interestingly, the poet William Cowper anticipated the appeal of Bicknell's *Painting Personified*. In a January 19, 1788 letter, Cowper writes: "The day before yesterday I saw for the first time Bunbury's new print, The Propagation of a Lie." He concludes the letter: "The original thought is good, and the exemplification of it, in those very expressive figures, admirable. A poem on the same subject displaying all that is displayed in those attitudes and in those features…would be most excellent. The affinity of the two arts, viz. verse and painting have been observed; possibly the happiest illustration of it would be found, if some poet would ally himself to some draftsman, as Bunbury, and undertake to write everything he would draw…so should the sisters arts be proved to be indeed sisters, and the world die of laughing" (422-423). William Cowper, *The Works of William Cowper Comprising His Poems, Correspondence, and Translations.* vol. 3. London: H.G. Bohn, 1854.

Figure 11: After Henry William Bunbury,
The Propagation of a Lie, Plates 1 and 2 (ca. 1815)

Figure 12: After Henry William Bunbury,
The Propagation of a Lie, Plates 3 and 4 (ca. 1815)

Figure 13: After Henry William Bunbury, *Evening, or, The Man of Feeling* (1802)

Bicknell's account of Reynolds's *The Infant Samuel* (fig. 14) includes a depiction of Samuel's mother—"afflicted *Hannah* prostrate at the Portal of the Temple" (*PP* 1.173); his description extends beyond the actual image of a curly-haired young boy on his knees looking upwards in prayer. "So animated were [Hannah's] ejaculations; with such Energy and Warmth did they flow from her Soul," Bicknell relates, "that although her Lips only moved, and her Words are not heard, they attract the Notice of *Eli* the High Priest, who happened to sit near" (*PP* 1.174-175). For Bicknell, the elaborate, non-ekphrastic storyline is not a flaw. The verbal excessiveness in his recreation of a visual object is instead a "Trai[t] of…Genius," a natural reaction for the man of sensibility (*PP* 1.3). He sees and hears the deeper sentiment in the painting and that is what he chooses to portray.

In the Biblical narrative, Hannah is a sentimental figure that the prophet Eli recognizes as sentimental only after she tells her story. It is a paradigmatic sentimental epiphany: the object is seen, but the whole meaning is not understood until the story of the object is communicated. Thus, it becomes clear why Bicknell's ekphrasis is a hyper or extra-visual one. The image in Reynolds' painting is full of sentiment, but even more so because of the unspoken story it contains:

> I have selected [Reynolds's] Portrait of the Prophet SAMUEL, in his infant State, as it appears to my (perhaps *enthusiastic*) Imagination, to abound with Sentiment…
>
> If ever Character deserved peculiar Attention from the Artist, it is this SAMUEL. To represent it in a proper Stile;—to pourtray [sic] the MIND as well the Form;—to depicture the divine Emanation beaming from

his Eye…requires the most luxuriant Imagination, joined with the truest Taste, and soundest Judgment. It was a subject worthy of the Pencil of *Guido*.—And Sir Joshua has shewn his Taste and Judgment, as well in the Choice, as in the Execution of it. Displaying a grand Scope for Sensibility, we will suppose that it naturally obtruded itself upon an enlarged and susceptible Mind. (*PP* 1.169-171)

Figure 14: Sir Joshua Reynolds, *The Infant Samuel* (c. 1776)

Sterne's Yorick, like Bicknell, alludes to the Baroque painter Guido Reni when describing his own sentimental epiphany. At the beginning of *A Sentimental Journey*,

Yorick disapproves of the begging monk he passes by because he dislikes his face: "The moment I cast my eyes upon him, I was predetermined not to give him a single sous; and accordingly I put my purse into my pocket—button'd it up—set myself a little more upon my centre, and advanced up gravely to him; there was something, I fear, forbidding in my look… (*ASJ* 5)" The real life spectacle of the monk does not move him. It is only through interiority, in re-imagining that moment—the image of the face mediated through memory and narration—that Yorick can fully appreciate the full sentimental value of that encounter: "It was one of those heads, which Guido has often painted—mild, pale—penetrating, free from all common-place ideas of fat contented ignorance looking downwards upon the earth—it look'd forwards; but look'd, as if it look'd at something beyond this world." The reader of *A Sentimental Journey*, like the novel's protagonist, cannot discern the sentimental poignancy of Yorick's monk without the ekphrastic turn—the visual image translated into verbal details. After describing the monk's "white hairs upon his temples" and the wrinkles in his face, Yorick proceeds to fill in his portrait of him:

> The rest of his outline may be given in a few strokes; one might put it into the hands of any one to design, for 'twas neither elegant or otherwise, but as character and expression made it so; it was a thin, spare form, something above the common size, if it lost not the distinction by a bend forwards in the figure—but it was the attitude of Intreaty; and as it now stands presented to my imagination, it gain'd more than it lost by it.
>
> …when I had got close up to him, he introduced himself with the little story of the wants of his convent, and the poverty of his order—and

> did it with so simple a grace—and such an air of deprecation was there in the whole cast of his look and figure—I was bewitch'd not to have been struck with it— (*ASJ* 5-6)

Here we are given a representation of a visual-verbal sketch of the monk, the "outline" and "few strokes," and the "little story" the monk recount recounts. The visual-verbal combination is Yorick's (and Sterne's) attempt to bridge the gap of communication. *A Sentimental Journey* is an exploration of gaps—the hidden, fragmentary, elusive (and allusive) meaning and sensation. John Mullan observes:

> Many of the fragments or episodes that constitute [Sterne's sentimental traveler's] story ("chapters" seems precisely the wrong word) leave us, like the book's end, in midair; the text is full of significant silences…
>
> Sentiment lives at the edges of speech; it is felt most when words stop.[50]

Bicknell's *Painting Personified*, however, offers an alternative perspective: sentiment lives at the edges of the visual outline; it is felt most when the viewer verbally fills in the picture with the narrative of the visual object.

Near the beginning of *A Sentimental Journey*, Yorick relates, "we lie under so many impediments in communicating our sensations out of our own sphere, as often amount to a total impossibility" (*ASJ* 8). Our inability to see and hear sentimentally is one

[50] John Mullan, "Sentimental novels" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Eighteenth Century Novel* ed. John Richetti (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 241. In *Eighteenth-Century Sensibility and the Novel: The Senses in Social Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), Ann Jessie Van Sant also discusses the verbal voids of the sentimental experience: "The body appears to be the only genuine and unmediated source for understanding psychological processes. The body itself speaks—and language is inadequate. The inarticulateness frequently discussed as one of the features of sensibility narratives can be partly attributed to the significance attached to the bodily level of experience" (116).

of those impediments. The aesthetic experience, either as visual (a painting by Guido) or verbal allusion, is a means to bypass such impediments to feeling. Once, the man or woman of sensibility fully sees and hears the sentimental spectacle he or she has experienced the round trip sensation of a sentimental journey. A "whole…Meaning" is ascertained when a verbal portrait is created by the subject in response to the visual encounter of the object. One must capture what a sentimental picture "said or seem'd to say" to fully sympathize—a relationship pithily illustrated by the last line of Pope's "Eloisa to Abelard": "He best can paint'em who shall feel 'em most" (line 365).[51]

II. "*It said, or seemed to say*"

> To an Accidental Circumstance do the Following Flights of Fancy, or descriptive Rhapsodies, owe their Origin.—As I stood, one Day, to take a View of the Prints exhibited in the Windows of an eminent Printseller; by one of those mental Effusions which are not to be accounted for, the Words, "*It said, or seemed to say,*" part of a Line in *Pope's* beautiful Epistle from *Eloisa* to *Abelard*, suddenly occurred to my Mind. (*PP* 1.5)

A line from Alexander Pope's epistolary poem "Eloisa to Abelard"(1717) is the trigger that sets off a range of sentimental and satirical readings that Bicknell observes in the pictures displayed in a shop window. Furthermore, he correlates his work to Pope's poem by including the line "it said, or seem'd to say" as the epigraph to *Painting Personified.* It is striking that Pope's poem is the inspiration for Bicknell's own display

[51] Alexander Pope, *Eloisa to Abelard* (London, 1758).

of excessive interiority in *Painting Personified*, given that the extremism of the heroine's sentiments leads her to an untimely end. Excessive interiority does not liberate Eloisa, but instead traps her in a loop of past images and former declarations of love.[52] *Eloisa to Abelard* is sentimental in that it evokes a strong emotional reaction, one of pity, for the fictionalized and long-suffering Eloisa; it is also a poem about the unfortunate consequences of excessive feelings. As Pope states in the introductory "Argument," "Abelard and Eloisa…were two of the most distinguished persons of their age in learning and beauty, but for nothing more famous than for their unfortunate passion."[53]

In the poem, Eloisa is sympathetically obsessed with emotional spectacle, both hers and Abelard's. She attempts to create a picture of her suffering and sorrowful existence in the mind of her lover. She is the sentimental object, both physically and as mediated through her epistle, seeking a sentimental reader. Her letter is a record of her melancholic feelings and her desire for a sentimental exchange. She pleads with Abelard to write back, to speak to her in the language of suffering and sentiment. Eloisa desires a visual-verbal response from Abelard: "Come! with thy looks, thy words, relieve my woe;/Those still at least are left thee to bestow" (119-120). Her pleas become more frantic and sepulchral as the poem progresses: "See in her cell sad Eloisa spread/ Propt on

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[52] Susan Manning comments, "Part of the excessiveness of Eloisa's voice comes from the absence of the tempering measure from another perspective. The melancholy of the poem refuses those orders, structures, and constraints on the self which have been imposed from without, and turns inward to seek a freedom of expression uncompromised by acquiescence." See Susan Manning, "Eloisa's Abandonment," *The Cambridge Quarterly* 22.3 (1993): 234.

[53]Pope, *Eloisa to Abelard*, 3. David B. Morris characterizes Pope as a proponent of a conservative sentimentalism: "[T]he redeeming power which [Pope] attributes to sympathetic insight and to emotional generosity should raise at least the possibility that his attitude toward Eloisa, like his idea of criticism, is based ultimately in a deep commitment to the saving value of human affection." He further notes, "Unlike some of the later sentimentalists, neither Pope nor Fielding believed that emotional outbursts were necessarily good, but they also rejected the duty of invariable restraint" (262). See David B. Morris, "'The Visionary Maid': Tragic Passion and Redemptive Sympathy in Pope's 'Eloisa to Abelard,'" *Modern Language Quarterly* 34 (1973): 248, 262.

some tomb, a neighbour of the dead" (302-303). Recognizing her emotionally tortured (and sexually frustrated)[54] existence, female spirits from the other world call her to join them:

> Here as I watch'd the dying lamps around,
>
> From yonder shrine I heard a hollow sound.
>
> "Come, sister, come! (it said, or seem'd to say)
>
> Thy place is here, sad sister, come away!
>
> One like thyself, I trembled, wept, and pray'd,
>
> Love's victim then tho now a sainted maid." (308-311)

Eloisa's desire for Abelard and the sentimental spectacle culminates in the privileging of her as a newly virginal corpse—a sentimentalism fixated on the erotics of suffering. In Pope's version of the legendary medieval romance, Eloisa, separated from her lover, Abelard, becomes a proto-Maria figure.

In *A Sentimental Journey*, Yorick seeks out Maria, the sad, beautiful young woman Tristram first comes across in the last volume of *Tristram Shandy*, who, despite being abandoned by her lover (and her goat), remains a sentimental spectacle of female virtue: "Maria, tho' not tall, was nevertheless of the first order of fine forms—affliction had touch'd her looks with something that was scarce earthly—still she was feminine—and so much was there about her of all that the heart wishes, or the eye looks for in woman" (*ASJ* 97). Here, we see Sterne equating the sentimental with feminine affliction,

[54] See Anne Elizabeth Carson's " 'Exquisite Torture': The Autoeroticism of Pope's Eloisa," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 40.4 (2007), where Carson notes that Eloisa's "overpowering desire prompts an onanistic subtext that subversively reacts to the eighteenth century's increasingly medicalized and restrictive view of human sexuality" (616).

a trope of sensibility that only grew through the many representations of Maria (or Maria figures), as ideal feminine object in paintings, prints, and decorative items in the period.[55]

Bunbury's sentimental print *Misery* (fig. 15) is representative of Sterne's sentimentalism, and more specifically the sentimentalism embodied by the figure of Maria, who is described in *Tristram Shandy* as the "venerable presence of Misery" (*TS* 9.24.523). Bicknell begins his description of *Misery* with an appeal to the genius of Sterne:

> To represent in kindred Language the Variety of Woe expressed in the Piece before us, would require the Pen of *Sterne*.—The same Muse, who inspired the glowing Emanations of Benevolence, so feelingly described by that pathetic Writer, as actuating the Heart of *Mr. Toby Shandy*, when called forth by the Illness and Death of *Le Fevre*;—the same Muse, whose Illuminations enabled him so truly to depicture the soft Susceptibility excited in the Bosom of *Yorick* by the mental Wanderings, and sweet wild Notes, of the love-lorn *Maria*;—could alone do Justice to the Scene before us, or convey the full Conceptions of the ingenious Artist. (*PP* 189)

The print demonstrates a variety of printmaking techniques (stipple, aquatint, and etching); it is a highly polished depiction of a displeasing emotion—misery—intended to be a beautiful and aesthetically pleasing object, like the central figure herself. Here, we see Bicknell presenting three aspects of Sterne's sentimentalism: 1) the evocative and sentimental application of the fragment, 2) the prominence of the visual (real or

[55] See "Icon of the Heart: Maria as Sentimental Emblem, 1773-1888" in W.B. Gerard's *Laurence Sterne and the Visual Imagination* (Hampshire, England: Ashgate, 2006).

imagined) in the sentimental experience (ways of seeing are connected to ways of feeling), and 3) the sentimental object as sexual object.

In *Misery*, a dejected young woman, idealized as beautiful through her classicized facial features, stands near the door of her home about to leave her impoverished family. An older man (presumably her father) sits off in a corner and looks away, while a second sad beautiful young woman pleads at his knee. Female virtue is at stake; the caption on the print reads: “To barter Virtue see the Parent led/And with a Child’s dishonor purchase Bread.” A young man, with a companion and hunting gear in tow, possessively points to the first young woman, who is at the same time both a sentimental and a sexual object her family, unwillingly, puts at his disposal. Bicknell creates the words that he imagines the kneeling female figure in Bunbury’s design speaks, but he presents those words as ones that can only be heard by the “heart of sensibility.”

Figure 15: After Henry William Bunbury, *Misery* (1788)

In Bicknell's narrative both young women are threatened; the father's perspective serves as the focal point for sentimental feeling. Bicknell's focus on fatherly feeling is similar to Yorick's response to the sentimental image of Maria: "Maria should lay in my bosom, and be unto me as a daughter" (*ASJ* 97). But unlike Sterne's Yorick, Bicknell's imaginary father no longer carries a "heart of sensibility." He may fear for his daughters: "What is to be done!—No Resource presents itself, but the proffered Purchase of his Daughters' Virtue" (*PP* 1.192). Misfortune has hardened him: "his Heart is no longer susceptible of the Incitements of Honour." In Bicknell's adaptation, the kneeling daughter, whose hands are crossed as if she is not only pleading but also praying, begs for her father's protection: "Oh my Father," she *seems to say*, "preserve my Honour;—that Honour you have, till now, taught me to value more than Life.—Gladly would I lay down that Life for your Relief,—but oh spare—" She can no more.—Her Agony breaks off the fervent Imploration. (*PP* 1.193) The young woman's speech ends with a fragment; she cannot complete her sentence, too overcome by emotion. For Bicknell, the young woman "seems to say" because she is a sentimental spectacle that speaks not through words as much as through visual evocation.

The threat to embodied virtue—"virtue in distress"— continues with works produced within Sterne's legacy of sentimentalism.[56] In the pseudonymous conduct guide *Useful Hints to Single Gentlemen, Respecting Marriage, Concubinage, and Adultery*

[56] For an overview of the literary phenomenon of "virtue in distress" in eighteenth-century literature, see R.F. Brissiden, *Virtue in Distress: Studies in the Novel of Sentiment From Richardson to Sade* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1974). In *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), G.J. Barker-Benfield comments: " 'Virtue in distress' was archetypically female. Appropriately, therefore, women's vulnerability to the predatory world was a sexual one, their worldview corresponding to the system of home and street spaces, now being civilized for women's apprehensive entry" (219). David Morse provides a helpful overview of the uses and abuses of the term "virtue" in *The Age of Virtue: British Culture from the Restoration to Romanticism* (New York: St. Marton's Press, 2000).

(1792), the image of Maria in misery is used to transform the hearts of young men in such a way that their behavior will be morally correct as opposed to libidinous. In one of the text's short essays entitled, "Maria; or, An Address To The Gay Lothario of The Present Day," the author Little Isaac remarks:

> The amiable Maria is formed to make the marriage state happy…And would you--*you*, who are scrupulously nice in the punctilios of honour,----would you pluck that fair blossom from it's [sic] virgin stem? Would you sully it's [sic] beauty by the dictates of lust? Would you deprive Maria of that jewel which is the ornament, the pride, the glory of her sex? Would you seduce her into guilt, and (the practice of every perjured debauchee) abandon her to disease and poverty? Would you bring the grey hairs of her parents with sorrow to the grave? Have either of *you* a wife, a mother, a daughter, or a sister?--Lay your hand on your heart, and answer this question.[57]

The author addresses the young bachelor encouraging him to imagine familial feeling, including the feelings of a father ("What affection is so delicately tender as that of a father to his daughter?" *UH* 21) Attempting to employ sentimentalism as a way of rehabilitating libertine lust into fellow feeling, the author instructs the young male reader to imagine "a picture of misery": "Were these creatures men; were they possessed of the common feelings of humanity, I would endeavor to melt them to compassion, by drawing a picture of the misery they occasion." The text itself is quickly carried away with the language of misery and the image of virtue in distress: "He could not refuse a tear to the

[57] Little Isaac [pseud.], *Useful hints to single gentlemen, respecting marriage, concubinage, and adultery. : In prose and verse. : With notes moral, critical, and explanatory* (London, 1792), 24. Hereafter cited as *UH*.

miseries which his own imagination had pourtrayed" (*UH* 29); "Such are not the *imaginary* but *real* miseries of prostitution; which a life of *virtue* only can prevent"; "think of the consequences of that ruin, misery, shame and sorrow" (*UH* 41). The young bachelor has imagined to himself the "misery" of a sexually vulnerable Maria figure that resonates with Bicknell's own description of Bunbury's *Misery.*

In Hannah More's novel *Coelebs in Search of a Wife* (1809), a character complains that "corrupt" Sterne was "the mischievous founder of the school of sentiment. A hundred writers communicated, a hundred thousand readers caught the infection." But now, "The reign of Sterne is past."[58] Contrary to the proclamations of *Coelebs in Search of a Wife*, Sterne's legacy did extend far into nineteenth century. For example, in the introduction to the 1832 Macmillan's Novelists' Library edition of *Tristram Shandy* and *A Sentimental Journey*, the editor views Sterne's fiction as useful for identifying readers of "taste and feeling" who will be able to discern the proper from the morally suspect:

> With the merits of the following work the world has long been acquainted; and it is a matter of farther satisfaction to us to know that its defects also are equally well ascertained. No reader of taste or feeling can fail of being delighted with the one, and no intelligent and reflecting mind can be deceived into an approbation of the other. *Tristram Shandy* is a standard book in English literature, and will, therefore, in some form or other, pass into most people's hands: but the improved taste of the age, the firmness which intelligence has given to the general mind, and the now commonly received truth, that genuine wit has no connexion

[58] Hannah More, *Coelebs in Search of a Wife: Comprehending Observations on Domestic Habits and Manners, Religion and Morals* ed. Patricia Demers (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2007), 237.

> whatever with coarseness, will place its defects in a far stronger light before the readers of this age, than they appeared in before those of the preceding century.[59]

Unwittingly voicing a kind of cultural amnesia, the editor asserts that early nineteenth-century readers, unlike late eighteenth century readers, are better equipped to judge the agreeable from the improper in Sterne's fiction. It is as if the editor has no awareness of the fraught response that existed at the time of Sterne's publications. One way to interpret the editor's comments is to view them as demonstrating how successful the project of sentimental laughter had been; now there is a divide between "the improved taste of the age" and Sterne's time. The "readers of this age" and the readers of the "preceding century" are different kinds of readers. There is no acknowledgement from the editor that this supposed difference was in many ways initiated by the readers of Sterne's era—readers who yearned to mix laughter and tears in their affective response to his texts, who yearned to overcharge their hearts with virtuous feelings.

[59] Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman. By the Rev. Laurence Sterne, M.A. To Which is Added The Sentimental Journey*. With Illustrations by George Cruikshank (London: J. Cochrane, 1832), ix.

Chapter 3

"Unbecoming Conjunctions":
The Comforts of Caricature in Jane Austen's *Persuasion*

At the beginning of chapter eight of Jane Austen's *Persuasion* (1818), Anne Elliot and Frederick Wentworth find themselves "repeatedly in the same circle," but their meetings lack the emotional intimacy they once shared: "Now they were as strangers."[1] Eight years earlier the two had been deeply in love: "there could have been no two hearts so open, no tastes so similar, no feelings so in unison, no countenances so beloved" (*PS* 46). But Anne's rejection of Frederick's marriage proposal—a rejection spurred by the counsel of Lady Russell—has embittered Frederick against Anne: "He had not forgiven [her]…She had given him up to oblige others. It had been the effect of over-persuasion" (*PS* 44-45). When the two former lovers meet at Uppercross, Frederick, once a young man without fortune, is now a wealthy captain seeking a bride. Although his heart may be closed to Anne's, his taste and feelings are still known to her. Even more, she can read, like no one else can, in his countenance—"a certain glance of his bright eye, and curl of his handsome mouth"—his thoughts (*PS* 49). About halfway through the chapter, Mrs. Musgrove begins exclaiming to Captain Wentworth how much she regrets that her son, Richard, ever left the captain's service. Anne quickly discerns that Frederick must catch himself from laughing: "instead of sharing in Mrs. Musgrove's kind wishes, as to her son, he had probably been at some pains to get rid of him; but it was too transient an indulgence of self-amusement to be detected by anyone who understood him less than herself."

[1] Jane Austen, *Persuasion* (New York: Norton, 2013), 45-46. Hereafter cited as *PS*.

What unites these former lovers, for at least a moment, is ridicule—or rather, the restraint of it. Frederick and Anne find themselves in the drawing-room at the Great House, intimate strangers, on the edge of laughter:

> They were actually on the same sofa, for Mrs. Musgrove had most readily made room for him;—they were divided only by Mrs. Musgrove. It was no insignificant barrier indeed. Mrs. Musgrove was of a comfortable substantial size, infinitely more fitted by nature to express good cheer and good humour, than tenderness and sentiment; and while the agitations of Anne's slender form, and pensive face, may be considered as very completely screened, Captain Wentworth should be allowed some credit with which he attended to her large fat sighings over the destiny of a son, whom alive nobody had cared for.
>
> Personal size and mental sorrow have certainly no necessary proportions. A large bulky figure has as good a right to be in deep affliction, as the most graceful set of limbs in the world. But, fair or not fair, there are unbecoming conjunctions, which reason will patronize in vain,—which taste cannot tolerate,—which ridicule will seize. (*PS* 49)

Frederick and Anne maintain their composure as they console the distraught Mrs. Musgrove. They are for now, at least, both of the same "taste," "feeling," and "countenance." The narrator, however, invites the reader's ridicule. Several pages earlier, the narrator has cruelly dismissed Mrs. Musgrove's deceased son: "'poor Richard,' [had] been nothing better than a thick-headed, unfeeling, unprofitable, Dick Musgrove, who had never done any thing to entitle himself to more than the abbreviation of his name,

living or dead" (*PS* 37). Now the narrator mocks Mrs. Musgrove as an "unbecoming conjunction": physical largeness transforms authentic sadness, "all that was real and unabsurd in the parent's feelings," into comical spectacle (*PS* 49).

Several critics have viewed the ridicule of Mrs. Musgrove as Austen's critique of excessive sentimentalism.[2] Mrs. Musgrove's grief is portrayed as both performative and physical excess. For example, a "fat" role, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, can refer to "an actor's part, offering abundant opportunity for skill [and] display," and Mrs. Musgrove, along with her daughters, Louisa and Henrietta, almost seem to be role-playing their sorrow with their unnecessary refrains: "poor son," "poor brother," "poor Dick," "poor Richard," "poor dear fellow!"[3] Mrs. Musgrove's own excess—and the theatrical excess of her daughters—has crowded out natural sentiment, and sentiment is the key term, since, according to the narrator, certain kinds of bodies in pain, like those with "the most graceful set of limbs" evoke tasteful, sentimental responses while others do not.

In the passage, the narrator prescribes a set of aesthetic and moral standards: "fair or not fair, there are unbecoming conjunctions." Big bodies are "infinitely more fitted by nature to express good cheer and good humour." It may seem unjustly cruel, but we can't help laughing at the sight of sad fat women. If this conclusion seems shockingly inappropriate, that is Austen's point. We are not supposed to be persuaded by the narrator's presentation of the Austenian triumvirate of Reason, Taste, and Ridicule,

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[2] For example, see D.W. Harding, *Regulated Hatred and Others Essays on Jane Austen*, ed. Monica Lawlor (London: Athlone Press, 1988), 164-165, and Tess O'Toole, "Reconfiguring the Family in *Persuasion,*" *Persuasions* 15 (1993): 200-206.

[3] In *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property* (London: Methuen, 1987), Patricia Parker observes that female fatness and loquacity are often paired in literature (34-35). For more on literary representations of fatness, see Elena Levy-Navarro, ed., *Historicizing Fat in Anglo-American Culture* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press), 2010.

which is, as Claude Rawson observes, a "parody of the Johnsonian version of the rhetorical triad."[4] Moreover, the redundant language of largeness ("large fat," "large bulky") employed to describe Mrs. Musgrove is a little too showy, like the weeping woman herself.

As such, the satire of excessive sentimentalism, which begins with Mrs. Musgrove's body, extends beyond her body to Austen's narrator, who spouts personal opinions about sentiment and graceful limbs as if they are universal truths. If we, as readers, are uncomfortable with the biases paraded by the narrator then we have comprehended the first arc of Austen's ethical trajectory. But many readers have failed to recognize that Austen's description of Mrs. Musgrove's "comfortable substantial size" is not a needlessly crude one given that the novelist ridicules *ridicule* itself in *Persuasion.* The double-edged sharpness of Austen's irony cuts both ways.

Many critics recognize the narrator's ridicule, without acknowledging the ironic form it takes. They often read the passage as a moral lapse on the part of the author, assuming that Austen and the narrator are the same. Brian Southam, for example, surmises an offensive encounter roused Austen's dark side.[5] Similarly, John Mullan perceives "the devil in Austen": "Ridicule, in the person of the author herself, has certainly seized this opportunity in a manner that many have often found 'not fair.'"[6] John Halperin contends, "only a woman deficient in feeling, and, yes 'taste,' could have

[4] Claude Rawson, *Satire and Sentiment: 1660-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 291.

[5] Brian Southam, *Jane Austen and the Navy* (London: Hambledon and London, 2000), 271.

[6] John Mullan, *What Matters in Jane Austen: Twenty Crucial Puzzles Solved* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2012), 299.

written it…[Austen] stands revealed, personally, in the most unflattering light here."[7] A dismayed D.A. Miller opines: "We might expect this ridicule from Sir Walter Elliot," Anne's vain and superficial father.[8] Though Miller, like many other critics, clearly understands the dynamics of Austen's satire—its "ironic, unobtrusive disciplined narrative voice"—he underestimates its range, mistakenly reading this moment as the "semiotic outrage or despair" of a bitter spinster.[9] Other readers have disparaged the account of "unbecoming conjunctions" as material the novelist would have omitted from *Persuasion* if she had lived longer, though there is no evidence to support this.[10]

In this chapter, I argue that Austen's satire of excessive sentimentalism targets not only Mrs. Musgrove's "large bulky figure" as grotesque, but also the "most graceful set of limbs in the world" as picturesque. The mock-serious tone that aligns afflictions with rights indicates Austen's ironic dismissal of a stock sentimental image—a fragile, tearful female. Ultimately, the target of Austen's joke about unbecoming conjunctions is not Mrs. Musgrove, or even graceful limbs, but instead "comfortable reader[s]" who, as D.W. Harding comments, let the novelist's passages "sli[p] through their minds without creating a disturbance."[11] Comfortable readers may take for granted the narrator's

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[7] John Halperin, *The Life of Jane Austen* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 305.

[8] D.A. Miller, "The Late Jane Austen," *Raritan* 10.1 (1990): 60. Margaret Doody concurs: "The mental insulting of Mrs. Musgrove is one of the few moments when we see Anne as her father's daughter—and it is a low moment." Margaret Doody, *Jane Austen's Names: Riddles, Persons, Places* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 183.

[9] Miller, 61.

[10] For example, see Margaret Kirkham, *Jane Austen, Feminism and Fiction* (Brighton, Sussex, UK: 1983): "Revision was also required in the handling of Mrs. Musgrove, especially with regard to her ne'er-do-well son, Dick…It all seems to have had something to do with Austen's finding the name 'Richard' irresistibly comic, but I think it would have changed had *Persuasion* been 'finished' for publication by its author" (152-153).

[11] Harding, 6, 8.

comical description of Mrs. Musgrove's "comfortable substantial size," but in doing so they neglect to see their own reflection in the satirical glass of the author's ridicule.[12] Harding discerned that caricature was an inevitable mode for Austen because she found "that one of the most useful peculiarities of her society was its willingness to remain blind to the implication of a caricature."[13] We, as scholars, might also be blind to the implication of visual caricature in *Persuasion*.

Decades ago, Marvin Mudrick denounced the ridicule of Dick Musgrove as "savage caricature"[14]; as we have seen, many critics still view the descriptions of mother and son in chapter eight as brutal and dehumanizing.[15] What most scholars have overlooked, though, is how the scene is intentionally caricatural. Through my analysis, I demonstrate how the juxtaposition of the "large bulky figure" and the "most graceful set of limbs" creates a visual contrast that results in two layers of "unbecoming conjunctions" or caricatures. According to Austen's narrator, a fat body in pain is an unbecoming conjunction; a slender body in pain is a becoming conjunction. As readers, we are led to imagine two bodies separately and to perceive (though we may disagree) the distinction between the ridiculous and the aesthetically pleasing. We are missing the complete picture, though, if we discern only the first caricature of Mrs. Musgrove. The

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[12] In *Battle of the Books* (1697), Swift likens satire to a mirror: "Satire is a sort of glass, wherein beholders do generally discover everybody's face but their own; which is the chief reason for that kind of reception it meets in the world, and that so few are offended with it." Jonathan Swift, *Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 1.

[13] Ibid., 12.

[14] Marvin Mudrick, *Jane Austen: Irony as Defense and Discovery* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), 212.

[15] Also, see Elaine Showalter, "Retrenchment," *Persuasions* 15 (1993): 101-110, Adela Pinch, *Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 147, and Bharat Tandon, *Jane Austen and the Morality of Conversation* (London: Anthem Press, 2003), 236-237.

second caricature is the incongruity of the fat and the lean, a visual trope repeatedly found in the work of the most popular caricaturists of the period, including James Gillray and Thomas Rowlandson.

Figure 16: Charles Williams, *Fat and Lean* (1806)

For example, the 1806 print *Fat and Lean* (fig. 16) depicts the obese Daniel Lambert with an unidentified young woman sitting on his lap. Multiple prints from the period portray Lambert, who weighed over 700 pounds, alone, squeezed into a chair or a sofa.[16] The *Fat and Lean*, though, is a double portrait: the ridiculously long-limbed female accentuates Lambert's own girth and his fatness emphasizes her skinniness. Similarly, in Austen's novel, sentimentalized limbs become more skinny than graceful, an object of ridicule, part of the larger caricatural framework. A "graceful set of limbs" is no longer a picturesque image beside the caricature of a "large bulky figure." Building on Jillian Heydt-Stevenson's observation that "Austen's unbecoming conjunctions…destabilize any ready access to firm judgements and tidy truths," I seek to show how the logic of the passage falls apart through its parodic display of two kinds of exaggerated bodies: the fat and grotesque vs. the lean and picturesque.[17]

By situating Austen's work within the historical context of one of the most popular forms of visual ridicule in the period, my objective is to challenge "comfortable readings" of Austen's fiction that attempt to minimize the discomforts of caricature. My contention is that Austen's ability to ridicule *and* to uphold "comfort" in *Persuasion* represents a larger, back-and-forth moral play in which many kinds of unbecoming conjunctions, stemming from characters' desire for comfort, are alternatively ridiculed or justified. I begin the first section of this chapter, "Comfortable Readings," by briefly discussing the late Victorian Hugh Thomson's illustration of the "large fat sighings" of

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[16] For more on Lambert, see Paul Youngquist, *Monstrosities: Bodies and British Romanticism*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), and Joyce L. Huff, "Freaklore: The Dissemination, Fragmentation, and Reinvention of the Legend of Daniel Lambert, King of Fat Men," in *Victorian Freaks: The Social Context of Freakery in Britain*, ed. Marlene Tromp (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2008), 37-59.

[17] Jillian Heydt-Stevenson, *Austen's Unbecoming Conjunctions: Subversive Laughter, Embodied History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 181.

Mrs. Musgrove. This image renders the scene comforting as opposed to disturbing, which is problematic, but also symptomatic of a larger literary phenomenon—the desire to take comfort in Austen's fiction. Next, I examine how the term "comfort" is employed by Austen's characters to stake out personal politics regarding status and beliefs. In the second section, "Caricatures of Sentiment and Excess," I explore the development of the fat vs. the lean caricatural trope through an analysis of caricatures by Gillray and Rowlandson. Here, we see Austen adapting visual ridicule into literary form in order to satirize the physical and emotional excesses of sentimental female bodies. In my third section, "Caricature and the Picturesque," I examine the link between Austen's verbal caricature and Rowlandson's visual caricature—his illustrations for *The Tour of Doctor Syntax in Search of the Picturesque* (1812). I conclude this chapter by juxtaposing the caricatural portrayal of Mrs. Musgrove's "comfortable substantial size" with a brief discussion of the ridiculous in *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) and *Emma* (1816) in order to reveal what's most at stake in *Persuasion*: Austen's greatest concern is not the moral limits of aesthetic persuasion, visual or verbal, but the moral limitations of self-knowledge, how we are all "saved...by some comfortable feeling of superiority" (*PS* 30).

I. Comfortable Readings

In 1894, Joseph Grego, a scholar of eighteenth-century caricature and a Janeite, sent a congratulatory letter to Hugh Thomson, the thirty-four-year-old Irish illustrator of a new edition of *Pride and Prejudice*, praising the artist's ability to bring "restorative" and renewed humor to Austen's fiction:

> I am writing your publisher a testimonial that no sufferer or invalid should neglect a course of Hugh Thomson's marvelous tonic—the restorative effects on impaired vitality…etc. found in your illustrations to Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, and no household should be without a case—I mean a bookcase full. You have revivified the gently humorous Jane and given her a new lease of life…[18]

Most likely, Thomson's illustrations for an 1898 edition of *Persuasion* would have evoked for Grego, and many other readers, a similarly "gentle" humor.[19] At first glance, Thomson's depiction of Mrs. Musgrove (fig. 17) appears innocuous. Here, Mrs. Musgrove's sad, droopy eyes make her an object of pity more than a target for ridicule. Grieving for her deceased son, Dick, between the concerned Captain Wentworth and the sympathetic Anne Elliot, Mrs. Musgrove seems more composed than agitated. Furthermore, she is drawn not much larger than Anne herself, but Austen's text presents us with an excessively dramatic woman who is, according to the narrator, literally out of proportion. The illustration lacks the doubled-edge irony of Austen's writing because Thomson has reaffirmed the "gently humorous Jane" by removing the discomfort, excess, and ridicule the author intentionally supplied.

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[18] M. H. Spielmann and Walter Jerrold, *Hugh Thomson: His Art, His Letters, and His Charm* (London: A. & C. Black, 1931), 98. Grego's admiration for the "restorative" nature of Austen's novels anticipates Rudyard Kipling's 1924 story "The Janeites" about World War I soldiers so enamored with "England's Jane" that they form a secret society to honor her. Affirming the cultural resonance of Kipling's story, Janet Todd remarks that World War I coincided with the 1917 centenary of Austen's death: "Together with *Emma* and *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice* was considered therapeutic reading matter for wounded and damaged men." See Janet Todd, "Criticism" in *The Cambridge Companion to* Pride and Prejudice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 141.

[19] Thomson's illustrations typically depict Austen's heroines as proper young ladies. This idealization of femininity is also found in George Saintsbury's preface for the 1894 *Pride and Prejudice*. Janet Todd views Saintsbury as "grow[ing] sentimental when contemplating Elizabeth Bennet": "In a time of challenging female attitudes, [Elizabeth Bennet] became for Saintsbury a model of what a modern woman should be, an upholder of traditional values: there was in Elizabeth 'nothing offensive, nothing *viraginous*, nothing of the "New Woman" about her'"(Janet Todd, "Criticism," 140).

Figure 17: Hugh Thomson, "He attended to her large, fat sighings" (1898)

The twenty-first-century critic D.A. Miller confesses to a similar yearning for comfortable readings: "What Austen means to me (my Janeism) comes down to a childish notion that is easy to refute—or that would be if, after a certain age (or during an epidemic), the very easy refutation didn't become poignant with its own kind of pain: the notion that while you may sometimes fall sick, you can always get better."[20] For Miller, Austen symbolizes stability: the triumph of rational health over irrational sickness. She represents a world that may be, at times, unpleasant, but not unjustly cruel. He wants to believe that the constancy he desires—whether it be regarding good health, long-lasting

[20] Miller, 56.

love, or even irony in literary style—is the constancy he will always find.

Perhaps more than any other English novelist, Jane Austen is read with such longings for comfort. As Claudia Johnson observes, Austen's "art is uniquely comforting under circumstances of shocking duress," and her novels symbolize English comfort, the "therapeutic ideal of the graciousness of the English and England during the late Georgian period."[21] This may be one reason why so many readers have been disheartened by the narrator's derision of Mrs. Musgrove. Readers' unease may stem from expectations concerning the comforting ethical landscape of Austen's novels. John Wiltshire, for example, reassures us that, "the moral world is coherent and meaningful and ultimately rationally ordered."[22] Alongside Wiltshire, many other scholars, including Marilyn Butler, Alistair Duckworth, Mona Scheuermann, and Sarah Emsley, have emphasized the consistency of Austen's moral world.[23] By deemphasizing the discomforting aspects of the Austen's ridicule, these critics assert that the novelist upholds society's mores more than she questions them. However, I take the position that the novelist does not affirm the idea of a stable moral world as much as she indicates the arbitrary nature of "individual commitment" to society.[24] We see this most clearly in

[21] Claudia Johnson, *Jane Austen's Cults and Cultures* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 127. For more on comfort in Jane Austen's fiction, see Amanda Himes, "Looking For Comfort: Heroines, Readers, and Jane Austen's Novels," (PhD diss, Texas A&M University, 2006), John Wiltshire, "Comfort, Health and Creativity: A Reading of *Emma*" in *Jane Austen: Introductions and Interventions* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, 2006), 95-107, and Joy Alexander, "Anything Goes? Reading Mansfield Park," *The Uses of English* 52:3 (2001): 244-246.

[22] John Wiltshire, *Jane Austen and the Body: The Picture of Health* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 186.

[23] See Marilyn Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), Alistair Duckworth, *The Improvement of the Estate: A Study of Jane Austen's Novels* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1971), Mona Scheuermann, *Reading Jane Austen* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), and Sarah Emsley, *Jane Austen's Philosophy of the Virtues* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

[24] Duckworth, 32.

Persuasion in the way she enfolds multiples meanings of the word "comfort" into her narrative. As one might expect, Austen satirizes the irrational comforts of self-obsessed characters like Sir Walter Elliot and Anne's young sister, Mary Musgrove. By placing this ridicule within the context of Mrs. Croft's discussion of comfort in chapter eight, I provide an alternative "comfortable reading," one that demonstrates how Austen's moral world—as well as her irony—subsists on both irrational and rational comforts.

Today, comfort often connotes the home or domestic pleasures, which may be one reason many readers associate Austen's fiction with comfort, but prior to the eighteenth century "*comfort* was primarily a moral term indicating personal support. Its material connotations were liable to negative associations from Christian and classical disparagements of luxury."[25] In the 1755 edition of Johnson's *Dictionary*, for example, to comfort is "to strengthen, enliven, to invigorate" and "to console," but as John E. Crowley reveals, "changes in domestic material culture" transformed the word over the course of the eighteenth century into a term that validated physical ease, represented by the conveniences and furnishings of domestic life. Along with these changes, and the rise of a middle class, comfort took on a socio-economic dimension as well. As Amanda Himes notes, "At the heart of middle-class ideology…is the dream of comfort in mind and body."[26] The dream of comfort is to a large extent what Anne Elliot seeks and ultimately finds through her union with Frederick Wentworth.

Throughout the novel, though, Austen also mocks her characters' desire for comfort in mind and body. Like father, like daughter—Sir Walter Elliot and Mary

[25] John E. Crowley, *The Invention of Comfort: Sensibilities and Design in Early Modern Britain and Early America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), x.

[26] Himes, 73. Also see, Franco Moretti, *The Bourgeois: Between History and Literature* (London: Verso, 2013): "a word like 'comfort' outlines the contours of legitimate bourgeois consumption" (4).

Musgrove both cling to irrational forms of comfort that stem from their obsession with status symbols. Sir Walter, a man fixated on his complexion and the complexions of all those around him, is guilty of indulging in the bad comforts of class distinction. At the beginning of the novel, he rails against the loss of his symbols of superiority. After Lady Russell advises retrenchment, he retorts: "What! Every comfort of life knocked off! Journeys, London, servants, horses, table,—contractions and restrictions everywhere. To live no longer with the decencies even of a private gentleman!" (*PS* 10). Sir Walter isn't so much attached to his physical estate as he is to the comforts it materially signifies, which is why he is rather easily persuaded to change his residence to Bath, without feeling as if he has lost his place. Roger Sales compares Sir Walter to the Prince Regent: both men exhibit a fondness for admiring themselves in mirrors and a predilection for spending beyond their means.[27] Austen was no admirer of the Prince Regent, as her letters attest.[28] Her positive depiction of the navy through figures like Captain Wentworth and Admiral Croft could be viewed as a critique of the future George IV who dressed up in navy regalia and loved to fashionably play the part of a navy man without actually being one.[29] The Prince Regent was a constant object of ridicule in the period's caricatures (for example, see fig. 18) due to his excessive consumption of food and luxury goods, and his obsession with fashionableness. Sir Walter's disgust with the weather-beaten faces of sailors is not only an indication of his vanity, but also

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[27] Roger Sales, *Jane Austen and Representations of Regency England* (London: Routledge, 1994), 171-179.

[28] *Jane Austen's Letters*, ed. Deidre Le Faye (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 216. Hereafter cited as *JAL*.

[29] Steve Parissien, *George IV: Inspiration of the Regency* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001), 253. For analysis of the navy in Austen's novels, see Jocelyn Harris's chapter "Domestic Virtues and National Importance" in *A Revolution Almost Beyond Expression: Jane Austen's Persuasion* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2007) and Brian Southam's *Jane Austen and the Navy*.

demonstrates his self-satisfaction that he can pursue a life of leisure that will not "expos[e] [him] to every climate, and every weather" (*PS* 16)—and more importantly help him maintain a life of idleness and fashion.

Figure 18: William Heath, *1812 or Regency a La Mode* (1812)

The desire for excessive bodily display immediately marks the ill-tempered Mary Musgrove, who thrives on a "comfortable state of imaginary agitation" (*PS* 35). Mary establishes her own sense of superiority via an obsessive preoccupation with precedence. She aspires to position her body as a visible sign of her dominant status when she joins

Henrietta, Louisa, Anne, Captain Wentworth, and her husband, Charles, for a walk in chapter ten. After Charles and Henrietta decide to leave the group to meet Henrietta's suitor Charles Hayter, Mary figuratively stands her ground by literally sitting down:

> Mary finding a comfortable seat for herself, on the step of a stile, was very well satisfied so long as the others all stood about her; but when Louisa drew Captain Wentworth away...Mary was happy no longer; she quarreled with her own seat,—was sure Louisa had got a much better somewhere,—and nothing could prevent her from going to look for a better…she was sure Louisa had found a better seat somewhere else, and she would go on, till she overtook her. (*PS* 62)

Austen depicts Mary as if she is an automaton programmed to seek superiority, restlessly searching for a "comfortable seat." The free indirect discourse reveals just how empty-headed Mary's search is with its almost identical repetition of the phrase, "she was sure Louisa had got a much better [seat] somewhere." The comfortable seat signifies the country seat or estate, a "much better" marker of status than a mere "step of a stile." Mary holds onto a traditional, landed sense of identity—property as physical and social place—from the beginning to the end of the novel, taking comfort in her own superior position despite "seeing Anne restored to the rights of seniority, and the mistress of a very pretty landaulette" (*PS* 176). Mary believes she will maintain her rank in relation to her sister because: "Anne had no Uppercross-hall before her, no landed estate, no headship of a family; and if they could but keep Captain Wentworth from being made a baronet, she would not change situations with Anne." Mary's sense of her superiority shifts in relation to her "connexions." In the beginning of the novel we see her promoting

her rights as the daughter of a baronet in relation to Mrs. Musgrove, but by the end she views herself as superior because, unlike Anne, she is the wife of an eldest son who will inherit an estate.

Mary's fixation on place and situation is just as much about estates and procedural superiority as it is about the more superficial conveniences a comfortable life signifies. That Anne is "the mistress of a very pretty landaulette" and not mistress of a country house is still disconcerting for the younger sister. This reference to fashionable transportation humorously echoes an earlier scene in which Mary bemoans to Anne her lack of a carriage: "It is very uncomfortable, not having a carriage of one's own. Mr. and Mrs. Musgrove took me, and we were so crowded! They are both so very large and take up so much room!...So, there I was, crowded into the back seat with Henrietta and Louisa. And I think it very likely that my illness to-day may be owing to it" (*PS* 29). In this moment, Mary's self-centeredness is the object of ridicule and not Mrs. Musgrove's (or Mr. Musgrove's) size. Mary complains, while idly lying on "the faded sofa of the pretty little drawing-room, the once elegant furniture of which had been gradually growing shabby" (*PS* 27). The "faded sofa" is an inanimate object that has lost its bloom, like Mary herself. In the preceding sentence, Mary is described as "inferior to both her sisters [Anne and Elizabeth], and had, even in her bloom, only reached the dignity of being 'a fine girl.'" By the end of chapter five, the correlation between humans and household items is even more apparent.[30] The portraits in the Great House "seemed to be staring in astonishment" at the "confusion" of furniture styles that highlight generational differences: "The Musgroves, like their houses, were in a state of alteration, perhaps of

[30] For more on furniture in *Persuasion*, see Laurie Kaplan, "Sir Walter Elliot's Looking-Glass, Mary Musgrove's Sofa, and Anne Elliot's Chair: Exteriority/Interiority, Intimacy/Society," *Persuasions* 25.1 (2004). Accessed May 13, 2016, http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/on-line/vol25no1/kaplan.html (1-11).

improvement. The father and mother were in the old English style, and the young people in the new" (*PS* 30). The doubtful "perhaps" leads us to question what manner of improvement—moral, material, or social—may or may not be occurring and how characters, particularly Sir Walter and Mary, who are defined by their possessions, embody irrationality through their endless quest for physical comforts.

In *Persuasion*, the clash of rational and irrational comforts is featured most prominently in chapter eight, beginning with the "unbecoming conjunctions" of Mrs. Musgrove's "large fat sighings." The passage appears to assert the incontrovertibility of an aesthetic binary in which a large bulky figure in deep affliction is grotesque and the suffering of the most graceful set of limbs in distress is picturesque, but Austen subtly challenges the rationality of this opposition. As Claudia Johnson indicates: "The narrator…brings up the grotesqueness of Mrs. Musgrove's grief only to ponder the irrationality of our response to it."[31] Building on Johnson's observations, Audrey Bilger comments: "the perspective that deems a large woman's grieving sighs worthy of ridicule belongs to the broader system that endorses frailty in women as attractive to look at and that eroticizes female suffering."[32] For Johnson and Bilger, the narrative voice that speaks of unbecoming conjunctions in personal size and mental sorrow is remarkably similar to the voice of Captain Wentworth in chapter eight. He is convinced that women on board a ship is an unbecoming conjunction, as if the sight offends his notions of female delicacy.

After Wentworth declares, "women…have no *right* to be comfortable on board" a war ship, Mrs. Croft attempts to persuade her brother that his judgment is wrong. He is

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[31] Claudia Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 150.

[32] Audrey Bilger, *Laughing Feminism: Subversive Comedy in Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth, and Jane Austen* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1998), 204.

talking "as if women were all fine ladies, instead of rational creatures" (*PS* 50). Just before the exchange between brother and sister begins, Wentworth defends himself from Admiral Croft's assertion that he lacks gallantry: "It is rather from feeling how impossible it is, with all one's efforts, and all one's sacrifices, to make the accommodation on board, such as woman ought to have. There can be no want of gallantry, admiral, in rating the claims of women to every personal comfort *high*—and that is what I do. I hate to hear of women on board, or to see them on board." He readily connects the "claims of women" with "personal comfort," as if he has in mind conduct book literature, like Thomas Gisborne's *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* (1797).[33] For Gisborne, a woman's presence outside the "sphere of domestic life" is an unbecoming conjunction.[34] He instructs his female readers to, "Remember the duties which you have to perform at home, duties not so well to be performed elsewhere."[35] Gisborne believes that the "domestic life," centered on the home, offers "less diversity of action."[36] Austen, however, re-envisions the domestic life as one of great "diversity of action" for sailors' wives, like Mrs. Croft and the future Anne Wentworth.

Mrs. Croft views "comfort" not as dependent on the status of a great estate, but as active strength, the opposite of "idle refinement"—which Sir Walter and Mary ridiculously exemplify. Having travelled all over the world with her husband, Mrs. Croft

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[33] Austen was familiar with Gisborne's writings. In an 1805 letter to her sister, Cassandra, she writes: "I am glad you recommended 'Gisborne,' for having begun, I am quite pleased with it, and I had quite determined not to read it" (*JAL* 117). For an overview of eighteenth-century conduct guides written for women, see Kathryn Sutherland, "Writings on Education and Conduct: Arguments for Female Improvement," in *Women and Literature in Britain: 1700-1800*, ed. Vivien Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[34] Thomas Gisborne, *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* (London, 1799), 2.

[35] Ibid., 310.

[36] Ibid., 2.

asserts, "nothing can exceed the accommodations of a man of war" (*PS* 51). She does admit, though, "When you come to a frigate, of course, you are confined—though any reasonable woman may be perfectly happy in one of them." In *Persuasion*, Austen doesn't simply critique or satirize the gender politics of comfort. She goes further by offering a redefinition of domestic comforts. While her brother talks of comfort in terms of rights, Mrs. Croft views comfort as neither a right nor a privilege, but as the natural state of being of a reasonable mind and healthy body, male or female.

Given the emphasis on comfort, we can better appreciate the description of the weeping, sighing Mrs. Musgrove as a critique of irrational comforts. When the narrator tells us that, "Mrs. Musgrove was of a comfortable substantial size, infinitely more fitted by nature to express good cheer and good humour, than tenderness and sentiment," she uses the word "comfortable" as a euphemism for Mrs. Musgrove's fat frame. It has greater significance in the context of a larger discussion about comfort as rational and affective communion. Mrs. Croft and Admiral Croft are devoted to each other's comfort. The only time Mrs. Croft experienced discomfort, "ever really suffered in body or mind" was when she was in Deal separated from her husband who was in the North Seas, "but as long as we could be together, nothing ever ailed me, and I never met with the smallest inconvenience" (*PS* 51). Mrs. Croft affirms the primacy of rational comforts. Moreover, she implicitly advances the position that the most "comfortable" conjunction is the alignment of the minds and bodies of a happily married couple.[37]

In chapter eight, Mrs. Musgrove's "comfortable, substantial size" is pitted against

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[37] Anne Mellor, *Mothers of the Nation: Women's Political Writing in England, 1780-1830* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000), 130: "[Mrs. Croft] preserves the values—the comforts and consolations—of domesticity even in an arena formerly regarded as an entirely male preserve, the military ship."

“the perfectly comfortable” Mrs. Croft, unbecoming conjunction vs. necessary proportion. The plasticity of the word “comfort”—the way it intertwines the emotional and the physical—makes it an effective term for the author to deploy both satirically and earnestly. This is what is so slyly inventive about Jane Austen’s irony: she seemingly validates through a reluctant narrative voice the necessity of proportion, while ridiculing through the intrusiveness of that voice the validity of any such notion, only later to persuade us through Mrs. Croft’s conjunction of comfort and rationality that there are necessary proportions after all.[38] Austen’s moral world is certainly meaningful, yet it is anything but stable, shifting from one stance to another.

II. Caricatures of Sentiment and Excess

The novelist E.M. Forster, who self-identified as “slightly imbecile about Jane Austen,” believed her novels to be caricature-free zones: “unlike Dickens, [Austen] was a real artist…she never stooped to caricature.”[39] But Austen did stoop to caricature with her portrayal of the “large fat sighings” of Mrs. Musgrove. As Jocelyn Harris suggests, the “controversial passage,” might have, for the novelist’s contemporaries, “conjure[d] up [James] Gillray’s grotesque cartoon of [Admiral] Nelson’s bloated, tearful mistress [Emma Hamilton] as ‘Dido in Despair!’ (1801)”[40] (fig. 19). In this allusion to the mythological figure Dido, who was abandoned by her lover, Aeneas, an overweight Lady Hamilton despairs over the departure of her “gallant Sailor” Horatio Nelson: “Ah, where,

[38] In contrast with the narrator’s irrational musings about unbecoming conjunctions, Sophia Croft, “as her [first] name suggests—is the voice of female wisdom.” Mellor, 130.

[39] E.M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World Inc., 1954), 114.

[40] Harris, 98.

& ah where, is my gallant Sailor gone? - /"He's gone to Fight the Frenchmen, for George upon the Throne,/ "He's gone to Fight ye Frenchmen, t'loose t'other Arm & Eye, /"And left me with the old Antiques, to lay me down, & Cry." Emma Hart—and then Emma, Lady Hamilton, after she married the wealthy antiquarian Sir William Hamilton in 1791—had "rise[n] above humble origins" in part through her sexual appeal.[41] She was, as Betsey Bolton describes her, "the Marilyn Monroe of the late eighteenth century."[42] In the print, the sexual allure of Hamilton's body is featured in the book, *Studies of Academic Attitudes Taken from the Life*, which lies on the bench below the window, opened to a page that displays a naked female figure, lounging on a bed. The title of the book, particularly the word "Attitudes," evokes the celebrity Hamilton acclaimed for the "classical" poses she performed—"a one-woman Salon theater"—in Sir William's home in Naples.[43] Her "Attitudes" were popularized through the drawings published in the German artist Friedrich Rehberg's *Drawings Faithfully Copied from Nature at Naples* (1797). It could be argued that in the late eighteenth century the "most graceful set of limbs in the world" belonged to Lady Hamilton. But what fate has Hamilton succumbed to in *Dido in Despair*? Once considered an icon of beauty, she is now satirized as "grotesquely fat."[44]

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[41] Margarette Lincoln, "Emma Hamilton, War, and the Depiction of Femininity in the Late Eighteenth Century," *Journal for Maritime Research* 17.2 (2015): 141.

[42] Betsy Bolton, "Sensibility and Speculation: Emma Hamilton" in *Lewd & Notorious: Female Transgression in the Eighteenth Century* ed. Katherine Kittredge (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 134.

[43] Andrei Pop, "Sympathetic Spectators: Henry Fuseli's *Nightmare* and Emma Hamilton's Attitudes," *Art History* 34.5 (2011): 940.

[44] Lincoln, 138.

Figure 19: James Gillray, *Dido in Despair*! (1801)

In Gillray's caricature, Hamilton's heavyset frame alludes to the scandal of her recent pregnancy.[45] In late January 1801 she had given birth to a child fathered by Nelson. *Dido in Despair!* appeared on February 6, not too long after the birth of Hamilton's daughter, Horatia. In the image, the abandoned mistress sadly gazes out the window as her lover's fleet sails away, her outstretched arms theatrically framed by the backdrop of bed curtains. The collection of antique coins and sculptures scattered on the carpet include a small statue of a satyr shaped like a broken phallus. The misshapen phallus points upwards to the cuckolded, seventy-year-old William, who lies asleep behind his wife, seemingly oblivious to her sorrows and her affair. More than three

[45] Ibid., 138, 140.

decades older than his wife, William is one of the “old Antiques” Nelson has left Hamilton with “to lay me down, & Cry.” Even still, Sir William is not the primary target of Gillray’s satire. Instead, it is Hamilton’s body—or, rather, her bodies. Within the image, Gillray has juxtaposed two female forms: the “large fat” Hamilton vs. the “most graceful set of limbs in the world” Hamilton. By placing the figures side by side within the print itself, the caricaturist draws our attention to how Hamilton “provoked contrastive reactions.”[46]

Celebrated for her “Attitudes” and ridiculed in caricature for her affair with Nelson, Hamilton embodied two poles of the aesthetic spectrum: the sentimental and picturesque vs. the grotesque. In his image, Gillray emphasizes the sexually suggestive content of Hamilton’s “Attitudes” by including a nude female form in the print, but less salacious representations of Hamilton, like George Romney’s *Sensibility* (1786) (see fig. 20) emphasized the chastely sentimental idealization of her body. In Romney’s *Sensibility*, Hamilton is set against a “background [of] trees, hills, and sweeping clouds.”[47] Her attitudes are, Bolton informs us, a kind of “natural” artifice: “Her eyes intent, her lips parted, the performer seems fully engaged in the “attitude”—sensibility—she enacts.” By drawing our attention to the “self-dramatizing pose” of the sentimental female figure, Bolton highlights the theatrical “excess” of Hamilton’s “Attitudes”—how her gestures were “overcharged with emotional connotations.”[48]

[46] *Emma Hamilton Dancing*. ed. John Cooper. West Haven, CT: GHP, 2013. Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name, shown at the Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.

[47] Bolton, 133.

[48] Bolton,143.

Figure 20: Richard Earlom after George Romney,
Sensibility (1789)

The "overcharged" quality of both Hamilton's "Attitudes" and her larger-than-life love affair appears to have greatly appealed to Gillray's comical sensibilities. Six years after the publication of *Dido in Despair!* the artist returned to the subject of the two Emmas with a series of twelve engravings parodying Rehberg's famous drawings of Hamilton, published as *A New Edition Considerably Enlarged of Attitudes Faithfully Copied From Nature Humbly and Dedicated To All Admirers of the Grand and Sublime* (1807). The Preface to this "Considerably Enlarged" edition is loaded with puns mocking Hamilton's bulky figure: "Since its publication [Rehberg's *Drawings Faithfully Copied from Nature at Naples*]…the fair original has so *grown* in grace [grease], and *encreased*

in loveliness."[49] Placing Gillray's drawings of a Hamilton "Attitude" (fig. 21) next to Rehberg's drawing (fig. 22) creates a kind of doubled-edged parody. By ridiculing the "Considerably Enlarged" Hamilton, Gillray implicitly mocks the "overcharged" artifice of the original drawings.

Figure 21: James Gillray, From *A New Edition Considerably Enlarged, of Attitudes Faithfully Copied from Nature: and Humbly Dedicated to all Admirers of the Grand and Sublime* (1807)

[49] James Gillray, *A New Edition Considerably Enlarged of Attitudes Faithfully Copied From Nature Humbly and Dedicated To All Admirers of the Grand and Sublime* (London, 1807).

Figure 22: Friedrich Rehberg, From *Drawings Faithfully Copied from Nature at Naples* (1797)

When placed side by side, the images produce a caricatural trope. Like many Regency caricaturists, Gillray regularly pitted fat vs. lean figures.[50] In his caricature, *Following the Fashion* (1794) (fig. 23), a lean figure's fashionably long limbs are

[50] The most iconic fat vs. lean pairing of the late Georgian period may have been the sparring politicians Charles James Fox and William Pitt. See Constance C. McPhee and Nadine Orenstein's *Infinite Jest: Caricature and Satire from Leonardo to Levine* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011) for an eclectic survey of the fat vs. lean trope in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British, American, and French art. There are early precedents for this trope, like the sixteenth-century pair of Dutch prints *The Thin Kitchen* and *The Fat Kitchen* by Pieter van der Heyden, after Pieter Bruegel the Elder. We see this trope continued into the nineteenth century in Charles Dickens's *Pickwick Papers* (1836-1737), with the fat protagonist Samuel Pickwick and his thin antagonist Alfred Jingle.

attached to an impossibly tiny torso, while the short, fat figure's head is nearly obscured by a large bosom plopped on top of a massive belly. The caption identifies the lean body as a high fashion type, while the fat represents the low: "St. James's giving the Ton, a Soul without a Body; Cheapside aping the Mode, a body without a Soul."[51] The oppositional pairings—fat vs. lean, tall vs. short, high vs. low—seemingly accentuate the "ludicrous effect."[52] For example, in *Rules for Drawing Caricaturas* (1788), Francis Grose claims, if two men, "one very tall, and the other extremely short, were to walk down a street together…they would not escape the jokes of the mobility." It is as if the comic appeal of visual contrasts operates as universal law—fair or not fair.

Figure 23: James Gillray, *Following the Fashion* (1794)

[51] For a survey of eighteenth-century caricatures of fashionable types, see Diana Donald, *Followers of Fashion* (London: Hayward Gallery, 2002).

[52] Francis Grose, *Rules for Drawing Caricaturas: With an Essay on Comic Painting* (London, 1788), 27.

In *Persuasion*, “graceful limbs” become an object of Austen’s satire through the representation of the “fashionable” Musgrove sisters (*PS* 30). The chapter ends with Anne, teary-eyed, contemplating how her body compares in Wentworth’s eyes to the bodies of Louisa and Henrietta, who have not yet lost their bloom. Anne plays the piano, while those around her dance.[53] In the conduct manuals of the period, like the popular *The Polite Academy, or School of Behavior for Young Gentlemen and Women* (1768), which appeared in multiple editions, “graceful” limbs often connote the fashionable limbs of dancers. Anne, however, “has quite given up dancing” (*PS* 52). The narrator informs us that Anne plays without “consciousness,” though we, as readers find ourselves deep within her consciousness via free indirect discourse. She wonders if Wentworth is thinking of her “altered features.” Ultimately, though, “powers of mind,” not graceful limbs, are what Wentworth most seeks in a partner. While out for a walk on a picturesque November day, he encourages Louisa, whom he has decided to fix his attentions on, to be firm and unyielding, like a “beautiful, glossy nut” that “blessed with original strength, has outlived all the storms of autumn” (*PS* 63). He picks a hazelnut from off a tree, and expounds, “Here is a nut…while so many of its brethren have fallen and been trodden under foot, is still in possession of all the happiness that a hazel-nut can be supposed capable of.” “If Louisa Musgrove would be beautiful and happy in her November of life,” he advises, “she will cherish all her present powers of mind.” Several days later, during a trip to Lyme, Wentworth realizes the rashness of his advice. While out for a group stroll, Louisa attempts to impress Wentworth by jumping from the steps at Lyme. She leaps and

[53] The picturesque woman was also considered a “fashion type.” See Ann Bermingham, “The Picturesque and Ready-to-Wear Femininity” in *The Politics of the Picturesque: Literature, Landscape and Aesthetics Since 1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 81.

then falls, somewhat like a weak nut, and loses her "present powers of mind": "Louisa's limbs had escaped. There was no injury but to the head" (*PS* 81).

The limbs suffering the deepest physical affliction belong to Anne's childhood friend, Mrs. Smith, a "poor, infirm helpless widow" (*PS* 108). After her husband's death, Mrs. Smith faces "difficulties of every sort…and in addition to these distresses, had been afflicted with severe rheumatic fever, which finally settling in her legs, had made her for the present a cripple" (*PS* 107). As a result, she has lost "the glow of health and confidence of superiority" (*PS* 108). Roger Sales notes that Austen does not idealize female affliction or "the sentimental cult of the weak woman" in which "invalidism was a part that women were encouraged to play."[54] Instead, in *Persuasion*, the novelist ridicules the performative invalidism of Mary Musgrove, whose hypochondria is linked to her self-absorption. When left unattended, Mary "being unwell and out of spirits, was almost a matter of course." (*PS* 27) Once Anne arrives at Uppercross, Mary immediately begins complaining to her sister, "I am so ill I can hardly speak." Mary, though, goes on speaking, "I do not think I ever was so ill in my life as I have been all this morning" (*PS* 27-28). Charles Musgrove wishes that Anne could "persuade Mary not to be always fancying herself ill" (*PS* 32). In his *Essay on Fashionable Diseases* (1790?), James M. Adair claims that fanciful illness and fashionable diseases have originated, in part, from "the increase of luxury" (what Sir Walter Elliot considers "every comfort of life"): well-off women (and men) happen to be most susceptible to the "indolence of life and relaxation of habit" that "is often accompanied by a train of nervous symptoms."[55]

[54] Sales, 48: "Their frail bodies were seen by conduct writers and others as complementing their fragile minds."

[55] James M. Adair, *Essays on Fashionable Diseases* (London, 1790?), 17, 61.

Thomas Rowlandson's *Dropsy Courting Consumption* (1810) (fig. 24) mocks the fad for fashionable diseases, while also employing the fat vs. the lean caricatural trope. An overweight man swollen with edema, "Dropsy," professes his affection for his sickly, skinny beloved, "Consumption," who suffers from the most fashionable of diseases. The pun on the word "consumption" signals both her illness—tuberculosis—and her conspicuous consumption of fashionable goods, like her plumed hat, decorative fan, and hoop earrings.[56]

Figure 24: Thomas Rowlandson, *Dropsy Courting Consumption* (1810)

[56]See Clark Lawlor, *Consumption and Literature: The Making of the Romantic Disease* (Hampshire, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006) and Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects: Women, Shopping, and Business in the Eighteenth Century (*New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

While Mary Musgrove fancies herself as suffering from the deepest physical and emotional afflictions, Anne sheds real tears at the Musgrove's dinner party that no one seems to notice. Wentworth might be able "to trace in [her altered features] the ruins of the face which had once charmed him," but his "cold politeness, his ceremonious grace," demonstrates his inability to offer her any solace" (*PS* 52). Still, by "imaginatively transform[ing] her face into a ruin and Wentworth into the picturesque viewer who looks for the past in the rubble of the present landscape," Anne has, according to Jillian Heydt-Stevenson, become "something worthy of the gaze, a touristic site suitable for a visit, an almost sublime object of *memento mori* that nevertheless provides aesthetic pleasure."[57] Anne may have become picturesque—but only in her eyes, or Wentworth's. She is merely "faded and thin" to her father and her sisters (*PS* 5). Her affliction does not arouse sentimental feelings in the novel—like the kind that inspires the bedridden Louisa's poetic suitor Captain Benwick in the second half of *Persuasion*. She lacks the once fashionable, graceful limbs of Louisa Musgrove. But what is so picturesque and natural about graceful limbs in "deep affliction"? Anne never explicitly poses this question in the novel, but Austen certainly wants her readers to.

III. Caricature and the Picturesque

In March of 1814, Jane Austen penned a characteristically chatty letter to her sister Cassandra that concluded on a whimsical note: "I have seen nobody in London yet with such a long chin as Dr. Syntax, nor Anybody quite so large as Gogmagoglicus" (*JAL* 267). The Gogmagoglicus was a giant from medieval legend; Dr. Syntax's long chin and lean frame were the modern creations of Thomas Rowlandson. In 1809 Rudolph

[57] Heydt-Stevenson,183.

Ackerman published "The School Master's Tour" in the *Poetical Magazine*, which featured Rowlandson's images, accompanied with verses by William Combe. Three years later Rowlandson's illustrations and Combo's verses were published as a volume titled *The First Tour of Dr. Syntax, in Search of the Picturesque* (1812).[58]

When Dr. Syntax sets off, sketchbook in his hand, for the Lake District in the *First Tour* his goal is to "picturesque it ev'ry where" so he can "make his fortune by a book."[59] Through the late eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century, the picturesque became a popular aesthetic mode for defining the natural: "picturesque theory sought…to encourage an aesthetic or representational order—an idea of nature to be precise—that was natural insofar as it resembled a landscape already governed by aesthetic rule."[60] "Nature, dear Nature, is my goddess" (*TDS* 107), Syntax proudly proclaims. His desire to sketch cows and goats parodies the writings of the author and clergyman William Gilpin. According to Gilpin, desirable defects and disorderly attractions make an image picturesque. In *Three Essays: On Picturesque Beauty, On Picturesque Travel, and On Sketching Landscape* (1792), Gilpin declares, "as an object of picturesque beauty, we admire more the worn-out cart-horse, the cow, the goat, or the ass, whole harder lines, and rougher coats, exhibit more the graces of the pencil."[61]

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[58] For more on Dr. Syntax, see Jerold J. Savory, *Thomas Rowlandson's Doctor Syntax Drawings: An Introduction and Guide for Collectors* (London: Cygnus Arts, 1997) and Anthony Gully, "Thomas Rowlandson's *Doctor Syntax*" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 1973).

[59] William Combe, *The Tour of Doctor Syntax in Search of the Picturesque* ill. Thomas Rowlandson (London: Methuen & Co., 1903), 5. Hereafter abbreviated as *TDS*.

[60] See William H. Galperin's *The Historical Austen* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 52-53. For an overview of the picturesque, see Stephen Copley and Peter Garside's introduction to *The Politics of the Picturesque: Literature, Landscape and Aesthetics Since 1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[61] William Gilpin, *Three Essays: On Picturesque Beauty, On Picturesque Travel, and On Sketching Landscape* (London, 1792), 14.

Similarly, Syntax affirms, “There’s nothing picturesque in beef” (*TDS* 114); the “picturesque prefers a cow” and the “shaggy goat” (*TDS* 112).

In the *First Tour*, each example of picturesque beauty, including the mangled post Syntax discovers as he begins his journey, is presented to the reader as an object of ridicule. But the primary joke of the text is Dr. Syntax himself. He rhapsodizes, “If in man’s form you wish to see/The picturesque, pray look at me,” but the picturesque is transformed into ridiculous caricature through Syntax’s lean form and long chin (*TDS* 102). Moreover, his caricatural body disrupts the binary of the natural vs. the unnatural. In *An Historical Sketch of the Art of Caricaturing* (1813) James Peller Malcolm views caricature as an aberration in the natural state of things; it is nature “interrupted”: “Nature, the term we apply to the secret operations existing in the human frame, or the expansion from a certain point, would strictly adhere to the laws of the Creator, were *she* or *it* not interrupted.”[62] Syntax’s own awareness as an object of ridicule becomes explicit near the end of his first tour: “But my lean form was never smart/From barber’s skill or tailor’s art/So that my figure was a joke/For all the town and country folk” (*TDS* 254-255). Syntax declares that his “figure was a joke,” meaning his body, but his “figure,” as one half of the caricatural trope of the fat vs. lean is also mocked. The trope of fat vs. lean (Syntax’s fat wife vs. Syntax, fat Squire vs. Syntax) repeatedly occurs within Rowlandson’s illustrations and Combe’s verses. For example, towards the end of the text, the fat bookseller, “whose ample pauch/Was made of beef, and ham, and haunch” is set up in direct opposition to Syntax (*TDS* 197) (fig. 25).

[62] James Peller Malcolm, *An Historical Sketch of the Art of Caricaturing* (London, 1813), 1.

Figure 25: Thomas Rowlandson,"Dr. Syntax and Bookseller" (1813)

The ironically humorous critique of picturesque aesthetics that we see in Rowlandson and Combe's text surely appealed to Austen's own comic sensibilities. Austen admired the picturesque, and she was familiar with Gilpin's writings, but there is also in her own fiction a mockery of picturesque aesthetics.[63] Wit, however, is for Austen, a female author, arguably more problematic than it would be for a contemporary male author.[64] According to conduct book authors, like James Fordyce and Hannah More, wit

[63] For example, in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), Elizabeth demurs from joining a group of three that Mr. Darcy belong to be using the picturesque as her defense: "No, no; stay where you are. You are charmingly group'd, and appear to uncommon advantage. The picturesque would be spoilt by admitting a fourth." Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice,* ed. Donald Gray (New York: Norton, 2001), 36. For further discussion of Austen's interest in the picturesque, see chapter two, "The Picturesque, the Real, and the Consumption of Jane Austen," in William H. Galperin's *The Historical Austen.*

[64] For an examination of nineteenth-century women authors and humor, see Eileen Gillooly's *Smile of Discontent: Humor, Gender, and Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (University of Chicago Press, 1999).

is too violent, and therefore unfeminine; it has too a great potential to erode the comforts of the home. In *Sermons to Young Women* (1766), Fordyce condemns wit as a "two-edged sword," and he discourages men from marrying witty females because he believes wit detracts from feminine softness.[65] Similarly, Hannah More, staunchly opposes ridicule as "the most deadly weapon in the whole arsenal of impiety, and which becomes an almost unerring shaft when directed by a fair and fashionable hand."[66]

Austen's most fashionable heroine, Emma Woodhouse, is certainly guilty as charged of wielding wit as a weapon against the spinster Miss Bates. Emma, who comes from a "comfortable home," is caught in the act of relishing ridicule. Her brother-in-law Mr. Knightley quickly reprimands her: "How could you be so unfeeling to Miss Bates? How could you be so insolent in your wit to a woman of her character, age, and situation?"[67] Emma defensively answers: "[Y]ou must allow, that what is good and what is ridiculous are most unfortunately blended in her" (*E* 408). Mr. Knightley responds that the rich are acceptable targets, but not poor, socially marginalized women like Miss Bates. D.W. Harding notes: "What Austen does [in *Emma*]…is unexpectedly to give Miss Bates the moral advantage in a social situation, with the effect of taking down a peg those—including us—who have felt comfortably superior to her."[68]

Austen explores the comforts of private ridicule in *Sense and Sensibility*. In that novel, a cheery disposition is associated with largeness in the figure of Mrs. Jennings, "a

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[65] James Fordyce*, Sermons to Young Women*, 12th ed. (London, 1800), 146.

[66] Hannah More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education. With a view of the Principles and Conduct Prevalent Among Women of Rank and Fortune*, vol. 1 (London, 1800), 12-13.

[67] Jane Austen, *Emma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 407. Hereafter cited as *E*.

[68] Harding, 102.

good-humored, merry, fat, elderly woman, who talked a great deal, seemed very happy, and rather vulgar."[69] Austen's narration, focalized through Elinor's sensitive observations, encourages us to unfavorably judge the loud laughter of Mrs. Jennings. Yet, there is also an awareness within the character of Mrs. Jennings that she is an object of ridicule. She invites the Dashwood sisters, Marianne and Elinor, to travel with her to London: "I am sure I shall be monstrous glad of Miss Marianne's company, whether Miss Dashwood will go or not, only the more merrier say I, and I thought it would be more comfortable for them to be together; because if they got tired of me, they might talk to one another, and laugh at my odd ways behind my back" *(S&S* 175). Here we see Austen's object of ridicule winking her eye at those who might laugh at her. In this case, Mrs. Jennings recognizes that her behavior makes her subject to ridicule from Elinor and Marianne, yet she doesn't seem to mind, but instead encourages it. She doesn't view this ridicule as harmful, but instead as conducive to establishing a bond between two sisters—as long as the ridicule is privately shared.[70]

A private moment of laughter is shared between Anne and Charles Musgrove near the end of *Persuasion*, when Anne inquires about Louisa's health. Charles replies that Louis is "very much recovered; but she is altered; there is no running or jumping about, no laughing or dancing; it is quite different. If one happens only to shut the door a little hard, she starts and wriggles like a young dab-chick in the water; and Benwick sits at her

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[69] Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 40. Hereafter cited as *S&S*.

[70] The conduct book author Hester Chapone claims that it may be acceptable to laugh at someone who is offensive if the mockery does not take place in the presence of the offensive individual: "Delicate and good-natured raillery amongst equal friends, if pointed only against trifling errors as the owner can heartily join to laugh at, or such qualities as they do not pique themselves upon, is both agreeable and useful; but then it must be offered in perfect kindness and sincere good-humour." See Hester Chapone, *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, Addressed to a Young Lady* (London, 1800), 143.

elbow, reading verses, or whispering to her, all day long" (*PS* 154). Anne cannot conceal her pleasure: "She could not help laughing." In this moment, Anne allows herself this small comfort.

At the beginning of *Persuasion* Anne is viewed as a "nobody" by her father and her sister, Elizabeth. Though she has less standing with them than Elizabeth's companion Mrs. Clay does, we, as readers, perceive that Anne's "elegance of mind and sweetness of character,"—her moral superiority—will triumph in the end (*PS* 5). Like Austen's readers, Anne views herself as morally superior to other characters in the novel, including the Musgrove sisters: "Anne always contemplated [Henrietta and Louisa Musgrove] as some of the happiest creatures of her acquaintance; but still, saved as we all are by some *comfortable feeling of superiority* from wishing for the possibility of exchange, she would not have given her own more elegant and cultivated mind for all their enjoyments" (*PS* 30)(emphasis added). Within the larger context of the novel, the narration reveals that excessive vanity, like Sir Walter's, is ripe for ridicule. But here the narrator, whose consciousness is so often aligned with Anne's, seems earnest in pointing out that Anne's vanity, her need to feel mentally and morally superior to the Musgrove sisters, may be an irrational, yet still natural, comfort. Anne is "saved" by "some comfortable feeling of superiority" because at this early moment in the novel, she lacks other comforts, like Wentworth's affection.

As a novelist, Austen found her own "comfortable feeling of superiority" in laughing at herself and others. In her novels and her letters to her sister Cassandra, Austen may have mocked others, but she also made ironic sport of her own faults and frailties—her bad moods, her fickleness, her complexion. If satire is a glass, Austen did

not shy away from her reflection. She once wrote to an admiring, though somewhat clueless reader: "I could not sit seriously down to write a serious Romance under any other motive to save my Life, & if it were indispensible for me to keep it up & never relax into laughing at myself or other people, I am sure I should be hung before I had finished the first Chapter—No—I must keep to my own style & go on in my own Way" (*JAL* 326)."[71] Austen squarely aimed her ridicule at herself, her narrators, her characters—and even at her readers. Are we in on the joke?

[71] Austen's correspondent, the Reverend James-Stanier Clarke, librarian to the Prince of Wales, suggested a "Historical Romance illustrative of the History of the august house of Coburg" (*JAL* 325).

Chapter 4

"Real Life" in Caricature: Pierce Egan's *Life in London*

The playful blurring of fiction and reality is promoted throughout Pierce Egan's *Life in London* (1821), beginning with the title and the title page's announcement "*EMBELLISHED WITH THIRTY-SIX SCENES FROM REAL LIFE*" (fig. 26). First published in twelve monthly numbers in 1820 and 1821 with illustrations by Robert and George Cruikshank, the novel depicts the sightseeing larks of city sophisticate Corinthian Tom and his unpolished country cousin Jerry Hawthorn. Corinthian Tom, the son of a self-made man, is not an aristocrat, though his moniker "Corinthian" signifies nobility. He has been able to establish himself as one of the *beau monde* in part through his sartorial sensibility, taste, and penetration. Tom takes Jerry under his wing and introduces him to "real" *Life in London*. One evening Tom and Jerry might mingle with high society in the ballroom at Almack's in the West End. Another night they may find themselves dancing with lowborn sailors, dustmen, and prostitutes at the gin joint All-Max in the East End. As the men move through the city, Tom guides Jerry in how to read "real character"—the way various classes converse, dress, and pursue "LIFE" in London. The primary conceit of Egan's novel is that (almost) everything Tom and Jerry see the reader sees along with them. At the same time as the novel underscores its visual tangibility, it presents, on the other hand, reality—the streets, storefronts, and galleries that actual men and women may have walked down or looked into in the early 1820s—as textual. "Real life" is just like a book. The narrator heartily declares, "There is not a *street* in London but what may be compared to a large or small volume of intelligence, abounding with

anecdote, incident, and peculiarities."[1] Every new street or new character that Tom reveals elicits wonder from Jerry. Over the course of the story, Jerry becomes both a spectator and a collector of "real life": "The strange tales which JERRY had heard, and the extraordinary characters that he had been made acquainted with in the course of the last few days, made him exclaim, 'This, indeed, is LIFE IN LONDON!'" (*LIL* 175).

Life in London;

OR, THE

DAY AND NIGHT SCENES

OF

JERRY HAWTHORN, ESQ.

AND HIS ELEGANT FRIEND

CORINTHIAN TOM,

ACCOMPANIED BY

BOB LOGIC, THE OXONIAN,

IN THEIR

Rambles and Sprees through the Metropolis.

BY PIERCE EGAN,

Author of Walks through Bath, Sporting Anecdotes, Picture of the Fancy, Boxiana, &c.

DEDICATED TO HIS MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY

KING GEORGE THE FOURTH.

EMBELLISHED WITH THIRTY-SIX SCENES FROM REAL LIFE,

DESIGNED AND ETCHED BY I. R. & G. CRUIKSHANK;

And enriched also with numerous original Designs on Wood, by the same Artists.

London:

PRINTED FOR SHERWOOD, NEELY, AND JONES,

PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1821.

Figure 26: *Life in London*, Title Page (1821)

[1] Pierce Egan, *Life in London: or, the Day and Night Scenes of Jerry Hawthorn, Esq.*, *and his Elegant Friend Corinthian Tom, Accompanied by Bob Logic, the Oxonian, in their Rambles and Sprees in the Metropolis* (London, 1821), 24. Hereafter cited as *LIL*.

As much as Egan's metafictional verbal puns, the Cruikshank etchings are central to the novelist's goal of portraying "real life" as a highly mediated, yet authentic experience. In the first half of *Life in London*, Egan reassures his readers, "All the Plates are the exact representations, as they occurred, of the various classes of society" (*LIL* 85). In the second half, we see that a "plate is an exact sketch of a Watch-house scene at midnight" (*LIL* 184) or that the "plate is an accurate representation of the Public Office, Bow-Street" (*LIL* 188).[2] In addition to drawing attention to the colored plates to validate his vision of "real life," Egan enthusiastically proclaims the artistry of the illustrators: in "all the varied portraiture of the interesting scenes of LIFE, let me invoke the superior talents, BOB and GEORGE CRUIKSHANK (thou *Gilray* [sic] of the day, and of *Don Saltero* greatness), to my anxious aid" (*LIL* 11). By comparing the Cruikshanks' illustrations to James Gillray's caricature, Egan firmly situates the designs in a caricature tradition that reveled in ridiculing the stylishly highborn in Gillray prints like *Following the Fashion* (1794) (see fig. 23). For example, in chapter one of book two, Jerry visits Tom's residence, Corinthian House, and admires "a portfolio of *caricatures*, including the whole of the fine and extensive collection of GILLRAY's works…while the inimitable wood-cuts… astonished Jerry at the great perfection which had been attained in this curious and interesting branch of the arts" (*LIL* 134-135). Egan also points to caricature's history as a medium that displayed curiosities and freaks through an allusion ("*Don Saltero* greatness") to James Salter's museum coffeehouse, which featured a

[2] Each monthly number included three plates featuring the Cruikshanks' illustrations. David A. Brewer has argued that this arrangement of the images, appearing before Tom and Jerry set out on their rambles and sprees in book two of the novel, contributed to the narrative suspense and initial success of *Life in London*. Brewer's research demonstrates that the arrangement of the plates in the monthly numbers of 1820-1821 may significantly differ from their authorized arrangement in the 1821 edition. See "The Moment of Tom and Jerry ('when fisticuffs were the fashion')"
Romantic Circles Praxis: Romantic Fandom (2011), accessed July 28, 2016, http://www.rc.umd.edu/praxis/fandom/praxis.fandom.2010.brewer.html#1.

variety of strange and foreign objects, like "a large tusk of a beaver," "teeth from a giant," or "A Chinese Nun, very curious."[3] This varied collection of types found in Salter's museum coffeehouse may have signaled for Egan an appealing "real life" authenticity akin to the "exact" and "accurate" realness of the "varied portraiture" of characters and "interesting scenes" found in the text and the illustrations.[4]

Egan's emphasis on the "varied classes of society" and "varied portraiture" stems from his conviction that "real life" is rendered most vividly through the "extremes" of class and taste. For Egan, a vision of "real life" is one of extremes because, tautologically, London itself is full of extremes: "The EXTREMES, in every point of view, are daily to be met with in the Metropolis" (*LIL* 22). The novelist textually foregrounds "the extremes" through the repetition of binaries like high and low, rich and poor, up and down, in and out. The "extremes" are also represented in the Cruikshanks' plates, which portray the polished society of Almack's, as well as the "unsophisticated sons and daughters of Nature" (*LIL* 287) found at All-Max. From the first chapter of the novel, Egan acknowledges the Cruikshanks' crucial role in delineating the "extremes" of *Life in London*:

> Indeed, I have need of all thy illustrative touches; and may we be hand and glove together in depicting the richness of nature, which so wantonly, at times, plays off her freaks upon the half-famished bone-rakers and cinder-sifters round the dust-hill, that we may be found, *en passant*, so identified with the scene in question, as

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[3] Angela Todd, "Your Humble Servant Shows Himself: Don Saltero and Public Coffeehouse Space," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 6.2 (2005): 120-121, 131.

[4] Todd, 121: "Salter's collection, which like [Sir Hans] Sloane's included several examples of a *type*…nevertheless failed to convey the same sense of systematic inquiry. Scattered as it was throughout the coffeehouse…these objects lose the *effect* of comprehensiveness that Sloane aimed for with his systematic display." Unlike Salter, Egan does seek "comprehensiveness" though his lists of the different "real characters" found at Almack's, All-Max, Hyde Park, and other venues.

> almost to form a part of the group. May thou, also, Bob and George, *grapple* with an *Hogarthian* energy, in displaying *tout à la mode* the sublime and *finished* part of the creation…(*LIL* 12)

The novelist closely aligns himself, "hand and glove," with the Cruikshanks as they depict the low "freaks" and the high and fashionable, the "sublime and *finished* part of the creation." It is important to note, though, that Egan disrupts this binary of high and low through a pun on the "richness of nature." The "half-famished bone-rakers and cinder sifters" are economically poor, but they are rich in character and life—a theme that is central to Egan's focus on "real life" and "real character."[5] More than any other establishment Tom and Jerry visit, All-Max represents the "richness of nature" through lowborn, marginal figures like the dustman, Dusty Bob, Tom and Jerry encounter at the gin joint.[6] Egan also conveys the low and poor as aesthetically rich spectacles. The lower class adds "light and shade" that fills out the picture of *Life in London*.

Still, it is not simply the content of a spectacle that defines Egan's concept of "real life." Rather, it is the form the spectacles take that fascinates him as a novelist. The protagonists Tom and Jerry represent "real life" through how they see "real life." That is, how they function as spectacles through their own spectating. Similarly, in the passage above, the author describes reality as almost coming into being through the act of observing: "that we may be found, *en passant*, so identified with the scene in question, as

[5] For example, the title page informs us that in addition to the color plates *Life in London* is "enriched also with numerous original Designs on Wood, by the same Artists." These black-and-white vignettes depict moments in the narrative that primarily focus on low characters or low incidents, unlike the color plates which alternate between presenting images of high life and low life.

[6] For more on Dusty Bob, see Brian Maidment, *Dusty Bob: A Cultural History of Dustmen, 1780-1870* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).

almost to form a part of the group." Here, Egan and the Cruikshanks become "so identified with the scene," blurring the divide between the fictional *Life in London* and reality of the novelist and artists, through the act of seeing "real characters," the freaks and the "finished part of the creation" that inhabit London. As a whole, the novel is about the act of observing, of reading surfaces and exteriors, rather than interiority or character development.[7]

Corinthian Tom's ability to recognize "real character" does not stem from any special talent for reading minds. Instead, he reads the external signs written in an individual's dress, bearing, or conversation. As Deidre Lynch notes, "Real characters are, in the idiom of the period, 'strongly marked': their traits (quirks) are writ large."[8] Their "traits" often render them as comical as caricatures, and it is not uncommon to see the words "character" and "caricature" used interchangeably in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, as the line separating the two terms tends to blur in contemporary illustrations and prints (for example, fig. 27 and fig. 28). The Egan-Cruikshank collaboration captured in word and image this contemporary fascination with "real" characters and caricatures. By insisting that he is providing his readers a picture of "real life," Egan is, I contend, also advancing the concept of "real life" in caricature.

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[7] Although an admirer of Egan's fiction for its "faithful and detailed picture of the Regency scene," his biographer J.C. Reid criticizes the novel for its undeveloped characters, and a plot that is "an excuse for presenting a series of pictures of city life," in which the "touches of caricature" detract from the overall work. He believes Egan is somewhat inept as a novelist because he "lacked the imaginative power necessary to transform his material into an integrated work or to contrive incidents and characters which transcend the observed." My contention is that there is no need for Egan to "transcend the observed" when the novel itself is about observation. See J. C. Reid, *Bucks and Bruisers: Pierce Egan and Regency England* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), 66.

[8] Deidre Shauna Lynch, *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1998), 78.

Figure 27: *A real Character P—O* (1777)

Figure 28: *A Real Character in St. Helena by Lootho* (1781)

In this chapter, I argue that Egan's descriptions and the Cruikshanks' illustrations of the rambles and sprees of the novel's protagonists call attention to their *mediation* of

"real life." Both realism and caricature are not at odds on this plane where what is primary is the means of expression more than the content (which matters mostly in *Life* for being varied). As such, *Life in London* is, I suggest, invested in two distinct modes that make primary the mediation of "real life": first, in "seeing" life in spectacles of spectacles, and, second, in touching "EXTREMES, in every point of view." In the first part of this chapter, I explore how Egan's depiction of Corinthian Tom on display in a print shop window advances the novelist's agenda of seeing "real life" in caricature. I follow Deidre Lynch in showing that consuming character and caricatures in books and print shop windows extends from the eighteenth century into the early nineteenth century: here looking at those looking at caricatures at a print shop brings into focus the overlap of caricature and realism. In the second section, I consider how Egan promotes "real life" through the "extremes" of *Life in London*, which are epitomized by the fashionable assembly room Almack's in the West and the gin joint All-Max in the East.

I. Seeing *Life*

In *Life in London*, spectating, itself, is the most compelling object of sight. The adventures of Corinthian Tom and Jerry center on studying and judging everyone around them, but their eyes are often focused on how others see the men and women in their own line of sight. In Hyde Park, Tom directs Jerry's attention to the spectating others perform: "The MAN OF TON *staring* some modest female, that attracts his attention, completely out of countenance; while the *Lady of Rank*, equally *delicate* in her ideas of propriety, uses her *glass* upon the same object till her carriage removes her out of sight" (*LIL* 150). Tom's observations convey that there are proper and improper ways of looking at others.

The Man of Ton's sexually suggestive stare is just as inappropriate as the Lady of Rank's quizzing. But it is also incorrect, Tom informs Jerry, to commit the "too common but vulgar practice of turning round to look back after any person whom he might point out to his notice" (*LIL* 149). The emphasis on the act of seeing found at Hyde Park extends to other venues like Vauxhall, where Tom and Jerry's dancing "attracted numerous *gazers*" (*LIL* 337), the Opera House where the audience desires "To *look* and to be *looked* at" (*LIL* 330), and the Royal Academy's Exhibition Room at Somerset House, where the pair see "various characters" (*LIL* 342) gaze at both the portraits on the wall and the real men and women mixing in the room beside them. The two men observe myriad characters ogling and peeping, but they look on with a discretion that others lack. Tom's inherited wealth makes it possible for him to sustain his life of leisure. He can ramble as much as he wants. Without his rambles and sprees he would not be able to see life as fully.

Tom's observations provide a comforting fantasy of the legibility of real character, and this may be one reason for the novel's contemporary popularity.[9] According to Tom, the city consists of a vast, intricate array of types, but that variety is securely fixed and ordered through his descriptions. The immensity of the city comes through in Egan's narration, when he remarks, the "next-door neighbor of a man in London is generally so great a stranger to him as if he lived at the distance of York" (*LIL* 22-23). This breadth of city life also appears in the images, which often feature crowds—at Almack's, at All-Max, at Hyde Park (fig. 29), and so on. Corinthian Tom's dialogue in each of those scenes primarily consists of him identifying the types of onlookers that fill

[9] Even before the completed novel appeared in boards in 1821, dramatizations, like W.T. Moncrieff's *Tom and Jerry* (1821) were performed on stage to eager crowds, and pirated editions, like *Real Life in London* (1821), were printed for readers seeking to relive the "fun, frolic, fashion, and flash" of *Life in London*.

those spaces. He reassuringly classifies the “DEBAUCHEE,” the “SWELL DANDY,” the “WOMAN of *Quality*,” the “wealthy CIT,” the “*flashy Tradesman*,” and many other figures, including “PAINTERS on the look out for *characters*, and *Authors* for the purpose of gaining a knowledge of real life.” There is a never a doubt in Tom’s mind about what he sees, nor is he ever at a loss to find “real life” or real characters.

Figure 29: George and Robert Cruikshank, “Tom & Jerry, Sporting their bits of blood among the Pinks in Rotten Row” (1820)

In addition to seeing “real life” in Hyde Park, Vauxhall, the Opera House, and the Royal Academy, our protagonists also discover it in print shop windows (George Humphrey’s print shop), in auction houses (Christie’s), in Roman architecture (the Corinthian column), and the boxing ring (John Jackson’s boxing academy). The print shop window is a particularly apt metaphor for “real life” in an illustrated novel that emphasizes visual consumption. From the 1760s to the 1840s, the print shop window

offered two forms of entertainment for viewers—the prints, themselves, *and* the spectators who stand outside the shop window staring at those prints. For example, in *The Macaroni Print Shop* (fig. 30) the odd array of short and tall, fat and lean men profiled in front of Matthew and Mary Darly's print shop on the Strand are meant to appear just as ridiculous as the macaroni prints displayed in the shop window.

Figure 30: Edward Topham, *The Macaroni Print Shop* (1772)

As previous scholars have noted, the print shop window genre, which documents through a metapictoral frame "real characters" or types found in the city, featured repeatedly in the prints of the period, including James Gillray's *Very Slippy-Weather* (fig. 31) and the anonymous *Caricature Shop* (fig. 32). "One characteristic of this genre," Mike Goode notes, "is its emphasis on the diversity of the viewing public," one that

“crosses ranks, races, ages, professions, genders, sexualities, sociabilities, literacies, body types.”[10] In the first volume of his late nineteenth-century memoir *Glances Back Through Seventy Years*, Henry Vitzelly recalls, “The shop windows of the London printsellers were the people’s real picture galleries at this period, and always had their gaping crowds before them.”[11] Vitzelly’s remark about the “gaping crowds” conveys that the storefront was a prime location for observing the spectacle of other spectators. This mode of visual consumption, however, implicates the spectator into the comic spectacle, as he or she becomes apart of the “gaping crowds.” As an onlooker, one is susceptible to the same form of ridicule that satirical prints generate. Egan’s novel bypasses this concern, in the second chapter, by evoking his camera obscura metaphor: “The author…has chosen for his readers a *Camera Obscura* View of London, not only from its safety, but because it is so *snug*, and also possessing the invaluable advantages of SEEING and not being *seen*” (*LIL* 18).[12] As such, *Life in London* not only provides safe haven from the physical dangers of the city—“LIFE IN LONDON will be seen without any fear or apprehension of danger either from *fire* or *water*; avoiding also breaking a limb, receiving a *black* eye, losing a pocket-book, and getting into a watch-house” (*LIL* 19)—but also the social dangers of ridicule.

[10] Mike Goode, “The Public and Limits of Persuasion in the Age of Caricature” in *The Efflorescence of Caricature, 1759-1838*. ed. Todd Porterfield (Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 201), 123-124. For more on the print shop window genre, see Joseph Monteyne, *From Still Life to Screen: Print Culture, Display, and the Materiality of the Image in Eighteenth-Century London* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), and Brian Maidment, *Comedy, Caricature, and the Social Order, 1820-50* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

[11] Henry Vitzelly, *Glances Back Through Seventy Years: Autobiographical and Other Reminiscences* vol. 1(London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co, 1893), 88.

[12] For more on the *camera obscura*, see Jonathan Crary, “The Camera Obscura and Its Subject,” in *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 25-66.

Figure 31: James Gillray, *Very Slippy-Weather* (1808)

Figure 32: *Caricature Shop* (1801)

That Egan positions his text as one which promotes his readers to consume satirical images without becoming a joke themselves is notable given that in many other works produced in the early nineteenth century spectators are susceptible to becoming visual jokes. Perhaps the most popular example of this phenomenon is William Combe and Thomas Rowlandson's illustrated poem, *The Tour of Dr. Syntax in Search of the Picturesque* (1812), in which the lean clergyman with the long chin unwittingly becomes a ridiculous spectacle as he sketches the countryside. In the opening chapter, Egan requests that the print publisher Rudolph Ackermann, "Present a copy of [Tom and Jerry's] SPREES and RAMBLES to the learned Doctor [Syntax], and his 'Picturesque'

brain will be all on fire for another tour, from the new scenes it will develope [sic] to his unbounded thirst for enterprise and knowledge" (*LIL* 10). Egan imagines Ackermann in dialogue with the fictional Dr. Syntax who will be inspired by Egan's fictional creations.

The artist and author G.M. Woodward produced several images that depicted the viewers of caricatures as caricatures, themselves. In *Caricature Curiosity* (fig. 33), a fuming clergyman and a self-contented soldier stare at representations of themselves in a print shop window. The clergyman furiously denounces the caricature, voicing an anger that is quite unbecoming of a man of God: "Tis sure as I am Parson Puzzle-Text they have clapp'd me up in the Print Shops. I have a great mind to break the windows." The amused soldier remarks, "Don't be angry Neighbour—you should not be surprised by anything in London! why look ye there I declare they have got me too, in my Volunteer Uniform—but see how quietly I take it!! they like to see people in a passion—!"[13] He offers a comforting hand to sooth the seething parson, whose own hand is gripped in a fist. The soldier revels in his satirical depiction, while the Parson takes offense at what he views at the mockery of his person. The two dogs at the bottom of the frame seem to replicate the men's reactions. The dog behind Parson Puzzle-Text bears a stiff, offensive stance, his mouth wide open presumably exuding the same ire and horror that appears on the parson's face, while the dog closest to the solider eagerly stretches up to get a closer look. Dogs often appeared in caricatures belonging to the print shop window genre, as can be seen in James Gillray's *Very Slippy Weather* and the anonymous *Caricature Shop*, so Woodward may be comically suggesting that even dogs find themselves subject to "real life" in caricature. Most significantly, the images of both male figures mirror the

[13] Displaying "people in a passion" appears to have been a professional preoccupation for Woodward. In the early 1800s, Rudolph Ackermann published *Le Brun Travested, or Caricatures of the Passions* with designs by Woodward that were engraved by Rowlandson.

real characters outside the print shop, as opposed to exaggerating their features, as is typical of caricature, implying that the real characters are, in effect, walking, talking caricatures.

Figure 33: After G.M. Woodward, *Caricature Curiosity* (1806)

This interest in "real life" in caricature also extends to the many Woodward designs assembled in publisher Thomas Tegg's *The Caricature Magazine, or Hudibrastic Mirror*. The title page of the first volume (fig. 34), which alludes to Hogarth's *Characters and Caricatures,* is filled with a crowd of heads. The caricatures—some are amused, while others are dismayed—gaze at one another and out at the viewer. Below these figures, on the left side of the frame, a man heartily laughs at a drawing of himself. On the right a woman closely examines a depiction of herself. The epigraph playfully warns, "*Quid rides? Mutato nomine, de te Fabula narrator*," informing the reader that with the names changed the story—in this case, the image—could apply to oneself. The *Caricature Magazine* invites its readers to gaze on and laugh, fully aware that the jokes that beguile them are self-reflective jests. These self-reflective jests function as forms of visual consumption that define Egan's concept of "real life," which makes his mode of realism significantly different from traditional accounts of nineteenth-century novelistic realism. Much of the discussion of novelistic realism has revolved around middle-class interiority that stems from Ian Watt's influential account of the novel in *The Rise of the Novel*. Egan's realism validates reading surfaces (e.g. two-dimensional surface of a book's pages), as opposed to probing inner meaning. His novel does portray the lives of the middle class as good and unassuming, but this representation is ultimately too staid and dull and not full of new sights that the city is naturally bursting with on each street. As Sambudha Sen notes, "Egan explicitly finds in the city the source of an expressive dynamic that runs counter to domestic realism's focus on the everyday life of the middle classes as the only proper subject for the novel."[14]

[14] Sambudha Sen, *London, Radical Culture, and the Making of the Dickensian Aesthetic* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2012), 83.

Figure 34: Isaac Cruikshank after G.M. Woodward *The Caricature Magazine,* vol.1, Title Page (c. 1808)

Egan, like Woodward, draws attention to the trope that the onlookers are caricatures themselves. Even the consummate Corinthian Tom cannot escape the comical gaze of others. Towards the beginning of the first chapter, Egan requests that the printseller George Humphrey display Corinthian Tom in the window of his print shop: "HUMPHREYS [sic], too, thou plentiful caterer for the sons of Momus, only one little pane of glass in thy attractive shop-front I entreat for the display of CORINTHIAN TOM, that he may be viewed quite 'at home' in St. James's Street" (*LIL* 8). The contradiction of Corinthian Tom "at home" in the public street of St. James humorously signals Tom's status as a well-heeled denizen of the West End: "The *unique* appearance of our Hero, at all times,—his corresponding vehicles,—his elegant high-bred cattle,—and his servants, displayed such an unity of mind and taste, that he was christened by the *Beau Monde*, CORINTHIAN TOM" (*LIL* 92). Tom knows that his acclaim stems from

his stylish appearance, which marks him as a gentleman of means and taste. Indeed, his very name, Corinthian Tom, symbolizes the highest level of embellishment. As Jane Rendell notes, "For the Roman architectural historian Vitruvius, the Corinthian was the superlative architectural order, distinguished by its decorative capital."[15] But there is also another meaning to Tom's designation as a Corinthian, as can be seen in Egan's 1823 version of Francis Grose's *Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue*. In Grose's 1785 dictionary the definition for "Corinthians" is "Frequenters of brothels." In Egan's edition, however, the definition of "Corinthians" is "The highest order of swells." The novelist doesn't explicitly acknowledge the irony of a brothel-frequenting perfect gentleman, but the additional meaning resonates in a novel filled with puns and *double entendres*. Egan presents Tom as the suave swell, or gentleman, of St. James Street.[16] His fashion sense is admired, rather than mocked, unlike so many dandies featured in contemporary prints (for example, see fig. 35). Yet, the print representing his figure is a comical one, appearing in a print shop window that caters to the "the sons of Momus." Despite this connection to the Greek god associated with satire, Corinthian Tom is not ridiculed. He is a real character, whose identity is as legible as caricature, but without the negative sting of ridicule.

[15] Jane Rendell, *The Pursuit of Pleasure: Gender, Space & Architecture in Regency London* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 39.

[16] Although Tom may not be a frequenter of brothels, it is not entirely due to moral qualms. Rather, he has the financial independence to support his own mistress, Corinthian Kate, who lives in private quarters that Tom pays for.

Figure 35: Robert Cruikshank, *Dandies Dressing* (1818)

In the early nineteenth century, caricature had many detractors who viewed the medium as one of *ad hominen* attacks that degrade a person's humanity by mocking behaviors or bodily irregularities. For example, a contemporary edition of Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* defines "to caricature" as "to ridicule; to represent unfairly."[17] In *Eccentric Excursions*, Woodward anticipates criticism of his own designs: "many of the sketches in this work may be thought exaggerated, and pronounced by some able *picture-dealer* as bordering on *caricature*."[18] In his defense, he lifts a passage from the "ingenious" Francis Grose's *Rules for Drawing Caricaturas*:

[17] Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, ed. Rev. H.J. Todd, vol.1 (London: 1818). Interestingly, there is no entry for "caricature," or alternate spellings like "caricatura," in the first edition of Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Languag*e. Twenty-eight years later, in 1783, when a seventh edition of the *Dictionary* was published, a year before Johnson's death, the word is still absent. A definition for caricatura finally appears in 1794 in a *Dictionary of the English Language…Carefully selected from Sheridan, Walker, Johnson, &*c.: "a ludicrous…likeness."

[18] G.M. Woodward, *Eccentric Excursions*, *or Literary & Pictorial Sketches of Countenance, Character & Country in Different Parts of England and Southern Wales* (1796), ii-iii. *Eccentric Excursions*,

> In order to do the art in question justice it should be considered that it is one of the elements of satirical painting, which like poetry of the same denomination, may be most efficaciously employed in the cause of virtue and decorum, by holding up to public notice, many offenders against both, who are not amenable to any other tribunal!

Egan also acknowledges this familiar dismissal of caricature and addresses it within the novel, but he aligns his work with Hogarth's satirical prints (e.g. The Cruikshanks "*grapple* with an *Hogarthian* energy") to connect to a more esteemed tradition of caricature. Egan still advises the Cruikshanks, through an allusion to Shakespeare's *Othello*, "[B]ear it in remembrance, 'nothing to extenuate, or set down aught in malice' " (*LIL* 11). One can discern, though, in his admonition, a desire to move beyond the conventional disparagement of caricature, when he remarks:

> [Y]et be tremblingly alive to the *shrug* of the fastidious critic, who might, in his sneer, remark that CARICATURE would be as much out of time and place in holding up to ridicule the interior of the religious good man's closet, as it is animatedly required in giving all the rusticity and fun incident to the humours of a country fair. (*LIL* 11)

With facetious sincerity, he counsels the Cruikshanks to "be tremblingly alive" to a type of critic he belittles as "fastidious," one who would "sneer" at caricature.

Given the many caricatures produced by the Cruikshanks in the early nineteenth

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Woodward's most popular text, also promotes the spectacle of "real life" in caricature, through its portrayal of London as "the *seat* of CHARACTER." 6.

century, which were certainly full of maliciously comical content, the passage is humorously equivocal. In the years before George IV's ascension to the throne, George Cruikshank produced many satires of the Prince Regent, including *The Prince of Whales or The Fisherman at Anchor* (1812), in which the obese royal figure is depicted as a gross spouting whale, and *The Dandy at Sixty* (fig. 36), a design he created for William Hone's *The Political House that Jack Built* (1819). Yet, all this political caricature appears to be forgotten in Egan's address to the Cruikshanks. Moreover, Egan dedicates the novel to "His Most Excellent Majesty." Laughter in *Life in London* is never directed at George IV, who is without irony portrayed as a "PERFECT GENTLEMAN" (*LIL* 11).[19]

Figure 36: George Cruikshank, "The Dandy of Sixty" (1819)

[19] Henry Vitzelly did not hold a favorable opinion of Egan's novel or of the dedication to the king: "Now-a-days we find the letterpress of "Life in London" sad rubbish, and yet the first gentleman in Europe, charmed with so congenial a subject, gave his gracious permission for the work to be dedicated to him" (12).

There are many other male figures in the novel, like the dandy Dick Trifle, who are mocked as caricatures. At Almack's, Corinthian Tom disparages the effeminate Trifle, who is, as his name suggests, superficial. What is worse is that his obsession with fashion is so uninspiring. He is one of the "fellows… who are made up of *imitation*, from the beginning to the end of that *Chapter of Caricatures* upon the human race; sullying the dignity of man, and reducing his character to the degradation of the *vain* butterfly, or more gaudy peacock" (*LIL* 162). Corinthian Tom represents the "real life" of caricature as opposed to the unimaginative caricature that Trifle symbolizes. Instead of simply encountering Tom in the snug and private atmosphere of one's home, one sees Tom, himself, as part of the public spectacle of visual consumption. In much of the novel, however, the author seeks to evoke laughter that is knowledgeably sardonic, a laughter that Tom exhibits in the city, as well as his "Always punning" Oxonian friend, Bob Logic (*LIL* 359). It is an irony-induced laughter, a laughter that originates from insider knowledge of the gap between "real character" and masks, figurative and literal, that men and women wear in the city.

Near the beginning of the second half of the novel, Jerry mistakenly identifies a bawd and her prostitutes as a "Mamma and her three daughters" (*LIL* 164). Logic quickly apprises the impressionable young man of his error: "I mean to inform you," answered the *Oxonian*, with a grin on his face, that those three nymphs, who have so much dazzled your optics, are three nuns, and the plump female is Mother ***** of great notoriety, but generally designated the Abbess of ***** *****" (*LIL* 166). Logic uses terms found in both Francis Grose's and Egan's slang dictionaries, like "Abbess" and "nuns," to classify the women, but at least one of his terms, "Mother," is almost identical to the term that

Jerry uses. Although "Mother" is also slang for bawd, the word has a very different meaning in Logic's speech than it does in Jerry's. But without Bob Logic or Corinthian Tom's guiding insight, Jerry would not be unable to discern the wordplay, to see through the masks of fancy dress and manners worn by the real characters he encounters.

Logic's response to the hypocrisy of *Mother* ***** is one of sardonic detachment. This same critical, but bemused tone also appears earlier in the novel, when Logic recounts the schemes of Rich Old Evergreen, "the most systematic debauchee on the town" (*LIL* 159). He lists Old Evergreen's sexual conquests: "MARIA was *deceived*—BETSY *decoyed*—PAMELA *entreated*." He continues to name the young women who were "persuaded," "inveigled," "cajoled," or "tricked," etc. Evergreen is described by Logic as a man who uses women as objects of embellishment:

> "…the finest females of this kingdom had, at various times of his life, either adorned his mansion or *graced* his coach…So *keen* a sportsman was Old Evergreen, and so well acquainted with the manoeuvres of the course, that he was not easily jockied; but, when a new object appeared in view, no one knew better how to hedge-off than he did, in having no objection that his OLD fillies should run under other names." (*LIL* 159-160)

Logic's tone is one of amusement more than disgust towards Evergreen. As a "sportsman," Evergreen's major preoccupation, the chase, is not so different from Logic, Tom, or Jerry's objective. The fun the trio pursues is often sexual fun, though their actual sexual escapades remain off the page. Still, the novel implies the prevalence of such adventures. Egan indicates that Tom is also a rake like Evergreen: "[Tom's] character

was not exempt from the term of LIBERTINE" (*LIL* 49).[20] Both Evergreen and Tom seek women as forms of embellishment. For Evergreen, they "either adorned his mansion or *graced* his coach." Similarly, Tom searches for a female companion who will give "*éclat* to his curricle" (*LIL* 94). Corinthian Tom, himself, as previously discussed, embodies embellishment in his name and person. Embellishment is the guiding ethos of his lifestyle and Egan's brand of "mediated" realism. The novel is, we are told early on, "*EMBELLISHED WITH THIRTY-SIX SCENES FROM REAL LIFE*."

Egan never explicitly states why libertinism resonates with "real life." Instead, he displays an ironic tolerance for the unspoken moral trespasses of his heroes. He playfully leaves it in the hands of the reader to discern the shades of real character his protagonists embody. It is as if he places judgment in the eyes of the reader with a warning similar to the banner found in an image of George Humphrey's print shop (fig. 37) by Theodore Lane.[21] The caricatures displayed in Humphrey's window are satires of George IV's estranged wife, Caroline of Brunswick, whom the king unsuccessfully attempted to divorce in 1820 before his coronation.[22] The blue banner contains the motto of the order of the garter "Honi Soit Qui Mal Y Pense" ("Shame on Him Who Thinks Evil of It"), which draws attention to both the images in the window and the onlookers who consume those images. The bodies of the viewer are tightly packed together, and, for the most part,

[20] For more on the rake as gentleman, see Erin Mackie, *Rakes, Highwaymen, and Pirates: The Making of the Modern Gentleman* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009): "the modern polite English gentleman shares a history with those other celebrated but less respectable eighteenth-century masculine types: the rake, the highwayman, and the pirate," 1.

[21]The printseller George Humphrey was the nephew of Hannah Humphrey, who became in the 1790s the preeminent purveyor of Gillray's prints. Born around 1800, Theodore Lane had a short-lived career as an artist. Impressed by the illustrations Lane created for his comic poem *The Show Folks* (1831), Egan wrote "A Biographical Sketch or The Life of Mr. Theodore Lane" in honor of the artist who died in 1828.

[22] See Kristin Flieger Samuelian, *Royal Romances: Sex, Scandal, and Monarchy in Print, 1780-1821*(New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 167-178.

their backs rather than their faces are shown, making it difficult to distinguish between one onlooker and the next. These spectators are not "real characters" like Parson Puzzle-Text and the Soldier in Volunteer Uniform from Woodward's *Caricature Curiosity* are. Moreover, there is less variety in dress and economic status here than can be found in *Very-Slippy Weather* or the *Caricature Shop*. Nor do the middle class men and women of *Honi Soit Qui Mal Y Pense* gaze at one another as intently as do the figures in *The Macaroni Print Shop*. These differences may indicate a newer cultural conception of the print shop window as less a space for character-watching than earlier examples of the genre. *Life in London*, however, recalls the world of those mid-to-late eighteenth century prints through its display of various classes, what Egan calls the "extremes."[23]

Figure 37: Theodore Lane, *Honi Soit Qui Mal Y Pense* (1821)

[23] In *City of Laughter: Sex and Laughter in Eighteenth-Century London* (Atlantic: London, 2006), Vic Gatrell explores the influence of late eighteenth-century caricature on Egan's novel, "*Life in London* looked backwards rather than forward," 550.

II. "The EXTREMES, in every point of view"

"Real life," we learn through the urbane observations of Corinthian Tom, is found most distinctively in London, where one can see "LIFE" in all its variety. Egan does admit, though, that there is life outside of the city: it is "not absolutely necessary to a man's salvation…that he should pay a visit to London," nor is it true "that a man, born in England, who does not visit London during his existence, dies 'a fool'" (*LIL* 38-39). But these are not strong endorsements of country life, which in the novelist's view does not offer the "extremes" of "real life" and "real character" that London presents. The predominant way to see life in terms of an exaggerated high and low is represented through the pairing of Almack's in the West and All-Max in the East. Tom praises the refinement and polish of the high found in Almack's, but he also informs Jerry that "a view of real life" can be found in the low in part because it is so full of "human *character*" (*LIL* 222).

Egan uses the novel's frontispiece to shape how the reader sees the "extremes" of "real life." The illustration (fig. 38) places Tom, Jerry, and Bob at the center of the Corinthian column.[24] The three men's arms are raised in celebration—though Bob Logic, on the left, seems half passed out—as they toast merry "Life in London." Tom and Jerry's arms are raised above their heads, drawing the reader's attention to the "Ups," the "Noble" and "Respectable." Tom and Jerry can freely mingle with the *ton* in Almack's assembly rooms, where they interact with *pinks*, the "top of the mode." The "flowers of

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[24] In *Metropolitan Art and Literature, 1810-1840: Cockney Adventures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), Gregory Dart comments that "there is a strong sense in which we are supposed to think of [Tom and Jerry's] central position purely as a vantage point from which the rest of society, with all its violent contrasts and reversals, becomes readable as a form of sporting spectacle…Tom and Jerry have succeeded in raising a hot-air balloon of the imagination, in which all the anxieties about fortune and status have been subsumed into a fantasy of visual pleasure," 11.

society" bow to a remarkably trim George IV. Above the king rests the "Corinthian Capital," which designates London as a city ordered by a Corinthian vision of the metropolis. Bob Logic's right arm points to the "downs" of *Life in London*; this significantly links the low world to Bob more than it does to Tom and Jerry. The worlds of the ups and downs, however, do not come into direct contact: it is only through Tom and Jerry's forays into these very different worlds that they link up. With the Corinthian column, Egan constructs a coherent, stable portrait of society, albeit one that he is constantly disrupting throughout the novel. In the frontispiece, the mediation of "real life" through the Corinthian column emphasizes Egan's focus on embellishment. At the same time, the centrality of pleasure to *Life in London* is highlighted by the caption below the base of the column: "*Here are we met three merry Boys/ Three merry boys I trow are we/ And mony a night we've merry been/ And mony mae we hope to be.*" The lines come from a drinking song written by the Scottish poet Robert Burns in 1789 called "Willie Brew'd a Peck o' Maut." The chorus of the song encourages a lifestyle of hard-drinking fraternal fun that lasts from dusk until dawn: "The cock may craw, the day may daw/ And ay we'll taste the barley bree [whisky]." The song, like *Life in London*, celebrates masculine conviviality. In the novel, Corinthian Tom repeatedly sings ballads and show tunes. In fact, bound into the text is sheet music for Tom's "A Description of the Metropolis," which begins "LONDON TOWN's a dashing place/For ev'ry thing that's going,/There's *fun* and *gig* in ev'ry face,/So natty and *so knowing*." Interestingly, although the *Life in London* trio toasts, and presumably sings, the ups of Almack's in the frontispiece, the drinking and merry fun they pursue is found to a larger extent in the

downs of All-Max. The “Base,” or low life, is the foundation for the Corinthian column and Tom’s way of life.

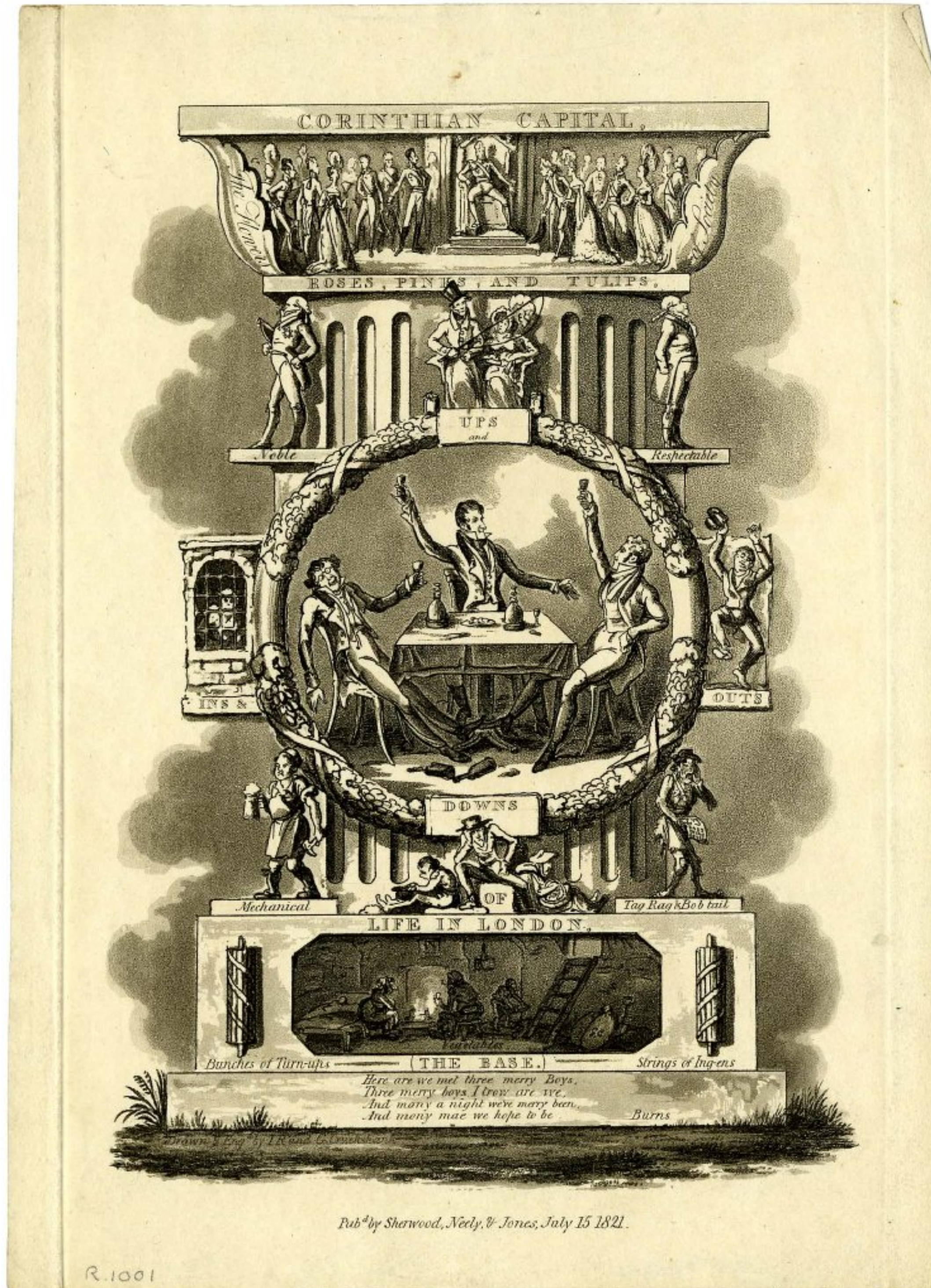

Figure 38: George and Robert Cruikshank, *Life in London*, Frontispiece (1821)

Tom shines in the polished and refined world of Almack's (fig. 39), the "highest life" in London, which features its own set of types:

> the *imperious* DUCHESS—the proud MARCHIONESS—the *stiff* COUNTESS—the *starched-up* LADY—the *consequential honourable* FAIR ONE—the *upstart* MRS.—the *contemptuous* BEAUTY—the *turn-up-nose* DEMURE CREATURE—the *squeamish* MISS, and the fastidious PATRONESSES. (*LIL* 295-296)

The women who "parade up and down" and pass judgment at Almack's may seem to be a dazzling array of real characters. As Tom relates to Jerry, however, he will find but "few *characters*" because of the emphasis on propriety among this group of women, as well as the men who frequent Almack's.[25] They are "persons whose riches afforded them so much time and so many opportunities of becoming correct in their movements," that they lose the spontaneity and freedom of real character (*LIL* 297). When Tom and Jerry are among royalty and the ton of society at Almack's they "must be on [their] P's and Q's", which places Jerry at a complete "stand-still" (*LIL* 299-300) The pun on movement, or lack of it, is evident through the duo's exchanges at Almack's. Tom instructs his cousin, "if you should find me tripping…you will gently bring me back to my recollection by merely saying 'LETHE,'" their shared code for forgetfulness. In moving, or "tripping," through the world of the high they must forget the rambles of low life. Both men hold this exclusive world in high esteem. Yet, Tom reassures Jerry that a "view of real life" can be seen more easily and freely in low life.

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[25] For more on Almack's, see 'Dissipation's hydra reign': Almack's and the Coterie" in Gillian Russell's *Women, Sociability, and the Theatre in Georgian London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 64-87.

Figure 39: George and Robert Cruikshank, "Highest Life in London" (1821)

Low life is presented most vividly in the novel through All-Max (fig. 40), where Bob Logic exudes the pleasures of low life even more than Tom and Jerry:

> The *spree* and the *fun* were increasing every minute, and the "TRIO" made the most of it, with as much pleasure and satisfaction as the lowest mud-lark amongst the group, LOGIC, (as the Plate represents,)…was listening to the *jargon* of *Black* SALL, who was seated on his right knee, and very liberally treating the *Oxonian chaste* salutes; whilst *Flashy* NANCE (who had *gammoned* more seamen out of their *vills* and power than the ingenuity or palaver of twenty of the most knowing of the frail sisterhood could effect,) was occupying LOGIC'S left knee, with her arm around his neck, laughing at the *chaffing* of the "*lady in black*," as she termed her, and also trying to engage the *attention* of LOGIC, who had just desired [JERRY] to behold the "Fields of Temptation," by which he was surrounded, and

chaunting, like a second Macheath…(*LIL* 289)

Egan introduces an intertextual layer by comparing Bob to Macheath, the anti-hero of John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*.[26] The allusion to *The Beggar's Opera* positions the low figures as aesthetic objects on display for the rambling protagonists and the readers of *Life in London*.[27] It is Logic, rather than Tom and Jerry, who is shown most intimately connected to low life. The lower status Bob does not have the access to the heights of Almack's, and therefore the delights of low life entrance him even more strongly than his companions. Tom and Jerry may dance the night away at Almack's, like the jigging interracial couple Dusty Bob and African Sal, but the two men maintain their social distinctions and finer sensibilities. Dusty Bob and African Sal exist as "extremes," representative of a racial binary that Egan playfully destabilizes along with the binary of high and low classes.[28] All-Max is the meeting ground of "Lascars, blacks, jack tars, coal-heavers, dustmen, women of colour, old and young, and a sprinkling of the remnants of once fine girls," where "every *cove* that put in his appearance was quite welcome; colour or country considered no obstacle; and *dress* and ADDRESS completely out of the

[26] In her journals, Harriet Arbuthnot compared a stage adaption of *Life in London* performed at the Adelphi theater to Gay's play: "[I]t was a sort of very low Beggars' Opera, but it is impossible to describe the sort of enthousiasm [sic] with which it was received by the people, who seemed to enjoy a representation of scenes in which, from their appearance, one might infer they frequently shared." Harriet Arbuthnot, *Journal of Mrs. Arbuthnot, 1820-1832*, Francis Bramford and the Duke of Wellington, eds. 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1950), 1:144, February 20, 1822. Quoted in Jenna M. Gibbs, 130.

[27] Egan's narrative nostalgically draws on a dramatic text in order to highlight the mediation of "real life." Mackie, 83: "The gentleman highwayman Macheath…is a nostalgic figure prominent in eighteenth-century cultural negotiations of legitimacy, masculinity, and social status."

[28] For more on black life in *Life in London*, see Jenna M. Gibbs, *Performing the Temple of Liberty: Slavery, Theater, and Popular Culture in London and Philadelphia, 1760-1850* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014): "While the prose, cartoon, and theatrical *Life in London* satires had only limited intersection with debates about black slavery and freedom and were at heart a class-based commentary, *Life in London* became the template for a transatlantic racialized urban spectator genre" (119).

question…All was *happiness*" (*LIL* 286). But the celebration of these marginalized figures is illusory. Even as they celebrate the carefree, democratic space that All-Max embodies, their slumming is never depicted as mixing too closely with the lower sort.

Figure 40: George and Robert Cruikshank, "Lowest 'Life in London'" (1821)

More than once in *Life in London*, Egan expresses concern for the potential threat that mixing evokes, but the threat is mitigated: "The company [at the horse auction house Tattersalls], I admit, is a *mixture* of persons of nearly all ranks in life; but, nevertheless, it is the sort of *mixture* which is pleasingly interesting: there is no *intimacy* or *association* about it" (*LIL* 238). The threat of "mixture" is never a serious issue for Corinthian Tom and Jerry. For example, Tom, Jerry, and Logic turn " 'masquerading it' among the CADGERS in the '*Back Slums*" in the HOLY LAND," St. Giles (*LIL* 333) into a fun, theatrical event. The trio dresses as beggars in order to enjoy an insider look at low life at the "begging fraternity" (*LIL* 345) that never gets too close. Tom informs Jerry that the

beggars in St. Giles provide “a *rich* view of Human Nature; and a fine page in the Book of Life” (*LIL* 343). They keep their theatrical distance, even as they are, in effect, imposters among a larger group of imposters, the cunning low men and women posing as the needy (*LIL* 345). Tom may be “disguised as a beggar, yet he did not lose the traces of a gentleman; according to the old adage, that a gentleman in rags does not forget his real character” (*LIL* 346). Although author and artists may identify with the world they depict, the division between the high and low is never completely undone. Within the Corinthian vision of “real life,” the low will stay low, and the high will stay high. Still, the novel delights in disrupting the status quo of class status through puns and wordplay (e.g. Almack’s and All-Max) and through scenes of social gatherings like masquerades. “A MASQUERADE is,” according to Bob Logic “an *unsorted* class of society,” but it is also “a fine picture of ‘*Life*’ in the Metropolis” (*LIL* 195, 193).[29]

Although the masquerade Tom and Jerry attend may encourage visual indulgence with its wide range of masked characters on view, many sights are left out of *Life in London*, including Tom and Jerry’s sexual escapades, which the novelist hints at but never details. Sometimes these hints feel rather like winks, or, as Gregory Dart infers, “a half-conscious indication, on Egan’s part, that there is more to Tom and Jerry than meets the eye.”[30] For example, in the sixth chapter, Tom seeks a female companion who will make him the “admiration and envy of the *Ton*” (*LIL* 95). There is never any intention on Tom’s part to woo and marry. His search for the perfect counterpart is described, like

[29] For more on the masquerade, see Terry Castle’s *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnivalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986): “Like the world of satire, the masquerade projected an anti-nature, a world upside-down, an intoxicating reversal of ordinary sexual, social, and metaphysical hierarchies” (6).

[30] Dart, 120.

many of his adventures, as sport. When he finally encounters the dazzling Corinthian Kate, he views her as an object of prey: "his penetrating eye, like a staunch pointer, made a *dead set* at the object that crossed his path. He could not leave it. He was *entranced*, as it were, on the spot…and like a true sportsman, his shots told, and the prize was borne off in triumph" (*LIL* 94). Egan accentuates this comically predatory tone by including a passage from a poem by the English satirist John Wolcot[31]: "So when thou showest, nymph, thy rosy face,/I see at once an AEsculapian chase;/And, oh! IF CAUGHT, *though wilt not find it* FUN!" (*LIL* 93). In much of the novel, "FUN" is portrayed as life-giving; Tom and Jerry feel most alive when they are pursuing "FUN, FROLIC, and FANCY" (*LIL* 57). Here, however, the word appears strikingly sinister in the context of Egan's pun ("made a *dead set*"), which links stasis ("set") to death. The rambling fun of Tom will be the figurative death of female purity, the loss of Corinthian Kate's virginity, when she becomes Tom's mistress.

The pun and the poem also foreshadow Kate's literal death in Egan's sequel to *Life in London*, the *Finish to the Adventures of Tom, Jerry, and Logic*. For the novelist the word "*finish*" is multivalent. It might signify the polish of the expensively dressed men and women who mingle at Almack's, or the final layer of paint applied to a canvas, or it might mean the meeting ground of the low men and women Tom and Jerry encounter in the coffee house called "The Finish." When the men venture a midnight visit to "The Finish," the novelist describes the event as a "finish to the evening," familiar to Tom, but "quite new to thousands in London." This gathering of drunken coves, prostitutes, and beggars "(which the plate so correctly delineates, and in point of

[31] The writings of Peter Pindar, Wolcot's pen name, frequently appear in the novel. For more on Wolcot, see Benjamin Colbert, "Petrio-Pindarics: John Wolcot and the Romantics," *European Romantic Review* 16.3 (2005): 311-328.

character, equal to any of HOGARTH'S celebrated productions) displays a complete picture of what is termed 'LOW LIFE' in the Metropolis" (*LIL* 181). For Egan, the pun on "finish" represents the vibrant mobility of language. The wordplay the text exudes matches the playful mobility of the protagonists. These multiple uses for the word "finish" indicate that the mediation of real life is, for Egan, less about stable content and more about variety of types, classes, and unfixed meanings and forms.

In the sequel to *Life in London*, the "Finish" also means the ultimate "finish"—the deaths of main figures, like Corinthian Kate, Bob Logic—whose last will and Testament is full of puns—and Corinthian Tom. In the *Finish*, Tom falls from a horse while taking part in a country chase. His inability to thrive in the country indicates that there is no "real life" for him outside of the city. "Seeing Life" no longer appears to be the playful game it is represented as in the prequel, despite the phrase from John Gay's "My Own Epitaph," "Life's a Jest. All Things Show It," which appears in the circle of the novel's frontispiece (see fig. 41 from 1871[?] edition). In the frontispiece, the rambles of Corinthian Tom and Bob Logic literally come to a dead end. Death's daggers point to Tom and Jerry. Death reigns; it wears a crown instead of George IV. To Jerry's right we see a woman shamefully reduced by falling into seduction. Images of poverty, folly, and idleness lie just below Bob Logic's corpse. The frontispiece is not devoid of playful puns—Dusty Bob, the dustman, has the words "Ashes to Ashes" below him, and African Sal's figure is accompanies by the phrase "Dust to Dust" which alludes to her relationship with Dusty Bob. But images of destruction dominate the illustration. Logic's umbrella catches fire, as a male figure tumbles downward from the vice of gambling.

London is no longer the celebrated Corinthian capital. There is no Corinthian capital at all.

Figure 41: Robert Cruikshank, *Finish*, Frontispiece and Title Page (1871[?])

A similarly ominous tone is presented at the end of the *Finish*. Jerry's immoral adventures in the city—in one chapter he escapes from a burning brothel—have reminded him of the importance and value of country life, and his too easily forgotten country sweetheart Mary Rosebud. He is "determined immediately to give up everything connected with LIFE IN LONDON, and return to the country once more, to enjoy the

sports of the field, and the comforts of a domestic circle of friends."[32] The unregulated fun of city life merely serves a larger purpose: reaffirming the security and sanctity of the private, domestic sphere, the home.

The journey of *Life in London* begins with exuberant praise for the kinetic variety and vibrancy of the Metropolis, but it ends in the *Finish* in the sedate, comfortable middle-class countryside, with Jerry married to Mary Rosebud, a squire's daughter:

> Jerry might be viewed [now] as a '*settled being*'…His fireside was a pattern of domestic comforts, although a sigh would now and then escape his lips, whenever the thoughts of TOM and LOGIC came over his mind. In every other respect, JERRY was a picture of contentment…his general conduct was the praise of the surrounding gentry, and he was admitted, by all parties, to sustain the character of a perfect COUNTRY GENTLEMAN. We now take our leave of JERRY, "all happiness," with an amiable, handsome wife, a fine estate, a capital stud of horses, and a crack pack of hounds, to promote LIFE IN THE COUNTRY." (*Finish* 312)

"LIFE" ends with the abnegation of the pleasures of the city, its "real life" and real characters, for the "character of a perfect COUNTRY GENTLEMAN." Jerry has given up London, the Corinthian capital, for a "capital stud of horses." In the past, he had found "all happiness" in the joyous din and drunken dancing of All-Max, but he no longer desires that life.

[32] Pierce Egan, *Finish to the Adventures of Tom, Jerry, and Logic in Their Pursuits through Life In and Out of London* (London, 1828), 295. Hereafter cited as *Finish*.

Now, instead, Jerry can from the safe and "*settled*" confines of the "fireside" recollect his adventures. He has become like the "*fire-side* heroes and sprightly maidens, who may feel a wish to 'see Life' without receiving a *scratch*" the narrator addresses in the original novel (*LIL* 19). Jerry is one of the "Country Folks," a middle-class consumer of "Life in London," and a spectacle himself, as a "picture of contentment." This is, after all, the way Egan imagines his audience as real characters, themselves, in the opening chapter of the *Finish* consuming real life from a *mediated* distance:

> The Plates, by ROBERT and GEORGE CRUIKSHANK, were considered so full of amusement, that they were transferred to a variety of Articles without any loss of time. The *Lady*, in taking her *gunpowder*, was enabled to amuse her visitors with the adventures of TOM and JERRY on her highly-finished TEA-TRAY. The lovers of *Irish Blackguard* experienced a double zest in taking a pinch from a BOX, the lid of which exhibited the laughable phiz of the eccentric BOB LOGIC. The *Country Folks* were delighted with the HANDKERCHIEF which displayed Tom getting the best of a Charley; and DUSTY BOB and BLACK SAL "all happiness!" The *Female of Quality* felt interested with the lively scene of the light fantastic toe at Almack's when playing with her elegant FAN; and the *Connoisseur* with a smile of satisfaction on his countenance, contemplated his SCREEN, on which were displayed the motley groups of high and low characters continually on the move in the Metropolis. (*Finish* 10)

The desirability of these material objects—tea tray, box of snuff, handkerchief, fan, and screen—show that city and country folk relish the commercial and visual experience of

Life in London objects. The scenes Egan describes are strikingly akin to the hodgepodge of the print shop window genre or the self-reflective caricatures designed by G.M. Woodward. The real characters—"The *Lady*," "The lovers of *Irish blackguard*," "The Country Folks," "The Female of Quality"—all delight in pictures of Tom, Jerry, and Bob, and the "motley groups of high and low characters." Egan fittingly ends his list of characters with the connoisseur who gazes at his screen of real life caricatures: it is the ultimate Corinthian vision in which realism is life seen through the lens of caricature.

Coda: Sentimental *Finish*

For Egan, "real life" in caricature is deeply intertwined with sentimental spectacle. When the trio first arrive at the lowlife gin joint All-Max, they admiringly describing the scene as "new," "rich," and "alive" (*LL* 288). All-Max is, Bob Logic declares, "one of the invaluable mines of Nature: her stores are inexhaustible. What a fine subject would a sentimental stroll through London have afforded the pen of STERNE!" (*LL* 288). Here, Logic associates the "real life" of All-Max—and "Life in London," as a whole—with sentimental spectacle. Bob's "logic" also functions as the underlying logic of the novel. The spectacle of real life attunes Tom and Jerry to sentimental feeling. For example, in the second half of the novel, Corinthian Tom and Jerry encounter "an elegant but unfortunate young woman" who shares her lamentable story: her seducer "when satiated with her lovely person, had abandoned her to the wide world. To him she now applied for a few pounds, in order to escape the horrible life of a *streetwalker*—and, like a humble penitent, to return to her agonized and distracted relatives" (*LIL* 185-186). But the seducer offers her nothing; she is stranded, without protection. Moreover, the

desperate woman has only two shillings to offer the coachman for her journey to the residence of her seducer. As a result, she ends up at the Bow Street Public Office threatened with a jail sentence. In front of the magistrate, tears pour from her lovely face: "Her elegance of deportment—her manners, so truly interesting—and her tale of injuries and misfortunes she had sustained, was so artlessly told, that not a dry eye was to be seen in the Office" (*LIL* 149). The sentimental outpour touches the heart of Jarvis, the coachman:

> JARVIS took up the two shillings by order of the Magistrate; but instantly throwing one of them out of his hand (the tear starting from his eye), exclaimed, (with as fine pathos as Mrs. Siddons in the best of her performances,—but it was Nature that spoke,) "It shall never be said that Bill—took the last shilling from a woman in distress." (*LIL* 187)

Egan verbally paints the scene as if it were a piece of theatre: "Indeed, it was a fine scene altogether. It was one of NATURE'S richest moments" (*LIL* 188). He asserts that the moment could not be captured by the pen or the pencil, but then goes on to describe how even Sterne's fiction pales in comparison: "STERNE would have made a complete chapter of it. The *Dead Ass* at Nampont—the *Friar—and Maria* of Moulines*,* were not finer pictures of the human heart, either in richness of colouring, grandness of design, or softness of touch, than the eloquence of Nature displayed in the unfortunate Cyprian's case at Bow Street." Tom and Jerry's role as witnesses to this scene functions as a kind sentimental "finish." Through their gazing they validate the authenticity of the sentimental scene as "real life."

Conclusion

"The Last Days of Coarse Caricatures"

With a mixture of nostalgia and condescension, the Victorian publisher John Camden Hotten recalled the phenomenal popularity of *Life in London*: "This was *the* book—*the* literature—of that period, the one work which many elderly gentlemen still remember far away in the distance of their youth."[1] Looking back forty-eight years into the past, Hotten was puzzled by the novel's influence and appeal: "A tedious—and by some will be considered an absurd—composition, when judged by similarly descriptive works of the present day, it has just this claim to our attention, that it is, perhaps, the best picture of 'Society'—or as they of the period defined it, of '*Life, Fashion, and Frolic*'—in the days when George IV. was king, that has been bequeathed to us."[2] In his 1888 anthology *The True History of Tom & Jerry*, Charles Hindley describes the novel as one that "[made] our grandfathers so very—*very*! merry in the first quarter of the Nineteenth Century," but "we are constrained to admit; that it is a terrible dull and tedious work to read through in the present day."[3] Hindley's evaluation of the text is predominately negative:

> The present generation will find in some of the scenes depicted in such glowing colours, many of the fashions, manners and customs, which prevailed in the reign

[1] John Camden Hotten, introduction to *Tom & Jerry: Life in London or the Day and Night Scenes, of Jerry Hawthorn Esq. and His Elegant Friend Corinthian Tom in Their Rambles and Sprees through the Metropolis*, by Pierce Egan (London: John Camden Hotten, 1869), 1.

[2] Hotten, 1-2.

[3] Charles Hindley, *The True History of Tom & Jerry, or the Day and Night Scenes of Life in London From the Start to the Finish! With a Key to the Persons and Places, Together with a Vocabulary and Glossary of the Flash and Slang Terms, Occurring in the Course of the Work* (London: Charles Hindley, 1888), 2-3.

> of King George the Fourth, together with certain landmarks of the past, which no one need regret leaving far behind, and ought to give every encouragement to those who live under the rule of Queen Victoria to maintain a firm faith in the social progress of the age.[4]

In Hotten and Hindley, the bad, bygone days highlight in "such glowing colours" just how improved the Victorians are, how much they have progressed from an "age of excesses," from "the last days of coarse caricatures."[5]

The novelist William Makepeace Thackeray also exudes a mixture of desire and dismay for the vibrancy of *Life in London*. In *An Essay on the Genius of George Cruikshank* (1840), Thackeray wistfully recalls his youthful enthusiasm for Egan's rambling protagonists Tom and Jerry, but, ultimately, he characterizes the fiction as "absolutely vulgar."[6] In *The Roundabout Papers*, the author expresses reserved admiration for the energetic fun of the novel: "Now every London man is weary and *blasé*. There is an enjoyment of life in these young bucks of 1823 which contrasts strangely with our feelings of 1860."[7] Furthermore, he appreciates the temporal distance between the dangerous sprees and rambles of the 1820s and his snug middle class existence of the 1860s. Even though Thackeray belittles Egan's writing style, the Victorian novelist is, as Helen Groth indicates, "Egan's ideal reader": "Thackeray

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[4] Hindley, 4.

[5] Hotten, 8-9.

[6] William Makepeace Thackeray, *An Essay on the Genius of George Cruikshank* (London: Henry Hooper, 1840), 13.

[7] William Makepeace Thackeray, *Roundabout Papers (From the Cornhill Magazine) To Which is Added The Second Funeral of Napoleon* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1869), 84-85.

represents his memory of the text as a series of moving images that capture the live action of life in London viewed from a comfortable distance."[8] In the novel, Egan reinforces the "comfortable distance" the text and the images provide of "low life." This emphasis on the "snug" perspective (as I mentioned in the previous chapter, Egan likens his novel to a *camera obscura*) stems from Egan's ambition to produce a work that caters to the high, the low, and the middle class audience, even as he promotes the extremes, the high and low of *Life*.

As a result, Egan's vision of "LIFE" is not as revealing or complete as he claims it is. Tom is indeed a libertine but Egan provides this information partially through a form of evasion. At the same time Egan insists on everything he is showing the reader, he is intentionally obscure, leaving his fiction open to interpretation that evokes laughter. In presenting the city as primarily a source of laughter and good-natured fun, the author believes he renders the book safe and sanitized. Egan does this in part because he doesn't want the portrayal of city life to be too terrible, too seamy. He wants to maintain a comical distance that paradoxically produces intimacy so his readers can relish the exciting dangers of real life that Tom and Jerry experience.

Still, one can see that in *Life in London*, and in the sequel, the *Finish*, that Egan struggles with refining his depiction of "real life." He makes many jokes and puns about the "'GLORIOUS UNCERTAINTY' OF PLEASING EVERY CLASS OF SOCIETY,'"[9] but one senses in the Tom and Jerry novels, as well as Egan's other writings, a serious

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[8] Helen Groth, *Moving Images: Nineteenth-Century Reading and Screen Practices* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 45.

[9] Pierce Egan, *Finish to the Adventures of Tom, Jerry, and Logic in Their Pursuits through Life In and Out of London* (London, 1828), v.

dilemma that the author faces. He believes that “cant” and “hypocrisy” weakens his comical portrayals; his “correct” representation of low life leaves too much out of the picture. And yet, when Victorian writers discuss *Life in London*, the problem is that it is too vivid, too excessive, too colorful, too coarse.

The tone of bemused nostalgia and moral disdain that Hotten and others express for *Life in London* are compelling examples within a larger narrative—that is, the self-described “modern refinement” of the Victorians constructed in part through an opposition to Georgian laughter and caricature. What one senses in reading Victorian accounts of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century caricature is that Victorians defined themselves as refined in reaction to what they viewed as the depravity of the past. Through their evaluations of Georgian caricature, Victorian authors, like Thomas Wright, George Paston, and Joseph Grego, were able to chart, in Grego’s words, “the progress of pictorial satire,” and to formulate moral and aesthetic standards for modern life.

In the *Caricature History of the Georges* (1868), Thomas Wright negatively describes the “squibs, broadsides, window pictures, lampoons, and pictorial caricatures” of Georgian England as “a class of literature which is always more coarse than any other, and during a period which was celebrated for anything rather than for delicacy.”[10] This critical tone is reinforced in Thomas Wright’s *The Works of James Gillray* (1873): Gillray’s art is defined as “too boldly coloured with the coarseness of an age which did not hesitate, in its most polished circles to treat of subjects that modern refinement has

[10] Thomas Wright, *Caricature History of the Georges; or, Annals of the House of Hanover, Compiled from Squibs, Broadsides, Window Pictures, Lampoons, and Pictorial Caricatures of the Time* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1876), viii.

decided to pass over in silence."[11] In the preface to *Rowlandson the Caricaturist* (1880), Joseph Grego writes that the experience of viewing Thomas Rowlandson's caricatures is for many of his contemporaries like traveling through "foreign ground—a novel, strange land, populated with daring absurdities."[12] The apparent strangeness of Rowlandson's work stems in part, Grego asserts, from the strangeness of the late 1700s and early 1800s. He characterizes the men and women of the Regency as "a generation which was marked with a colouring more intensified than those who live in our time are prepared to adopt."[13] For Grego, Rowlandson's art represents a period that was "diversified with much which has been discarded."

In *Social Caricature in the Eighteenth Century* (1905), George Paston (the pseudonym of Emily Morse Symonds) displays her dismay with aspects of the era, particularly the "excessive indulgence in eating and drinking." She remarks in the opening pages that the "English of the eighteenth century were in many respects semi-civilised"; they were "men of strong stomachs and dull brains, whose passions could only be inflamed and their comprehension reached by means of the crudest colours and the most unblushing exaggerations."[14] Nevertheless, she presents a less critical vision of late Georgian caricature than Wright and Grego do because she focuses on the social

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[11] Thomas Wright, ed., *The Works of James Gillray, the Caricaturist; with the History of His Life and Times* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1873), 4. [This work has also been attributed to Joseph Grego.]

[12] Joseph Grego, *Rowlandson the Caricaturist. A Selection of His Works With Anecdotal Descriptions of His Famous Caricatures and A Sketch of His Life, Times, and Contemporaries* (New York: J.W. Bouton, 1880), vii.

[13] Grego, viii.

[14] George Paston, *Social Caricature in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Methuen & Co., 1905), 6-7.

caricature, which is “lighter and more genial” than political caricature “which would have the effect of alienating modern sympathies.”[15]

Overall, Paston views eighteenth-century caricature as uniquely illustrative of Georgian England, that there is something significantly revealing about a nation’s humor: “It must be admitted that our great-great-grandfathers had a sense of humour which is apt to strike their descendants as a trifle crude; but to the serious student of a period every manifestation of that period has its interest and value, and probably no development of the eighteenth century is more characteristic than its caricature.”[16] Wright, Grego, and Paston are three of the most notable Victorian writers on eighteenth-century caricature, frequently cited in studies of the works of Gillray and Rowlandson. As a result, their views still influence how scholars view and write about eighteenth-century caricature. Even Vic Gatrell, one of the foremost scholars working in the field, advances the notion that the genteel humor of Victorian caricature is strikingly distinct from eighteenth-century caricature because “except in sanitized survivals, the Victorians lost sight of the carnivalesque.”[17]

For Gatrell, Charles Dickens’s novels illustrate the divide between the carnivalesque and sanitized humor: “Dickens’s ridicule shunned the antique bawdry, and this loss of an older, crueler, carnivalesque aggression was to mark a fundamental

[15] Paston, 6.

[16] Ibid., 7-8.

[17] Vic Gatrell, *City of Laughter: Sex and Satire in Eighteenth-Century London* (London: Atlantic, 2006), 190. Brian Maidment’s study *Comedy, Caricature, and the Social Order, 1820-50* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013) explores how the development of “sanitized” or “reformed” caricature predates the Victorian period. Also see David Kunzle, “Between Broadsheet Caricature and ‘Punch’: Cheap Newspaper Cuts for the Lower Classes in the 1830s,” *Art Journal* 43:4 (1983): 339–346.

change—a taming."[18] Indeed, Dickens does reject the crude and cruel caricatures of Gillray and Rowlandson for what Michael Steig refers to as "refined" or "elevated" caricature.[19] In an 1848 essay, Dickens observed: "If we turn back to…the works of Rowlandson or Gillray, we shall find, in spite of the great humor displayed in many of them, that they are rendered wearisome and unpleasant by a vast amount of personal ugliness. Now, besides that it is a poor device to represent what is satirized as being necessarily ugly…it serves no purpose but to produce a disagreeable result."[20] The emphasis Dickens places on the beautiful would seem to be in tension with caricature and its overcharged quality of disorderly proportion and exaggeration. However, the novelist sought to frame the distortion and exaggeration of caricature as pleasantly comical in order to evoke "delicate" laughter.[21] For example, in chapter one of *The Pickwick Papers* (1836-1837), Dickens describes the eponymous hero as having a "gigantic brain" and "beaming eyes" that "twink[le] behind [his] glasses" (*PC* 16). He is a "spectacle" of "full life and animation" as he rises to "addres[s] the club [he] himself had founded" (*PC* 16-17). "What a study for an artist did that exciting scene present!" Dickens writes (*PC* 17). And then the author proceeds to literally sketch that study:

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[18] Gatrell, 482.

[19] Michael Steig, "Dickens, Hablot Knight Browne, and the Tradition of English Caricature," *Criticism* 11.3 (1969): 222.

[20] Charles Dickens, "Leech's 'The Rising Generation" (*Examiner,* Dec., 1848). Qtd. in Steig, 219.

[21] Charles Dickens, *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* (London: Penguin, 2000), 7. Hereafter cited as *PC*. In his 1837 preface, Dickens remarks: "[The author] trusts that, throughout this book, no incident or expression occurs which could call a blush into the most delicate cheek, or wound the feelings of the most sensitive person. If any of his imperfect descriptions, while they afford amusement in the perusal, should induce only one reader to think better of his fellow men, and to look upon the brighter and more kindly side of human nature, he would indeed be proud and happy to have led to such a result" (*PC* 7).

The eloquent Pickwick, with one hand gracefully concealed behind his coat tails, and the other waving in air to assist his glowing declamation: his elevated position revealing those tights and gaiters, which, had they clothed an ordinary man, might have passed without observation, but which, when Pickwick clothed them—if we may use that expression—inspired involuntary awe and respect…(*PC* 17)

Figure 42: Robert Seymour, "Mr. Pickwick Addresses the Club" (1836)

The first chapter provides us with clues to the roundness of Pickwick through his "bald head," his "circular spectacles," his "gigantic brain" and we have some hint at his

largeness through his “tights and gaiters” that “inspir[e] involuntary awe and respect.” We are to understand that Pickwick is no “ordinary man,” but, still, we are not explicitly told that he is paunchy. Thus it is not hard to see why, according to the book’s publisher Edward Chapman, the first illustrator, Robert Seymour, drew a “long, thin” Pickwick, as opposed to a fat Pickwick.[22] We do not *know* Pickwick is fat until we see him as a rotund, bald man wearing glasses in the book’s first illustration (fig. 42). The gentle humor of Pickwickian fatness has a larger significance within the framework of the novel. Pickwick’s belly symbolizes his “universal philanthropy” or “general benevolence”—“one of the leading features of the Pickwickian theory” (*PC* 31). As such, the caricature of Pickwick is linked to the benevolence of sentimental feeling.

Caricature is “subtle truth,” G.K. Chesterton observes in reference to Dickens’s fiction.[23] Earlier in the same essay, Chesterton remarks that the “essence of the Dickens genius was exaggeration.”[24] But how can the exaggerations of caricature reveal “subtle truth”? On the surface, there seems to be nothing subtle about literary or visual caricature, which is defined by its unsubtle formal qualities. As we have seen, Fielding affirms this stance in the preface to *Joseph Andrews*: “It is much easier, much less the subject of admiration, to paint a man with a nose, or any other feature, of a preposterous size, or to expose him in some absurd or monstrous attitude, than to express the affections of men

[22] Robert L. Patten, “‘I Thought of Mr. Pickwick, Wrote the First Number’: Dickens and the Evolution of Character,” *Dickens Quarterly* 3.1 (1986): 20.

[23] G.K. Chesterton, *The Collected Works of G.K. Chesterton: Chesterton on Dickens*, ed. Alzina Stone Dale, vol. 15 (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 27.

[24] Chesterton, 26.

on canvas."[25] Yet, Chesterton perceives in the literary and visual caricature of Dickens's novels a "delicate instinct" or sensibility that belies Fielding's statement:

> To reproduce the proportions of a face exactly as they are, is a comparatively safe adventure; to arrange those features in an entirely new proportion, and yet retain a resemblance, argues a very delicate instinct for what features are really the characteristic and essential ones…to see an ordinary intelligent face in the street, and to know that, with the nose three times as long and the head twice as broad, it will still be a startling likeness, argues a profound insight into truth…[Caricature] is subtle truth…[Dickens] realized thoroughly a certain phase or atmosphere of existence, and he knew the precise strokes and touches that would bring it home to the reader. That Dickens phase or atmosphere may be roughly defined as the phase of vivid sociability in which every man becomes unusually and startlingly himself. A good caricature will sometimes seem more like the original than the original; so it is in the greatest moments of social life. He is an unfortunate man, a man unfitted to value life and certainly unfitted to value Dickens, who has not sat at some table or talked in some company in which every one was in character, each a beautiful caricature of himself.[26]

Echoing the observations of the Italian artist Annibale Carracci and the antiquarian Francis Grose, Chesterton emphasizes the sensitivity of the caricaturist's eye for identifying the essential qualities of an individual's character. Additionally, his remarks

[25] Henry Fielding, *Joseph Andrews* (New York: Penguin, 1979), viii.

[26] Chesterton, 27-28.

about “precise strokes and touches” resonate with Sterne’s own language about the caricature of Dr. Slop in *Tristram Shandy*. Chesterton’s comments also imply that in the “in the greatest moments of social life” one encounters a kind of Eganesque “real life in caricature” when each character becomes “a beautiful caricature of himself.”

Chesterton’s positive assessment of Dickensian caricature is noteworthy. Within Dickens studies, one often comes across the same rebuke hurled at the author: Dickens’s novels are not realistic enough because the works are too often filled with caricature. For example, Malcolm Andrews argues that verbal caricature weakens Dickens’s fiction. Moreover, he claims that the illustrations exacerbate this problem: “Even the best of Dickens’s artists reduced his art. They distilled it to caricature and tableau; they developed a greater density of allegorical detail as an attempt to match the fullness, richness, and vitality of Dickens’s scenes, but still fell short.”[27] Chesterton’s statements, however, highlight how literary and visual caricature “distill” the representation of reality. His essay does not discuss how Dickensian caricature draws on Sterne’s and Egan’s fiction. However, as this dissertation has shown, Sterne and Egan embraced caricature in order to enhance novelistic realism. These authors also attempted to link caricature to sentimental laughter. Although the move from harsh ridicule to sentimental laughter during the late Georgian period may have seemed progressive for many, it was a restrictive development, as Austen’s fiction reveals. The novelist’s use of the caricatural trope of the fat vs. the lean in *Persuasion* provides a critique of the gender politics of sentimental laughter that challenges Sternean sensibility. By examining the intersection of caricature and sensibility in the novels of Fielding, Sterne, Austen, and Egan, this

[27] Malcolm Andrews, “Illustrations,” in *A Companion to Charles Dickens*, ed. David Paroissien (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 124.

dissertation has demonstrated the range of emotions and laughter—sometimes crude and cruel, other times polite and sentimental—that literary and visual caricature evoked in the period.

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