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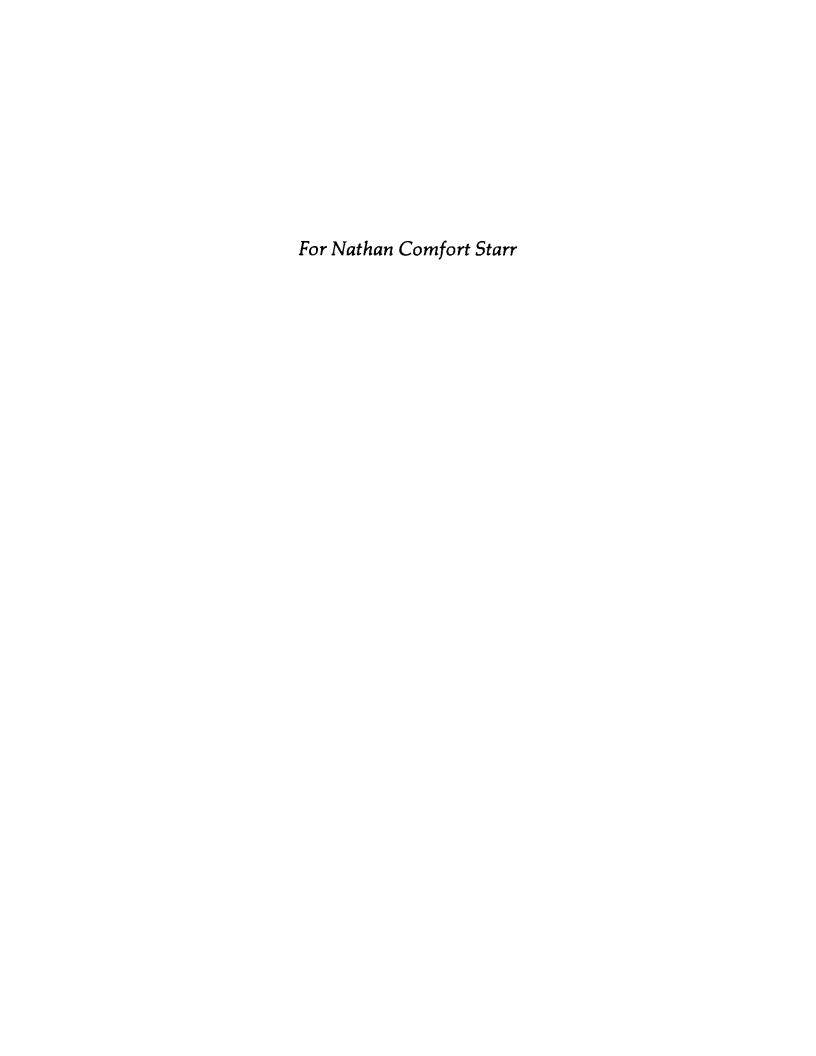
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Contents

1	Identity in Fiction and in Fact	
2	The Soul's Imaginings: Daniel Defoe, William Cowper	28
3	Female Identities	57
4	The Defenses of Form: Edward Gibbon	92
5	The Beautiful Oblique: Tristram Shandy	127
6	Dynamics of Fear: Fanny Burney	158
7	The Sense of Audience: Samuel Richardson, Colley Cibber	193
8	Young Men's Fancies: James Boswell, Henry Fielding	227
9	Laws of Time: Fielding and Boswell	264
10	Selfhood, Given and Formed	300
	Notes	317
	Index	339

1

Identity in Fiction and in Fact

A his existence by the fact of his writing, lives through his explanations, tacit or explicit, of how he came to be the person he is. He claims by his announcement of genre that he presents to the reader some version of a real human being—perhaps as extravagant a figure as any novelistic hero but asserted to be no fiction. Yet he exists on the page by virtue of his story, his shaping of the events of his experience; he exists as a literary phenomenon for essentially the same reasons that Tom Jones appears to exist. Indeed, the spacious novels of the eighteenth century, offering the names of their central figures as titles, are equally preoccupied with character and with human identity. Robinson Crusoe, Clarissa, Joseph Andrews, Evelina, Peregrine Pickle—their stories focus on the intricacies, the paradoxes, and the difficulties of human development. Their stories create them and create the reader's answering faith and pleasure.

That faith and pleasure differ from the responses accorded to autobiography, in which the story is formed from events that presumably really took place. Knowing that Edward Gibbon really lived and wrote a great history, one reads his account of himself, assuming its factuality, mainly to discover how he understands the happenings of his life. The reader of *Moll Flanders* seeks different discoveries, curious about the protagonist's fate. The line between autobiographical and fictional belief becomes more difficult to draw with someone like

Laetitia Pilkington—that rare figure, a real-life picaresque heroine—about whom little is known aside from what she tells. She shapes her mid-century memoir like a romance; her facts may be suspected to bear little relation to actuality. Still, because the woman who writes actually existed in the world, one accepts her version of her past as a genuine record of identity. She tells who she is by showing how she sees her experience, and she tells who she is even while lying about what she has done. The reader who knows the falsity of Gibbon's claim that all his brothers were also christened Edward is likely to find it particularly interesting. Its power to reveal character increases if one realizes that the episode derives from imagination rather than memory.

Memoir and fiction, however different the kinds of expectation they create, raise a common problem about the nature of that identity they assert. What constitutes character? Why does one believe in the continuity of personality? Eighteenth-century philosophers, considering the problem as one in life rather than in art, concentrate on the individual's subjective awareness of selfhood and what that means. To know that one exists may seem simple enough. "For if I know I feel pain," John Locke writes, "it is evident I have as certain perception of my own existence, as of the existence of the pain I feel: or if I know I doubt, I have as certain perception of the existence of the thing doubting, as of that thought which I call doubt. Experience then convinces us, that we have an intuitive knowledge of our own existence, and an internal infallible perception that we are." Bishop George Berkeley feels equally positive: "I do . . . know that I, who am a spirit or thinking substance, exist as certainly as I know my ideas exist. Farther, I know what I mean by the terms I and myself; and I know this immediately or intuitively, though I do not perceive it as I perceive a triangle, a colour, or a sound."2 But the self-evident could not survive David Hume's onslaught. When he looks into himself, Hume reports, he discovers only perceptions, no discernible, separate self. When he sleeps, in effect, he ceases to exist. Other men, he grants, testify different sorts of experience. Perhaps they differ in essence; he remains certain no principle of selfhood exists in him.3 Identity, incapable of unifying disparate perceptions, "is merely a quality which we attribute to them, because of the union of their ideas in the imagination when we reflect on them . . . Our notions of personal identity proceed entirely from

the smooth and uninterrupted progress of the thought along a train of connected ideas" (I, 246).

These key philosophers suggest the range of the eighteenth-century debate on identity, which became, after Hume, increasingly desperate in tone. Hume himself willingly grants the possibility that others differ from him, but to allow difference in so crucial a matter precludes meaningful generalization. Thomas Reid asserts, "The conviction which every man has of his Identity, as far back as his memory reaches, needs no aid of philosophy to strengthen it; and no philosophy can weaken it, without first producing some degree of insanity." Bishop Butler insists that "all imagination of a daily change of that living agent which each man calls himself, for another, or of any such change throughout our whole present life, is entirely borne down by our natural sense of things." But both write in the shadow of Hume, who demonstrates that such phrases as "our natural sense of things," solving no philosophic problems, mislead by substituting assumption for perception.

A man concerned to prove his own existence could fall back on memory: even Hume granted that, and Locke and Berkeley. By memory one possesses his past. The autobiographer converts memory to a literary resource; the philosopher clings to it as an anchor of certainty. Personal experience, as well as the evidence of psychoanalysis, leads twentieth-century thinkers to question the unvarying validity of memory, but eighteenth-century philosophers (did they ignore their own experience of fallibility? or was it different from ours?) strikingly concur in their reluctance to wonder seriously about the reliability of memory. 6 Those speculating about memory recognize the theoretical possibility that the testimony of memory might confuse itself with that of imagination, but they quickly retreat from the implications of such thinking. All agree that the difference between memory and imagination lies in memory's "superior force and vivacity," which speaks directly to the understanding.7 Hume, going so far as to grant the possibility that an idea of the imagination might seem sufficiently forceful to pass for a memory, yet concludes "that the belief or assent, which always attends the memory and the senses" distinguishes their evidence finally from that of imagination (I, 89). As Reid puts it, with his customary positiveness, "Perhaps in infancy, or in a disorder of mind, things remembered may be confounded with those which are merely

imagined, but in mature years, and in a sound state of mind, every man feels that he must believe what he distinctly remembers, though he can give no other reason of his belief, but that he remembers the thing distinctly; whereas, when he merely imagines a thing ever so distinctly, he has no belief of it upon that account."

Memory declares the continuity of identity with relative certainty; imagination does not—or so these philosophers assume. The undependability of imagination, considered as the power that creates images, seems as clearly implied in eighteenth-century philosophic discussion as the solidity of memory. But novel and autobiography, the two developing genres that flourished during the century, raise in their very natures some disturbing questions about the imagination and its relation to the reality attested by memory. An autobiography might be assumed to tell some truth about some self; yet contemporary readers and writers perceived a danger of falsification in the very fact of concentration on a single self. Moreover, by Hume's reasoning the idea of selfhood itself exists only in the imagination, although it is based on the testimony of memory. Autobiographers, therefore, from the outset are dealing with fictions.9 Novels, more dangerous still, avowedly lie, their characters' identities corresponding to no literal persons. Yet, bearing a troublesome resemblance to accounts of real life, novels might violate for their readers the distinction between memory and imagination.

The first thinker to articulate this problem with any clarity was David Hartley, whose *Observations on Man*, published in 1749, codifies and elaborates the theories of associationist psychology. Hartley, concurring in the general faith in memory, yet recognizes the possible effects of imagination. "The frequent Recurrency of an interesting Event, supposed doubtful, or even fictitious, does, by degrees, make it appear like a real one, as in Reveries, reading Romances, seeing Plays, &c."10 In revery one may brood on a single episode until it seems real. In reading romances and seeing plays "Recurrency" must consist rather in the persuasive sequence of related events. Later (I, 377), Hartley grants that confusion between imagination and memory need not depend on repetition but may in fact be universal. His recognition of the likely and dangerous confusion between revery and recollection emerges forcefully in his treatment of the pleasures of imagination and the function of art.

The poet—as a type of the literary artist—in Hartley's view sets out

consciously to obviate the distinction between the real and the imagined. He deliberately chooses scenes and characters to produce strong emotional effects. "In all these things the chief Art is to copy Nature so well, and to be so exact in all the principal Circumstances relating to Actions, Passions, &c. i.e. to real Life, that the Reader may be insensibly betrayed into a half Belief of the Truth and Reality of the Scene" (I, 431). Aiding the betrayal is the fact that "Poetry, and all fictitious History" actually constitute "Imitations of real History," thus achieving special power over the emotions (I, 432) and thus becoming dangerous. The pleasure of imagination may lead participants "to the Knowledge of many important Truths relating to themselves, the external World, and its Author" (II, 244), but indulgence in the arts, as creator or as enjoyer, may also distract from the good, encourage evil, waste time and money. Morality, therefore, must control artistic endeavor and artistic pleasure.

But can it? If imitations of real history may affect the mind like direct experience, it follows that the writer possesses incalculable power to subvert morality. Samuel Johnson, writing at mid-century, expresses great anxiety lest novelists concern themselves too much with the accuracy of their imitation, without dwelling sufficiently on the problem of what should properly be imitated; they may cause a reader to "lose the abhorrence of [characters'] faults, because they do not hinder our pleasure, or, perhaps, regard them with some kindness for being united with so much merit." Since the writer of fiction need not confine himself to literal truth, Johnson argues, he should feel free to exhibit "the most perfect idea of virtue," thus fulfilling the moral obligation that should take precedence over all merely literary or psychological notions of the novelist's function.

By his reference to the pleasure of the reader, Johnson clarifies a point implicit also in Hartley's argument: the power of literature to sway depends on the reader's enjoyment, which increases his vulnerability. His enjoyment derives partly from his imaginative identification with the characters. As Johnson points out in another *Rambler* essay, "All joy or sorrow for the happiness or calamities of others is produced by an act of the imagination, that realises the event however fictitious, or approximates it however remote, by placing us, for a time, in the condition of him whose fortune we contemplate; so that we feel, while the deception lasts, whatever motions would be excited by the same good or evil happening to ourselves." The word *decep-*

tion suggests again the danger inherent in the capacity of the imagination to obviate the crucial distinction between reality and illusion, generating pleasure precisely through that loss of distinction.

The kind of identity possible for a character in fiction thus depends on the novelist's purpose and function in manipulating his imitation of the real. Fielding had offered his readers in Tom Jones a "feast" of human nature, claiming realism as his sanction, his good characters containing blemishes, like the good in everyday life. The identity of a hero in his fiction, then, presumably duplicates the elements that constitute literal human identity, whatever that means. Yet Fielding more explicitly than any of his contemporaries or immediate followers acknowledges fictional artifice, directly asserting the author's power as contriver and manipulator of events. Leading his readers to involve themselves in the imagination's deception, he also calls attention to that deception as it takes place. And his very justification for the realistic complexity of his characters emphasizes a moral purpose sufficiently powerful and well-defined to satisfy, one might think, even Johnson. "The foibles and vices of men, in whom there is great mixture of good, become more glaring objects from the virtues which contrast them and show their deformity; and, when we find such vices attended with their evil consequence to our favorite characters, we are not only taught to shun them for our own sake, but to hate them for the mischiefs they have already brought on those we love."13 Such talk of loving and hating invites the reader to respond to Fielding's characters as to real people, but his insistent concern with vice and virtue, and with the means of leading the reader toward the good, stresses authorial contrivance. The novelist implicitly recognizes the danger of imaginative involvement in terms similar to Johnson's, but believes that he can control his reader by using emotional effects for moral purpose.

Characters in a novel do not have lives of their own, we do not know the extent of their memories, and their futures are more important than their pasts. Their becoming, more than their being, compels our attention. Their identities derive, at least partly, from their functions in a narrative; they exist in subordination to an author's purposes for them (in the eighteenth century, usually his announced moral intent). On the other hand, virtually all fiction writers in the eighteenth century also claimed the authenticity of their imitation of human life. As Fanny Burney puts it, discussing the nature of the

novel, "It is, or it ought to be, a picture of supposed, but natural and probable human existence. It holds, therefore, in its hands our best affections; it exercises our imaginations; it points out the path of honour; and gives to juvenile credulity knowledge of the world, without ruin, or repentance; and the lessons of experience, without its tears." The moral power of fiction, Miss Burney points out, depends on its psychological validity. Only if the life it reveals seems "natural and probable" will it involve the reader's emotions and imagination enough to lead him painlessly toward the paths of virtue. Johnson's wish that the novelist depict "the most perfect idea of virtue" therefore could not be gratified, even so devoted a disciple as Fanny Burney realizes, because the idea of perfection bears little relation to the "natural and probable."

Tom Jones's response to his situation (even Evelina's response) often corresponds to our expectations of how real people might react in real life. If sometimes a hero or heroine reacts as he or she should rather than as they would, we make due allowance for the novelist's professed moral intent. But fictional characters also diverge in less readily accountable ways from what we think of as reality. The characters in eighteenth-century fiction show less capacity for essential change than we like to believe possible in life, and the limited possibilities for change they have depend on external kinds of learning about the world outside themselves. Jane Austen's heroines, in contrast, through undergoing their confined and decorous experience, alter in minute but important ways: Emma's final capacity to admit herself wrong does not, like Tom Jones's prudence, constitute a quality added to her earlier characteristics but an actual reversal of a previous set of assumptions, and it derives from her increased understanding of what lies within. On the other hand, even the central character of a novel so unnervingly fluid in form as Tristram Shandy remains—to his pain and our satisfaction—unalterable, his nature established by the circumstances of his conception and the events of his birth, both constituting his doom and creating his comic triumph.

Of course the very notion of literary characterization, like the notion of character in life, implies fundamental consistency of personality. A character must, by definition, remain recognizable. But Fielding and Sterne in particular elevate the principle of consistency almost to one of rigor. Tom's gaiety, impetuousness, good will, his capacity for sympathy and respect, govern him always; Blifil's concern for the

appearance rather than the reality of virtue remains equally steady. Tristram Shandy, with his belief that a man's fate is virtually determined at his birth, articulates (and heightens to comic intensity) what many eighteenth-century novels imply—although probably few novelists would have admitted the implication. Human identity is absolutely fixed.

This novelistic view of identity may reflect a nervousness resembling that of the philosophers about the possible implications of change. The more a character is permitted to change, the harder it is to preserve the vital faith in personal continuity. The more he investigates himself, the more problematic is the evidence of his undeviating reality. Eighteenth-century novelistic characters, although a great deal happens to them, testify their stability far more eloquently than their flexibility. Fixed in their moral natures, uncorruptible by their experience, containing in their characters from the beginning the justification of their secular salvation, they refute the philosophers by declaring that identity, far from problematic, remains solid against all external pressure, the substantiality of their being in itself suggesting their virtue.

To remain essentially the same, in many eighteenth-century novels, constitutes the central character's triumph. People are rewarded, in those books, for being themselves: a way of defining the comic perspective that pervades the century's fiction. (Even Clarissa, of course, presumably wins her heavenly reward.) The principles of orthodox novelistic structure, to be sure, always demand both that something happen to people in a novel and that the people remain themselves in the face of all happening. Tom Jones both changes and remains inviolable; the same description applies in different degree to Dorothea Brooke in Middlemarch, published 122 years later. But the eighteenthcentury hero and the nineteenth-century heroine in their ways of growing diverge sharply. Tom learns what the world will and will not permit and how much Sophia can tolerate; he governs his actions accordingly. When he claims that from the first moment of hoping for Sophia's hand he found other women no longer objects of desire to sense or heart, we do not believe him. He may be able to refrain from tumbling into the wrong beds hereafter, but no evidence leads us to credit his claim of a shift in his emotional potential. That claim belongs to the realm of rhetoric. Dorothea, on the other hand, learns

what her feelings are and mean. Those feelings justify as well as account for her actions: outer knowledge versus inner, change in action versus change in feeling. It is more important to point to Dorothea's change than to her consistency but more meaningful to insist on Tom's essential lack of alteration, the distinction a matter of emphasis.

For if the optimism of the nineteenth century focuses on the possibilities of change, that of the eighteenth depends on the reassurances of stability. Nor is it only because (as the gloomy Tory satirists proclaim) change often implies decay but more simply, because change is unpredictable. Novels and autobiographies of religious conversion provide acceptable contexts for the dramatization of significant change specifically because they render alteration comprehensible and recognizable by placing it in a scheme that defines, limits, and justifies it. On the whole, though, the most hopeful eighteenth-century view of experience suggests that men, like nations, flourish by becoming more fully themselves and by believing—insisting on their belief—in themselves as consistent entities.

Moll Flanders, Pamela, Tom Jones, and Evelina—one might add most of Smollett's heroes—all face the problem of discovering and defining their proper social positions. The atmosphere of social fluctuation so familiar in the eighteenth-century novel contrasts sharply with the personal stability that I have been trying to describe. Indeed, the claim to rise in the world made by the four characters mentioned depends largely on the inviolability of their personal identities. Moll, epitomizing (as many commentators have recognized) the values of a capitalistic society, unwavering in her concern with personal security, achieves security and status as a direct result of that unwavering concern. Pamela wins the right to be a lady by her insistence on being herself; Tom's embodiment of Squire Allworthy's kind of personal nobility makes him the squire's natural heir; Evelina's purity in the face of social corruption fits her to marry the true aristocrat. If one considers this group of novels as exemplifying the moral purposes their authors consistently profess, it seems necessary to conclude that virtue, for these writers, depends upon an uncomplicated integrity of identity and a very specifically personal identity. However much writers of fiction speak of general human nature or general moral truth, their interest centers in the individual and in an awareness of individual complexity. Most definitions of the traditional novel assume that fact.

The aspects of Moll that make her different from other women, Tom's idiosyncrasies, noble and ignoble, Tristram's disturbingly plausible though bizarre peculiarities compel our attention.

"The novel like every form of art," A. A. Mendilow has observed, "is the product of the close cooperation between writer and reader." 15 Writer and reader between them establish the illusion of identity in fictional personages, creating and discovering in the characters' responses to experience that solidity of personality that Hume declares so elusive in self-perception. We speak confidently of character in eighteenth-century fiction; it is inconceivable to doubt its continuity. Hume describes the mind as "a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance; pass, repass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations." He adds, though, that the theatrical metaphor points only to the dynamic succession of perceptions: we have not "the most distant notion of the place where these scenes are represented, or of the materials of which it is composed."16 The metaphor suggests that when we reflect on our perceptions we discover (or invent?) a drama, an action, that assures us of our own reality. We believe in the existence of the theater—the continuing self that we cannot directly perceive—because we believe in the action that takes place within it.

Someone else invents the action of a novel, which declares the stability of the personalities who enact it. The reader, asked merely to suspend his disbelief, need give only temporary assent to the reality of those personalities. But his assent, however temporary, may be profound. For the duration of the novel, its characters have absolute authority. Before any other purposes they may be assigned, they fulfill the purpose of simple self-assertion. Telling their own stories or acting as subjects of a narrator's story, they declare the overwhelming fact of their own existence: existence in and through story.

They exist because they are imagined and perceived, and they are perceived more confidently (although within a conditional framework) than we can perceive ourselves. The structure of cause and effect that contains them makes more sense than the haphazardness of real life. Even such an imitation of haphazardness as *Tristram Shandy* reveals an inexorable logic. Tristram, unique in this respect as in others among the fictional protagonists of his time, sometimes doubts his own identity, but no reader can doubt it. The very consistency of his voice affirms it and the weird consistency of his experience. The

reader believes in a character's identity not because the character believes in it, not on the basis of the character's memory, but as a result of that character's existence in a succession of moments recorded, ultimately, in the reader's memory as part of his experience. Moll Flanders, who purports to write her recollections, yet appears to exist only in the present. Pamela, Clarissa, Evelina, the dramatis personae of *Humphry Clinker*—all, writing their endless letters, assert their presence moment by moment.¹⁷ Affirming their identities in action, they help us to affirm our own by claiming the comprehensibility and continuity of experience. Like Dr. Johnson kicking the stone to declare the reality of the objective world, the novelists of the eighteenth century insist on the ease with which Hume's doubts can be refuted.

Finally, of course, the characters in novels live and move and have their being in our minds. Fictional characters can possess our imaginations and exploit our memories, which supply us with the evidence of common experience, common humanity. Authors claim only that their characters imitate humanity and demand of their readers only the suspension of disbelief, not the total credulity that makes Partridge admire Claudius, thundering like a real actor, more than he does Hamlet, that little man who feels only what anybody would feel. He believes in Hamlet not as performer but as experiencer. Fielding's tacit warning to his readers, through Partridge, about the danger of uncritical faith in the reality of artifice acknowledges the moral problem implicit in the creation of fictional characters, the problem understood by Dr. Johnson and by Hartley. Altering our imaginations, fiction may alter our lives. Novelistic characters in realistic fiction may serve various functions for their creators: spokesmen or targets (as in Evelina), surrogates for forbidden or impossible action (Moll Flanders, Robinson Crusoe), playthings and puppets (Tom Jones), alter egos (Tristram Shandy). Always, though, the novelist has the characters more or less under his conscious or unconscious control. He may claim that his imaginary people take over the action, developing minds of their own. Still, he can always stop writing; without him those people would not exist. As for the reader, once fictional personages enter his imagination they do exist, their power over him greater than his over them. (He can close the book, but the characters survive.)

By giving their characters distinct and compelling human identities the novelists of the eighteenth century created potentially perplexing

moral issues. A few years before Richardson and Fielding began writing, the literary world had been wracked by dispute over the moral effect of *The Beggar's Opera*. Young men responding to the charm of Captain Macheath, moralists feared, would go and do likewise, persuaded to sin by the glamor of the highwayman's life. The moralists even found case histories to prove their point, deathbed confessions by reprobates willing to declare their downfall Gay's fault. They did not believe uncritically, like Partridge, in Macheath's reality or his literal irresistibleness to women. But the highwayman as lover provided a potent image that, entering the imagination, affected action as well as thought.

Moral responsibility depends on consistent identity. Philosophers agreed on this point, recognizing that madmen could not be held responsible for their acts specifically because their altered consciousness made them, to all intents and purposes, different people from their sane selves. But as Dr. Johnson suggested, all power of fancy over reason is a degree of insanity. Novels, stimulating the fancy and encouraging vicarious enlargement of identity, thus endangered sanity in its most rigorous definition by disturbing the clear preeminence of memory. By making imagination as vivid as memory, by creating characters whose identities persuaded readers' belief, they threatened the truisms about continuity and responsibility.

Putting the problem in those terms makes it rather quaint. Certainly no mature modern reader will concern himself seriously with the possibility that reading Fielding or Smollett may lead him to depravity or, for that matter, insanity. We make firm distinctions now between the literary life and the life of action—although such figures as Norman Mailer may raise doubts about exactly how secure those distinctions are. Yet the fundamental question that Johnson and Hartley tried to articulate remains significant, becoming even more compelling if one wonders about the nature of personal identity. And such wonderings are, of course, still with us. A contemporary psychoanalyst writes, "Self and identity are not facts about people; they are ways of thinking about people."18 He adds that self means "my body, my personality, my actions, my competence, my continuity, my needs, my agency, and my subjective space . . . self is a way of pointing" (p. 53). Identity in fiction seems more secure than in literal experience. Robinson Crusoe has a solidity of being that we might hesitate to assert of one another in real life. How does the firm identity of fictional charac-

ters function for the reader? or of autobiographical characters?—for such questions refer properly not only to the novel but to autobiography as well. When we see Pamela turning her life into story, we recognize the degree to which her fantasy imposes on reality, understanding how she creates herself through her letters. Real people, asserting their identities in prose, also to some extent create themselves. Can we, then, worrying about the problem of literary identity, make any significant distinction between the selves evoked in fiction and those established by records that claim to be factual?

David Hume, the great questioner of personal continuity, vividly asserts his own. He wrote his eleven-page autobiography—"the panegyric on himself which he calls his life," as James Boswell describes it¹⁹—in 1776, when he was sixty-five years old and knew himself mortally ill. It begins, "It is difficult for a man to speak long of himself without vanity; therefore I shall be short."²⁰ The author's further defense against vanity, he adds, is that he proposes to present a narrative that "shall contain little more than the history of my writings" (p. v), justifying the device by the fact that "almost all my life has been spent in literary pursuits and occupations."

Roy Pascal, one of the few theorists of autobiography, has commented, "It is with relief, we feel, that [many autobiographers] . . . write about their achievement, their gift, their attitude, solid, comforting realities as compared with themselves."21 He also observes, "The purpose of true autobiography must be 'Selbstbesinnung', a search for one's inner standing" (p. 182). Hume, for all his claim to write about "little more" than the history of his writings (and we feel unmistakably the relief with which he retreats from the vanity of self to that of the author), uses that "little more" to assert an "inner standing" based on his invincible equanimity, attested, according to him, in his response to every adversity. He was "naturally of a cheerful and sanguine temper" (p. vii); hence the failure of his Treatise of Human Nature did not long trouble him. His Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding and a collection of his essays were also overlooked by the public, but "such is the force of natural temper, that these disappointments made little or no impression on me" (p. ix). "Not being very irascible in . . . temper," he never involved himself in literary squabbles. He "was ever more disposed to see the favorable than unfavorable side of things; a turn of mind which it is more happy to possess, then to be born to an estate of ten thousand a year" (p, x).

And so on. Once he confesses to having been discouraged, at the reception of the initial volume of his history, which sold forty-five copies in the first year. But he soon recovered, "now callous against the impressions of public folly" (pp. xii-xiii). Facing death, he says, he has "never suffered a moment's abatement of my spirits" (p. xv); indeed, this final period of his life seems to him the happiest. Finally he summarizes his own character: "a man of mild disposition, of command of temper, of an open, social, and cheerful humor, capable of attachment, but little susceptible of enmity, and of great moderation in all my passions" (pp. xv-xvi).

Many of these formulations about his personality suggest the defensive function of such a self-image. The value of his nature, as he understands it, derives from its power to protect against the vicissitudes of literary life. His triumph consists in his development of callousness. He describes himself often in terms of negatives: not very irascible, never suffering abatement of spirits, little susceptible of enmity. After his description of his happiness at the end of life, he summarizes, "It is difficult to be more detached from life than I am at present" (p. xv). Detachment represents the ideal to which all his cheerfulness contributes. The mildness, moderation, and self-command of which he boasts encourage lack of full involvement in intense relationships, and his claim to be "capable of attachment" lacks conviction in the face of the autobiography's abundant evidence of his tendency to withdraw and protect himself from danger embodied in other people.

Hume's self-affirmation and self-justification—necessary aspects, probably, of all autobiography—express themselves principally in self-defense: against outer and inner forces. He must guard himself from the world, but also, we may surmise, from his anger at the world. He does not claim, in his statement of intent, to offer any picture at all of his psychic life; yet the account he provides emphasizes the omnipresence of his inner poise as a central truth. Denying all rage, almost all depression, insisting on the consistency of his emotions, he declares an identity based on feeling—while professing to declare one resting on his literary vocation—and based specifically on the utter predictability of his emotional life. It may still be true, in his age as in his youth, that he finds within only a bundle of perceptions and emotions, no distinctive discernible self. But looking back over a lifetime's perceptions and emotions he discovers often repeated the exper-

ience of responding cheerfully to adverse circumstance. And he finds that he displays always a distinctive character. Speaking of himself in the past tense, looking at his life in the perspective of his death, he appears to feel no doubt about his consistency of self. If this identity is simplified almost to the point of caricature, it becomes more emphatic for being that. Against all doubt (the doubt of audiences unconvinced by his interpretation of metaphysics or history, the doubt of the self about the self) he asserts his certainty: he knows who he is, or was. "I cannot say there is no vanity in making this funeral oration of myself," he concludes, "but I hope it is not a misplaced one; and this is a matter of fact which is easily cleared and ascertained" (p. xvi). His vanity, in other words, is justified by the facts; in emotional simplification lies truth. We know, and surely Hume knew too, that no man ever lived an entire life unmarked by anger, fear, misery, however powerful his self-command. Yet his vision of successful disengagement provides him with an interpretation of his experience that helps him to face death, that ultimate disengagement, as a true culmination.

Autobiographies, of course, provide interpretations, not merely records. The defensive function of self-interpretation seems striking in other eighteenth-century life stories besides Hume's. Hume presents himself as though the cheerfulness that others might suspect to be a mask instead embodies his ultimate substance. Colley Cibber glorifies his own follies; his daughter, Charlotte Charke, insists against all evidence on her fundamental identity as good daughter; Laetitia Pilkington declares that she wants only to be a good wife while demonstrating that she also wants something quite different: financial independence and literary fame. In all these cases, the reader is left with an uneasy conviction that important matters have been left out. But we read all autobiographies "not as factual truth but as a wrestling with truth," Roy Pascal explains (p. 75). All autobiographers wrestle, specifically, with the truth of personal identity: trying, perhaps, to record that ineluctable sense of self to which some philosophers testify; trying, perhaps, to discover it or to manufacture it. The individual autobiographies I have mentioned so far, in which the effort to assert a distinct identity seems a way to defend against the world's encroachments on the self, all suggest some attempt to invent a valid identity for defensive purposes. Such autobiographies do not, of course, like novels devise the happenings that will create consciousness of character in the mind of the reader. We assume that the hap-

penings of autobiography are more or less given, although the writer obviously selects among his memories and shapes them to his purposes. Events in autobiography, then, do not create character in the same way as events in fiction. Yet one may feel that the central character of an autobiography has created a self, then written the book to validate the creation. The writing itself may constitute the creation. Hume, looking back over his life, facing the imminent prospect of his death, mythologizes himself as a man virtually devoid of passion and therefore impervious. Setting down the myth, he fabricates the identity he cannot simply perceive. Mrs. Pilkington reflects on her long, chaotic struggle for survival and the endless insults to which she has been subjected. However indistinct her version of her being, she can yet interpret herself as heroine, forced by events to behave sometimes in dubious ways, but pure in heart and womanly in intent if not in action. Her prose converts her into a person of significance, defending her against the world's reluctance to take her seriously.

The atmosphere of self-invention about these autobiographical records of course raises doubts about the firmness of the personal sense of identity they presumably assert. James Boswell, who invents himself, in various versions, before the reader's eyes ("I have discovered," he writes, "that we may be in some degree whatever character we choose"22) epitomizes the uncertainty—not unmixed with exhilaration at the range of possibilities—that afflicts some of the century's autobiographers. Writing journals rather than formal retrospection, he is, like Hester Thrale and Fanny Burney (and like Pamela and Clarissa in fiction), an autobiographer of the moment, concerned with the pattern of a day or a week rather than a life. Unlike his female counterparts, he demonstrates no paramount need to defend against the opinion of others, although his concern with appearances yields to none in its intensity. His writing exists less to make an impression on the world than to explain himself to himself. The journals embody an endless struggle to make sense out of his life, a struggle of interpretation in which one form of self-understanding gives way to another in a conflict-ridden sequence that creates drama from the act of writing. If novelists like Richardson and Fielding assert the stability of identity, Boswell insists on the converse. Identity, he suggests, is made.

That is a rather frightening idea, whether it gives each individual vast responsibility for his own nature or makes him the victim of what happens to him. The associationist psychologists, with their vision of

every external cause creating a lasting internal effect and contributing to a structure of associations that determine individual responses, hint a similar view, suggesting that people become who they assert themselves to be. Of course, they believe that the process naturally has a happy ending.²³ But the actual process of becoming does not necessarily feel so secure. Some autobiographers, looking back over an expanse of experience, have a large stake in understanding their lives as structures of necessity—for good or for evil. William Cowper, unable to accept melancholia as a psychic state with only internal meaning, must explain his emotional life as evidence of his relation to God. His isolation and his precarious and hard-won sense of community both belong to his drama of salvation. If Hume, Cibber, and Mrs. Pilkington exemplify autobiography as defense, and Boswell epitomizes autobiography as invention, Cowper writes the autobiography of rationalization. Unlike Boswell, he cannot afford to explore alternative ways of "making sense"; he must cling to one way. The interpretation shapes the experience; every aspect of his life has meaning given to it from a source outside himself.

Cowper, we think, was intermittently insane; thus we may explain the peculiar intensity of his explanation. But the self-rationalizing autobiography, clinging to the certainties that make the chaos of human existence appear a reasonable sequence, belongs not only to the insane. Edward Gibbon, turning from the history of empires to his own, finds in his past a series of events so subject to rational elucidation that he feels tempted to believe his destiny fixed from birth, although his customary self-protective irony makes him avoid saying so. Citing Hume as a precedent in autobiography, he really does what Hume claimed to do. He describes his life in terms of his vocation. Childhood prepared him for that vocation, the earliest accomplishments of infancy assume meaning in relation to it, and the exclusions of his life justify themselves through it. Like Cowper, although in radically different terms, he discovers a reason for everything, discovers a life that makes triumphant sense. If an identity based on the work one does seems at the outset rather superficial, Gibbon persuades the reader of its profundity. His work comprises his nature; his nature expresses itself fully through his work. Nothing exists for him outside that circle. But the externality of such an emblem of identity suggests, once more, greater philosophic uncertainty than one discovers in novels. Such an autobiographer discovers who he is—that he is—through

inspection of what he has done. He deduces a self and accounts for it. The deduction derives from memory. In this respect, at least, all autobiography confirms the philosophers' views about the foundations of identity. It asserts the solidity of personality on the basis of the past. But how much—to return to an earlier question—does imagination contribute to the shape of that past? The question did not apparently occur in this form to eighteenth-century theorists or practitioners, who generally believed in the firm distinction between stories invented and stories recalled. One can argue, though, that the fact of story is more important than its nature and that story implies invention. Narration, Richard Gilman says, is "precisely that element of fiction which coerces and degrades it into a mere alternative to life, like life, only better of course, a dream (or a serviceable nightmare), a way out, a recompense, a blueprint, a lesson." And Lionel Trilling remarks that "a chief part of the inauthenticity of narration would seem to be its assumption that life is susceptible to comprehension and thus of management. It is the nature of narration to explain; it cannot help telling how things are and even why they are that way."24 Autobiographies as much as novels depend on narration, provide explanations, and insist on the comprehensibility of life. If Pamela's story creates her identity, so does Mrs. Pilkington's, and in both cases the story differs from the experience it records, although we can rarely ascertain exactly how or to what degree.

Every lie tells some truth: knowing that Heinrich Schliemann's autobiography is largely the product of his fantasy, we perhaps know more about him-how he wishes, how he dreams-than we would have learned from a meticulously factual report.25 His identity as comprehended by his readers, then, derives from his imagination more than his memory, and one suspects that his sense of subjective identity, too, rests largely on the testimony of imagination. The autobiographer's "fiction" is stronger and more telling than his "truth." Man's need to understand his life as a story and his need to tell that story suggest that the subjective faith in continuous personal identity depends on the explanations provided by the imaginative process of story-telling as well as the bare recollections of memory. Moreover, the conversion of life into story reflects the human need to declare not only the identity but the larger-than-life significance of the self. "Literary shape cannot come from life," Northrop Frye points out; "it comes only from literary tradition, and so ultimately from myth."26 By

myths man dignifies his condition. Shaping his life into a pattern derived from his imagination and his literary experience, he insists that he is both real and important. From a rigorous philosophical point of view, of course, the kinds of explanations provided by imagination—"false" as they are—only deceive, creating the basis for an illusory belief in continuity and blurring the vital distinction between real and unreal. But novels and autobiographies reflect another point of view, answering Hume's unanswerable question about how one can be assured of his identity simply by shifting its terms.

Autobiography assures its author of his existence beyond all possibility of philosophic denial. Through it he comes to terms with his past or exorcises it. The psychoanalyst Helene Deutsch, writing her own memoir in her late eighties, testifies that through the process she rediscovered buried "memories that have even eluded thorough psychoanalysis."27 The author presents for public contemplation a version of the self that he wants or needs or chooses to offer, rarely recognizing distinctly the imaginative components of that version. (Such highly self-aware twentieth-century autobiographers as Vladimir Nabokov and Mary McCarthy, of course, do realize how much self-depiction derives from imagination and exploit this fact. But such realization is a modern phenomenon; one discovers no evidence for its equivalent in the eighteenth century.) A sense of identity and a conception of the past put into words obviously differ from their equivalents existing in the mind, if only by their objective status. We quite readily assume now that, to varying degrees, people do make themselves up. This is what Hume realized, looking within: people invent the selves they cannot directly perceive. The realization severely limited his capacity for certainty about personal identity. But it may also enlarge the sense of certainty, although locating the certain on shaky philosophic ground. It is certain that man must believe in his own distinctive existence, however his isolated reason denies it; Hume supports this point by his autobiography. It seems certain now—although apparently it didn't in the eighteenth century—that people remember less than they think they do, that they imagine part of what they believe they remember, and that they are unable to distinguish, in such contexts, between memory and imagination. Imagination, then, both helps to create developed subjective identity and testifies to that identity in the same way that memory does. To read an autobiography is to encounter a self as an imaginative being.

This statement describes autobiographies written in the eighteenth century, whose authors would not have assented to its truth, as accurately as those composed with full consciousness of the power and ambiguity of imagination. We need not know (although we may) the facts about Hume's intermittently precarious psychic health or his episodes of irascibility to feel that the portrait he draws in his autobiography is more fanciful than realistic. Even without awareness of such facts, we understand that Hume's autobiography, or Cibber's, or Cowper's, reveals something of how a man sees his reality and that self-perception—like one's perception of other people—draws on other resources than factual knowledge.

Characters in fiction exist as the objects of someone else's imagination. The heroes and heroines of autobiography achieve identity as objects of their own imagination. Both assume new life in the imagination of the reader. The nature of that life depends on the plots they inhabit and on the patterns of psychic action that underlie plot. Autobiographies and novels alike must achieve form, by discovery or by invention. The possibilities for shaping the events of a real life into a pattern that reveals their true meaning may seem more limited than the novelist's infinite opportunities for inventing happenings as well as the patterns to contain them, but the challenge facing the novelist—the challenge of the infinite—is surely equally perplexing. Novelist and autobiographer must find the causality that produces plot: this, therefore that; this and this and this, therefore me; and, deeper still, the laws of motivation that generate psychic action: the answer to the question, Why this and that?

One may arrive at some understanding of the web of psychic action by inquiring what the characters of novel or autobiography really want. Moll Flanders, like everyone she encounters, wants security. Pamela wants to preserve her honor, perhaps to heighten it; Squire B., her antagonist, wants precisely the same thing. Tom Jones and Blifil and Thwackum and Square and the rest want to establish their places in the world. Of course, each of these simple formulations implies complex psychological and moral perceptions, since the meanings of such terms as security, honor, place in the world reflect the individual orientations of those thinking about them. In fact, the conflicts depicted in those novels center on the clashing meanings of such words and the clashing self-interests of those concerned with them.

The same is true in autobiographies. Boswell wants to choose

among the plausible characters he can manufacture. Gibbon wants to declare his control of experience through vocation. Hume wants to achieve superiority to events. Mrs. Thrale wants to assert her importance. Other figures besides the protagonist in eighteenth-century autobiography often seem extremely shadowy; so the pattern of psychic action rarely involves the entire cast of characters in autobiographies as it usually does in novels. But, as in novels, it organizes and unifies the presentation of character; indeed, it helps to establish that a character has a character.

Real life, as I have already suggested, seldom manifests such orderly and revealing patterns as one finds in its literary renditions. Action of the sort I have been describing belongs to literature; it belongs ultimately, as Frye would argue, to myth. To turn lives into words—whether those words claim to render fiction or fact—involves some act of the mind that discovers the logic of happenings in memory or imagination, although such logic seldom emerges in immediate experience. Putting a life into words rescues it from confusion, even when the words declare the omnipresence of confusion, since the act of declaring implies dominance.

But if life is precarious, hard to hold onto in memory, often nonsensical in the living, words are also undependable. Eighteenth-century philosophers alluded to this fact frequently and plaintively. Locke expresses an Alice in Wonderland sense of language: "Every one will always have a liberty to speak as he pleases, and to apply what articulate sounds to what ideas he thinks fit, and change them as often as he pleases."29 Berkeley, with an air of comic desperation, explains that since "words are so apt to impose on the understanding, I am resolved in my inquiries to make as little use of them as possibly I can."30 Hartley adds that individual differences in association necessarily create confusions of communication. 31 All these thinkers conclude that in practice people somehow manage to communicate with one another, just as in practice they assume the stability of their own and other people's identities and of objects existing in the external world. Yet the philosophers' doubt about the dependability of words and objects and human identities defines a dilemma of particular concern to the century.

All these problems of dependability derive from the nature of human consciousness. Words lack absolute clarity because they must mediate between one unknowable consciousness and another. Objects

can be demonstrated to exist in an observer's perception, but since we are trapped in our perceptions we can never prove—can only assert as self-evident—the reality of anything beyond them. The sense of continuing identity is intuitive, a product, once more, of our consciousness; yet rigorous examination of that consciousness as a phenomenon existing in time demonstrates that it consists necessarily of a series of experiences of the moment. We cannot, therefore, even prove our own identities, however certain we may feel of them. Consciousness, our only instrument for understanding self and world, makes secure understanding impossible; we can never fully become conscious of that consciousness, as thinkers long before Freud were aware.

It has been persuasively argued that the problem of insubstantiality so pervaded eighteenth-century English thought that it determined the form and content of much literature in the second half of the period.³² The efflorescence of novel and autobiography as genres may represent a significant response to this problem. Both save individual identity from pure subjectivity by converting human beings into objects: quite literally: pages with words on them: illusions of consistent substantiality. The words may not be true; certainly in no case can they convey the full complexity of self-awareness, or even the full potential of imaginatively grasped identity. Still, their objectification of the ungraspable creates a new order of stability. To offer the self as an object of contemplation rather than a subjective consciousness and to convert one's awareness of self and others into a new image of personality—such acts of creation assert the possibility of making and present the world with something made.

Objects as well as subjects constantly change: the tree we call the same tree we saw yesterday has new leaves; the chair has infinitesimally decayed. The paper on which the novel is printed will rot. But the novel as object nonetheless possesses a kind of substantiality lacking in the individual human consciousness, its existence subject to verification as the private consciousness is not. Life stories, fictional and factual, bear a different relation to time and space from that of lives. The act of reading, like all acts, occurs in time. Yet the life recorded has been rescued from temporality. The familiar paradoxes of time remain—everything exists in a perpetual present, past and future can only be theoretical—but the present of autobiography or novel has a different status from the eternal present of experienced life. The succession of moments has been stabilized, given perma-

nence; the imposition of form and meaning on the flux of experience creates a reassuring image of causality. Neither the autobiographer nor the novelist offers any real answer to the questions Hume raises, but both provide convincing illusions of answers. They affirm the significance of the identity of imagination as well as that of memory; they demonstrate that a sense of identity can be put into words, that the mysteries of personality can be expressed, through the operations of memory and imagination, in objectified form, that identity, in short, can be made substantial and communicated as substantive fact. The novels and autobiographies of the eighteenth century convey both the period's doubts about the substantiality of identity and one way of dealing with those doubts: by firm denial or firm and complex assertion of the reality and importance of consciousness operating on experience.

To look at eighteenth-century novels in conjunction with autobiographies from the same period, attending first to the sense of identity and how it is evoked, uncovers in both genres precisely that subtlety of interest and richness of attitude that F. R. Leavis, for example, denies to Fielding and Richardson. "There can't be subtlety of organization," Leavis writes, with reference to Tom lones, "without richer matter to organize, and subtler interests, than Fielding has to offer . . . Fielding's attitudes, and his concern with human nature, are simple, and not such as to produce an effect of anything but monotony (on a mind, that is, demanding more than external action) when exhibited at the length of an 'epic in prose' . . . By Amelia Fielding has gone soft . . . It's no use pretending that Richardson can ever be made a current classic again. The substance of interest that he too has to offer is in its own way extremely limited in range and variety, and the demand he makes on the reader's time is in proportion—and absolutely—so immense as to be found, in general, prohibitive."33 Sterne goes in for "irresponsible (and nasty) trifling" (p. 11). Fanny Burney matters because Jane Austen read her (p. 13). And so on.

However outraged by the dismissive condescension of those pronouncements, we understand what Leavis means. Like most twentieth-century readers, he brings to his encounters with eighteenth-century novels an imagination, a sensibility, informed by his reading of the novels of the nineteenth century, which make more manifest and complex claims of their own moral seriousness. Con-

cerned as they are with the subtleties of moral perception and decision, Jane Austen and George Eliot have influenced us all in our ways of understanding life as well as literature. We struggle to achieve in our own experience the sort of development that George Eliot's characters arduously attain; we believe, as Eliot believed, that such development is important. By comparison Pamela's struggle to preserve her honor and Captain Booth's to free himself from debt seem to involve less significant issues.

In contrast with later examples of the genre, eighteenth-century autobiography may also appear relatively superficial. Only in Boswell (not, of course, a formal autobiographer at all) do we find the full and explicit concern with the inner life for its own sake that we have come to expect and to value in records of the self. Colley Cibber neglects to mention how he felt; Hume systematically denies troublesome emotion; even such a journal-writer as Fanny Burney stresse in her writing the "external action" that Dr. Leavis assures us appeals only to second-rate minds. The decorum of respectable autobiography demanded that the writer offer his life, tacitly or explicitly, as an exemplum of worldly achievement or vocational dedication or woman's hardships or Christian salvation. Reading Gibbon or Hume or even William Cowper, we can hardly fail to realize how much their stories omit and how rigidly they have controlled their accounts of themselves. Even Darwin and Mill in the next century, reticent though both are, leave far fuller evidence. Such twentieth-century autobiographers as Edmund Gosse and Robert Graves and Lillian Hellman open possibilities for the form that challenge the achievements of their precursors.

But one should be skeptical, in literary as in social history, of any simple doctrine of progress. Our way of looking determines what we see; we must question the temptation to scorn the novel of "external action" and the readiness to assume that Gibbon's ponderous tone and propriety of allusion imply his failure to know or to reveal what would interest us most about his life. Strategies of dignity and concealment may communicate important concerns.

External action, we have come to know, reflects the internal. Fielding and Gibbon clearly knew as much, although their knowledge was less explicitly formulated than ours. The meanings of action, in eighteenth-century accounts of self or others, involve intricate levels of implication intimately related to questions of identity. If a person de-

clares his consistent being by consistently acting, then the novelist's invention and the autobiographer's selection of actions define the characters as well as the issues of their works. Dr. Leavis is wrong to let himself be so readily bored. The account of a young man's struggle toward maturity speaks, if we listen, to profound human preoccupations, not merely to our capacity for pleasure or malaise at the orderly arrangement of happenings.

The eighteenth-century concern with stability of identity (and the consequent reluctance to emphasize fundamental change) implies specific kinds of possibility both for character and for story—those crucial components of autobiography and novel alike—and specific possibilities for moral insight. The assumption that moral perception must imply profound change may derive from literature—specifically nineteenth-century literature—more than from life. George Eliot's ostentatious claims of moral seriousness can mislead us into believing that only her kind of insight matters. In fact the morality and the subtlety of stability can be as demanding as that of change. Characters who strive to maintain their given selves in full potential within the context of an accepted social status engage in an effort no less important because stated in conservative terms. The terms themselves are often misleading. The moral language of eighteenth-century novels suggests a universe of unquestioned verities in which heavenly sanctions insure the ultimate reward of virtue and punishment of vice. Eighteenth-century autobiographies rely often on an equally complacent rhetoric. Such complacencies define the moral context in which characters—real people and their fictional counterparts—must operate but not the full range of their imaginations, which may lead them to remarkable freedoms of action and narration beneath the accepted concealments of convention. Antigone is not a figure to capture the eighteenth-century imagination, but Aeneas—the man who, accepting public responsibility, works within it to realize himself—is. And if Aeneas does not immediately excite us in the twentieth century, that fact implies some critical obligation to think seriously about how he could once have moved so many.

The truth that apparent commitment to conventionality may protect as well as inhibit experimentation emerges more clearly in autobiography—in which Gibbon manages, for example, to express his rage at his father, Cibber to glory in the possibilities of unbridled narcissism, Fanny Burney to reveal the strategies of femininity—than in the

novel, perhaps because the critical traditions that shape our perceptions are not so firmly defined for the less literary genre. We can therefore see more freely. Autobiographies may help us to understand novels in new ways: to notice, for example, that the novels of the eighteenth century, beneath their moral rigidity, explore the nature of personality in action with remarkable insight. Daniel Defoe is not Henry James but Defoe, too, recognized the subtleties with which the individual guards himself against the encroachments of his society. He keeps saying out loud that he does not concern himself with subtleties; we must listen also to what he says under his breath.

This study proceeds largely by a series of pairings between individual autobiographies and individual novels, concentrating (though not exclusively) on works generally agreed to represent the century's important achievement in those forms. Such pairings automatically provide fresh perspective. It is instructive to look at Tristram Shandy in relation to Gibbon's Autobiographies. The novel and its protagonist are illuminated by the historian's struggle to find a form for his life, and we can understand the autobiographical effort more vividly in relation to Tristram's equally intense struggle to record himself. We escape the restriction of critical cliché (Gibbon is entirely rational, Sterne committed to the indulgence of emotion) by looking at the two works side by side. But I would make larger claims for the method on the basis of the questions it calls to one's attention. "If biographers taught novelists how to imitate nature by imitating actual memoirs," Donald Stauffer observes, "the novelists reciprocally exercised a fortunate influence upon the writers of lives: they showed them that the record of human life may be an art; that the attempt at interpretation and appraisal may be of more significance than the setting down of dates, facts, and actions; and that in reviving the dead, the prevalence of the imagination is less dangerous than its absence."34 It sounds plausible—but every term conceals baffling implications. Do novelists in fact imitate memoirists only because memoir provides a guide to techniques of realism? In what does the artistry of a record of human life consist? What kind of interpretation holds value and interest for a reader? How does the imagination function in setting down a life? Such questions become impossible to evade when attention is focused on the ways imitation, interpretation, and imagination operate in individual instances.

Three large issues emerge from such focusing: the meaning of tech-

nique, the insistence of theme, and the implications of genre. Technique is what the early novelist most obviously borrows from the autobiographer, although he also promptly modifies it and gives it back in new form to subsequent writers about the self. The modes of self-presentation that the first eighteenth-century novelists explored, elaborated, and altered in their fictional adaptations largely determine what can be said within them. To say new things, one needs new techniques. The relation between modes of expression and conceivable content leads directly to the question of theme. One quickly discovers in these books the steady recurrence of various crucial concerns, often directly related to the significance of writing itself. Such considerations as the proper role of the imagination, the implications of the creation of fictions, and the relation between writer and audience occur again and again. The meanings of maturity, gender, and profession: the emotions associated with growth; the ways of accepting the self within society: such matters necessarily preoccupy writers whose attention focuses on real or imagined character. Do such issues present themselves differently in fictional and factual accounts? That question returns one to the issue of genre. Does genre make any difference? Looking at examples will make the question easier to understand, if not resolve, concurrently opening the way to serious critical inquiry by describing perplexities that have too long gone unnoticed behind the elegant facade of this decorous literature.

Even to sketch such central problems before considering particular examples suggests a false emphasis, since only through the detailed reading of texts can one begin to resolve the issues and understand the complexity of their implications and the richness of human concern in a literature that may appear to content itself with superficially complicated plot and with established systems of value but in fact reveals profound awareness of how psychology may challenge morality, theology, and society and how intricate is the relation between language, illusion, and "the real."

2

The Soul's Imaginings: Daniel Defoe, William Cowper

piritual autobiography as a literary form provides obvious securities for author and reader alike. It resolves some manifest difficulties of rendering stable character in language. Identity, no longer problematic in the context of man's relation with God, can now be taken to derive from possession of an immortal soul, unique and uniquely valuable in every individual. As Pamela observes, at a moment of stress, "my Soul is of equal importance with the Soul of a Princess; though my Quality is inferior to that of the meanest Slave." The problem of how much a character can change without losing his identity disappears in the very structure of the genre: the kind of change he will undergo is predefined, paradigmatic. Indeed, all large elements of the narrative appear to be given. The story has a plot known in advance; the pleasure of reading it derives largely from contemplating individual variations in the anticipated unfolding of events.

With its acceptance of a set of established categories, spiritual autobiography, although it asserts (as all autobiography must) the meaning of the self's experience and even the primacy of the inner life, also implies meaning determined from outside. One may understand the writing of autobiography in this shape as an act of piety, but how should one interpret deliberate fictional imitation of such a form, which, by diminishing fundamental suspense, stress on idiosyncrasy, and individually discovered meaning, seems willfully to court dullness? In fact, of course, few readers find *Robinson Crusoe* dull, and its

interest derives from sources far deeper than its accumulation of fascinating physical detail. To examine a late eighteenth-century spiritual autobiography and one of its fictional analogues (chronologically earlier but psychologically synchronous) suggests the complexities implicit in even a highly conventionalized form, since form, limiting meaning, also creates it. Robinson Crusoe shares with William Cowper's Memoir of his early life a set of conventions. More importantly, it shares at least intermittently conscious preoccupation with the role of imagination in spiritual and emotional development. If, as I have argued in the last chapter, human beings assert their identities through imagination as well as through memory, the concern with imaginative growth that permeates this spiritual autobiography and its fictional analogue suggests that perhaps the "given" identity of the Christian soul cannot after all, by the eighteenth century, provide adequate substance for literary representation and that the problems which appear to be solved by the nature of the genre actually assume new disguises within it. Crusoe and Cowper discover or invent themselves not only in relation to God but as unique entities in their feeling and their imagining. Defoe, making fictions, and Cowper, chronicling actual events, use the form of spiritual autobiography to contain but also to justify imaginative self-investigation.

Imagination, of course, was for eighteenth-century thinkers a vital concept. Its ultimate purpose, Joseph Addison implies in his elucidation of aesthetic theory, is to lead man to God. "The Supreme Author of Being has so formed the Soul of Man, that nothing but himself can be its last, adequate, and proper Happiness."3 The human imagination gives God "an infinite Advantage . . . over the Soul of Man" (#421; III, 92). Indeed, Addison, a spokesman for the intellectual stirrings of his time, often suggests that imagination should be considered itself a faculty of the soul. And accounts of the soul's development written during the eighteenth century frequently emphasize, directly or indirectly, the contribution of imagination to spiritual growth, evoking images rich in psychological as well as theological implication to convey the intricacies of a soul's progress. In Robinson Crusoe, which adapts the conventions of such accounts to fictional purposes, direct references to imagination occur frequently. They may help to alert the reader to some psychological surprises of a story that follows a straightforward narrative scheme in many ways highly predictable.

Early allusions in Robinson Crusoe emphasize the potential power

of the image-making faculty to misdirect attention. Crusoe dwells in false images that lead him to mistaken assessments of his own position and that incidentally remind the reader how much interpretation can alter facts. In "the Brasils," prosperous on his plantation, the Englishman recognizes that he is "coming into the very Middle Station, or upper Degree of low Life, which my Father advised me to before." But he dramatizes his position into something quite different: "I used to say, I liv'd just like a Man cast away upon some desolate Island, that has no body there but himself." His later experience of true isolation makes him realize the moral danger of the imaginative exaggeration that transforms relative into total solitude and comparative alienation to entire separation from society, and thus encourages sinful repining. Moreover, the habit of imaginative transformation becomes a source of sin because it obviates rational action, as in the boat-building scheme when the mariner, dominated by his uncontrollable fancy, spends more than five months making a canoe so big and heavy that, he estimates, it would take ten or twelve years to dig a channel deep enough to get it to the water. The self-fulfilling satisfactions of his fantasizing sustain him through the labor of manufacturing the canoe: given unendurable reality, a man will live in dreams. Sometimes Crusoe's fantasies—of physical security within a ring of fortifications, of supplies arranged in soul-satisfying order in his storeroom—lead him to constructive alterations of reality. But often they lead him, at least temporarily, away from reality and away from the crucial question of just how unendurable it actually is.

On the other hand, imagination, given Crusoe's circumstances, provides the only conceivable guide to growth, and the narrative stresses this function. "Another Reflection was of great Use to me, and doubtless would be so to any one that should fall into such Distress as mine was; and this was, To compare my present Condition with what I at first expected it should be . . . I spent whole Hours, I may say whole Days, in representing to my self in the most lively Colours, how I must have acted, if I had got nothing out of the Ship" (VII, 150). Such representation leads inevitably to awareness of "the Goodness of Providence to me" and a thankfulness for the advantages of the castaway's position (VII, 151). Crusoe describes (here and elsewhere) purposeful exercises of the imagination, in which fancy produces piety rather than self-will. His fanciful reconstructions of how he would have lived without rum and swords and greatcoats emerge in answer

to his demand on himself to acknowledge the positive aspects of his condition: he is disciplining his imagination.

Crusoe learns to accept as well as to dominate his fancy: "the Power of Imagination" evokes the possibility of survivors in a shipwreck (VII, 217), stimulating "secret moving Springs in the Affections" and thus becoming an instrument of grace through self-discovery and through feeling. The castaway uses his imagination systematically to rehearse "the whole History" of his life, dividing it into various segments and seeking the illumination to be derived from comparing one portion with another (VII, 227). He deliberately stretches his imaginative powers to try to understand the nature of cannibals (VII, 228). He allows himself to learn from dreams (e.g., VII, 230). He grows, in short, through feeling and through fantasy.

In Locke's psychology, Ernest Tuveson points out, "the visual imagination is . . . the very medium of all thought." Such seems to be the case for Crusoe, whose mental rehearsal of his history and keeping of written records both involve the recovery or creation of expressive images to render reality. Almost a year after his shipwreck, he draws up "the State of my Affairs in Writing . . . to deliver my Thoughts from daily poring upon them, and afflicting my mind" (VII, 74). For similar reasons he begins to keep a journal, although forced to reconstruct most of the first year's record. This device enables Crusoe to offer three different narrative versions of his first day on the island, calling attention to the special qualities of the sustained narrative he provides.

He constructs a hypothetical version of the journal he might have written if he had kept it from the beginning: it "would ha' been full of many dull things: For Example, I must have said thus. Sept. the 30th. After I got to Shore and had escap'd drowning, instead of being thankful to God for my Deliverance, having first vomited with the great Quantity of salt Water which was gotten into my Stomach, and recovering my self a little, I ran about the Shore, wringing my Hands and beating my Head and Face, exclaiming at my Misery, and crying out, I was undone, undone, till tyr'd and faint I was forc'd to lye down on the Ground to repose, but durst not sleep for fear of being devour'd" (VII, 78). This variation of the ancient rhetorical device of praeteritio (the passage belongs to the journal Crusoe did not write) emphasizes the importance of time as an element in first-person narrative. The account, as it would have been written close in time to the

events it reports, contains vivid, specific details occurring in neither of the other versions: vomiting, hand wringing, self-beating, actual words cried out. Its sense of immediacy, far from dull, encourages a richer empathic response than that generated by the other accounts.

The actual journal, in contrast, written a year later, generalizes, editorializes, and emphasizes internal rather than external happening:

September 30, 1659. I poor miserable Robinson Crusoe, being ship-wreck'd, during a dreadful Storm, in the offing, came on Shore on this dismal unfortunate Island, which I call'd the Island of Despair, all the rest of the Ship's Company being drown'd, and my self almost dead.

All the rest of that Day I spent in afflicting my self at the dismal Circumstances I was brought to, viz. I had neither Food, House, Clothes, Weapon, or Place to fly to, and in Despair of any Relief, saw nothing but Death before me, either that I should be devour'd by wild Beasts, murther'd by Savages, or starv'd to Death for Want of Food. At the Approach of Night, I slept in a Tree for fear of wild Creatures, but slept soundly tho' it rain'd all Night. (VII, 79)

The naming of the island and the all-night rain occur only in this account; the much longer story (VII, 51-53), related in more distant retrospect, provides yet another set of details (the nature of the tree, what Crusoe had with him, the fact that he found fresh water and put tobacco in his mouth to prevent hunger). This extended account emphasizes how Crusoe felt and what he thought far more than what he did. Moreover, in one crucial respect it contradicts the hypothetical journal, which describes the mariner as exclaiming his misery "instead of being thankful to God for my Deliverance." The more retrospective narrative, on the other hand, claims as Crusoe's first action on shore "to look up and thank God that my Life was sav'd" (VII, 51), with his "whole Being . . . wrapt up in the Contemplation of my Deliverance" (p. 52).

One must take as deliberate the fact that the three accounts differ in general approach and in selectivity: Defoe, if not Crusoe, is surely suggesting the various nature of descriptive intent. Close to the happening, the mind hardly judges, content to record details. In the most distant version, the writer acknowledges by implication the self-indulgence of his misery ("All the rest of that Day I spent in afflicting my self"), and the event has become more importantly emotional than physical. Incorporated in the full-length "spiritual autobiography," it

includes fuller spiritual awareness, even claiming some spontaneous religious stirrings that foretell the orderly process of conversion.

Demonstrating through these literary examples that a writer's immediate purpose determines his literary choices, Defoe thus reinforces Crusoe's implicit contention that the process of recording—a process of selecting and preserving images on the basis of their significance—helps a man to come to terms with his experience. He also hints the qualified dependability of all narrators. Meanings change as feelings alter, stories derive partly from the emotions of their tellers. Crusoe's story changes with his point of view. The imagination, Defoe's instrument as well as Crusoe's, affects memory and perception alike; its value depends on the nature of its instrumentality, but Defoe also invites recognition of its essential ambiguity.

On the island, Crusoe ranges from fantasies of complete gratification to description of a metaphoric death that constitutes a kind of imaginative suicide ("the Anguish of my Soul at my Condition, would break out upon me on a sudden, and my very Heart would die within me, to think of the Woods, the Mountains, the Desarts I was in"; VII, 130). He in fact inhabits a remarkably benign wilderness, quite devoid of literal deserts and mountains, that his imagination converts into a severe prison. Surviving his own emotional exaggerations, he learns to inhabit a "middle state" of feeling, recognizing that he should wish to be delivered from his island even while understanding its real advantages.

He must learn also to confront in himself the unattractive emotions all hearts contain. First, fear. Crusoe's island offers nothing to be afraid of; yet fear torments him: its pretexts various, its true cause his essential alienation. The emotional energy of Crusoe's story absorbs his religious and non-religious experience into a single continuum: feeling explaining theology, theology justifying feeling. His increasing awareness of emotion marks a stage of spiritual development; his spiritual development delineates an emotional progression. Seeing an inexplicable footprint, he responds as to a ghost (VII, 177), the reader sharing his utter wonder and the terror of the inexplicable. He returns to his home "like a Man perfectly confused and out of my self... terrify'd to the last Degree; nor is it possible to describe how many various Shapes affrighted Imagination represented Things to me in, how many wild Ideas were found every Moment in my Fancy, and what strange unaccountable Whimsies came into my Thoughts by the Way"

(VII, 178; my italics). Crusoe's imagination becomes dangerous to him when he faces what he cannot understand. His terror increases as he thinks about it—"contrary," he says, "to the Nature of such Things," but not contrary to his own nature with its precarious control of his fantasies. "I was so embarrass'd with my own frightful Ideas of the Thing, that I form'd nothing but dismal Imaginations to my self, even tho' I was now a great way off of it. Sometimes I fancy'd it must be the Devil" (p. 178). The task of mastering this terror occupies Crusoe for the next seven years. To achieve mastery, he must discover himself. Homer Brown points out that "the island, which is an extension of himself, has dark areas Robinson has never explored; he is constantly startled by versions of himself, the voice of the parrot, the dying goat."8 Crusoe's fear has made self knowledge difficult. To interpret its direct cause as the devil (a fantasy which Crusoe elaborates; p. 179) solves nothing. He imagines innumerable invaders, all looking for him. "Then terrible Thoughts rack'd my Imagination" (p. 180): the fantasized savages will return, he fancies, destroy his grain, abduct his goats; he will "perish at last for meer Want." No practical expedient can overcome a fear out of all proportion to its nominal cause. Crusoe's fantasies disturb him so much that they "put an End to all Invention" (p. 205). No longer can he sustain himself by his ingenuities, since he is possessed by images quite unrelated to immediate actuality. He finds a cave, sees the eyes of some creature in it, fancies this too is the devil. But he assures himself "that he that was afraid to see the Devil, was not fit to live twenty Years in an Island all alone; and that I durst to believe there was nothing in this Cave that was more frightful than my self" (p. 205).

Crusoe is quite right but in a sense he does not intend. The eyes belong to an old goat, which dies the next day. More truly frightful is the inner self. Partly acknowledging this, penetrating the bowels of the earth like an epic hero journeying to the underworld, Crusoe begins to relinquish fearful fantasy. He will subsequently encounter real cannibals, but the cannibals of his mind oppress him less than before. In entering the cave despite his intense fear of the mysterious eyes, he reminds himself of reality. He has always been better at confronting immediate causes for fear than at dealing with his own fancies. Now, five years after seeing the footprint, he starts to escape the paranoid fantasies it precipitated. By the time English mutineers come to his island, he can feel easily contemptuous of the sailors' fear of spirits.

Fantasies of fear generate, first of all, counter-fantasies of aggression. Through them Crusoe can see himself as possessing effective power, not merely as a victim. He will combat fear by imagining himself a destroyer, burying five or six pounds of gunpowder under the cannibals' fire or killing twenty from an ambush. His imagination, he tells us, becomes so totally engaged that he spends days seeking hiding places and assembling an arsenal; in his imagination (the word, repeatedly, is his) he puts his bloody schemes into practice. Finally he tires; then realizes that the savages are none of his business: prudence and religion alike dictate leaving them to God.

He controls the imagery of his aggressive fantasies by reason and by Christian morality, but that imagery has combated his fears by assuring him, partly through his repetitive internal reenactments of destructive triumphs, that he can confront real enemies in the real world. When the cannibals actually appear in his immediate neighborhood and justify his aggression by their pursuit of a prospective victim, his gratification at killing some of them exceeds his pleasure at the concomitant rescue of their quarry: he has confirmed his power.

But the universality and completeness of Defoe's "history of the heart" demand that his protagonist should not only conquer fear and anger but also progress to human love. Before his island years, Crusoe has demonstrated little capacity to form or sustain human ties. He abandons his parents; he sells Xury, his devoted companion in his own escape from slavery, into further slavery with hardly a qualm (VII, 37); he scorns his Brazilian neighbor; he engages in the slave trade himself. Yet he comes to realize the importance of relationship. Seeing a shipwreck, he feels compelled to search it for some living creature. The thought of saving someone's life, and thus comforting his own, "clung so to my Heart, that I could not be quiet, Night or Day . . . I should be wanting to my self if I did not go" (VII, 219). Wanting—that is, lacking—to my self. During his long exile, Crusoe discovers his integrity. When Friday finally appears, therefore, he is able to love him.

Ian Watt to the contrary notwithstanding, the relation between Crusoe and Friday is in fact reciprocal, marred though it is by the eighteenth-century Englishman's assumptions about the naïveté of savages. Recognizing Friday's honesty and his capacity for devotion, Crusoe says flatly, "I began really to love the Creature; and on his Side, I believe he lov'd me more than it was possible for him ever to

love any Thing before" (p. 248). Despite the condescension of "Creature" and of the assumption that the white man has somehow created new emotional possibilities for the black (the reverse seems more clearly to be the case¹⁰), this amounts to a direct admission of Friday's emotional importance to his "master." When Crusoe returns to civilization, he can hardly keep from weeping at an old friend's affection and benevolence, and he acts generously toward friends, associates, and sisters. His travels, unlike Gulliver's, have released new emotional resources.

To have an ally in Friday—and, even more, to have a sense of alliance—protects Crusoe finally against his fearful fantasies. His rescue comes speedily, once he has decided he does not care about it. His imagination now reconciled to his reality, he feels himself at peace (this conviction reflected in his sense of full religious reconciliation) and fully effective in dealing with any eventuality—cannibals, Spaniards, mutineers—recognizing real threats but recognizing also his capacity, with Friday and later with an increasing number of allies, to confront threats realistically. No longer "wanting to himself," he can return to the complexities of civilized life and of full community.

Fantasy has helped him prepare for such a return not only by enabling him to deal with his emotions but by encouraging in him a spirit of play. The endless appeal of Robinson Crusoe for children derives partly from this spirit. Crusoe's fertile expedients partake of the child's inventiveness, and, of course, the story of self-sufficient castaway realizes the childish fantasy of omnipotence—a level of the story implicitly acknowledged in Crusoe's favorite image of himself as king, first ruling a monarchy inhabited only by a few domestic animals, later with human subjects as well but always with a solid imagination of hierarchy, himself at its apex. Crusoe admits the inadequacy of such fantasy to civilized experience with its infinitely more complex economic realities: what a man has bearing no necessary relation to what he needs and his sense of power correspondingly confused. Yet at the novel's end Defoe goes out of his way to suggest the importance of playfulness as well as the lasting effects of Crusoe's island confrontation with his emotions.

His publisher wanted a few more pages; Defoe supplied some material he had lying around about wolves and bears. ¹¹ Despite its irrelevance to the central plot, it contributes to the novel's psychic action. On the island Crusoe's enemies are largely imaginary. But traveling

through the mountains on his way from Lisbon back to England, he finds real antagonists. First two wolves attack the guide and are overcome by fearless Friday. The other travelers, though alarmed at the wolves' howling all around them, proceed, to find Friday engaged with a bear. He makes the encounter a game, facing the monster with "Joy and Courage" (p. 92), promising to give the company a good laugh; before he kills the bear he turns it into a joke. In subsequent, increasingly dangerous encounters with wild beasts, Crusoe repeatedly organizes his company for successful resistance. When they reach the town where they plan to lodge, the inhabitants, displaying "terrible Fright" (a phrase twice repeated; p. 101), tell the travelers that they have dealt with the wolves the wrong way and were successful only by a kind of miracle. Crusoe confesses, "For my Part, I was never so sensible of Danger in my Life" (p. 102).

To be sensible of danger differs from being frightened. Crusoe now demonstrates his awareness of and responsiveness to the real, as does Friday, his alter ego. Both display conspicuous mastery—in a situation where others are literally destroyed—by following unconventional procedures based on their personal perception of need and remedy. The impulse to play, in Friday's struggle with the bear, becomes a method of control. Crusoe's fantasies of kingship stand behind his capacity to lead his group. His many years of paranoid imaginings about unreal enemies have prepared him to conquer real ones. Friday's "Joy and Courage" and his master's signal their successful domination of self and of hostile environment. Crusoe now can trust his alliance with other men, can assess present danger rather than imagine a dreadful future, and can do what must be done. As a boy, absorbed in fantasies about "seeing the world," he could not rest in stable existence. As a man, he has made stable existence possible for himself. The story of the wolves solidifies the impression of mature mastery achieved through solitude, fantasy, and play. 12 The tale of how a man painfully enlarges his emotional capacities by using the resources of his imagination is not the story Defoe claims to tell, but the power of Crusoe's narrative derives largely from its roots in just such a drama of self-discovery. The imagination subordinated to God's purposes becomes a salvational force; the imagination through its own energy helps release the trap of self. In emphasizing the complex functions of Crusoe's imagination Defoe implicitly calls attention to his own: valuable as a means of serving God, but also valuable

because it enables him to create a new order of factuality, a world outside, although still the self's projection.

The crucial literary problem of autobiography is to articulate a significant form for the relative incoherence of human experience. The spiritual autobiographer disclaims responsibility for his own structuring power, attributing to God the meaningful form that he describes in his life. Assuming the supremacy of Providence as the only dependable author, such an autobiographer recognizes the impossibility of fully grasping the providential plan. In retrospect he perceives in his experience a design that he believes imposed from without. He acknowledges God's "supreme fiction": the divine artifice that provides a plot for his life. He appears by his choice of genre not only to disclaim responsibility for his own achievement but to avoid the burden of coming to personal terms with his thoughts and actions: the readymade pattern interprets all.

The author of such a fictional autobiography as *Robinson Crusoe* manifestly bears a different relation to his material from that of the literal autobiographer. He, too, may acknowledge God as the plotter of life stories; he may accept for his fiction the pattern established by narratives of spiritual fact; yet his imagination, obviously, supplies the happenings and the characters of his novel. Such a fiction, relying for its effects on its close approximation of factuality, ostentatiously demands its readers' suspension of disbelief for the duration of the literary experience. Its form guarantees its spiritual truth.

To read Robinson Crusoe involves contact with Defoe's imagination—organizer and inventor of events, conceiver of character—and with Crusoe's—reflector and enlarger of his own experience. The relation between the two is ambiguous. If we accept Crusoe's spiritual odyssey as an allegorical reflection of his creator's, thus declaring some essential identity between author and character, we must yet recognize, as Homer Brown puts it, that "the 'real' self of Defoe's various memoirs . . . is a fictive self. Defoe's confessions are not his confessions at all. The pattern of Christian truth has become the design of a lie masked as actuality, the plot of a novel." And if we consider the author totally divergent from his character, we have to ponder his attitude toward that figment of his imagination. The very form of imitated spiritual autobiography creates uncertainty. The literal genre records a preordained sequence of events, at every turn satisfying ex-

pectation. Its fictional analogue may conform to the identical sequence, yet the intervention of that extra figure, the invisible author behind the narrator, establishes a slippery new dimension. We may come to understand precisely how Crusoe's imagination contributes to his development without fathoming Defoe's imagination in its novelistic functioning. Even if Defoe claims to serve God in his writing, he simultaneously displays the creative vitality that asserts his unique individuality, although he deprecates it by his choice of form.

Reading the novel, however qualified our belief in its literal truth, we do not consciously worry about where Defoe is. It is enough to encounter Robinson Crusoe as richly as we do. But reflecting about Crusoe as a character, we must come to terms with the obvious but perplexing fact that he is an imagined character, his experience the direct product of human fantasy rather than divine ordinance, his existence confined to the imaginations of author and reader and to the printed page that mediates between them. Defoe, not God, has devised the plot of his life.

Is the protagonist of literal autobiography any less completely an imagined character? Are the recorded events of his life any less orderly? Such questions become particularly pressing in relation to that highly conventionalized form that we call spiritual autobiography. For a man to perceive himself as an actor in God's drama, playing a part that retrospectively makes perfect sense, requires considerable imaginative agility. Selecting, repressing, and interpreting his experience, according himself importance as a Christian soul while denying his importance as a unique personality, he exercises his fantasy by making himself into something very like a fictional character. The autobiographer unites in himself the functions divided in pseudoautobiography between novelist and character. Object as well as narrator of his own experience, he in effect bears an ambiguous relation to himself. Reading his work may provide the same imaginative complexities as experiencing a novel; the presumed difference in authorial intent between fictional and factual records makes little necessary difference in effect, though it poses knotty philosophic and literary questions.

The curious relation between subject and object, narrator and character—at once the same and different—in spiritual autobiography may focus critical attention in a new way on the problem of imagination. The narrator, subordinating his imagination to established

formal principles, perceives his character—himself—in preordained ways. He dedicates his imagination to the effort of leading man to God by demonstrating how he, the hero of his narrative, has been led. But the character who is the object of his attention has more aspects than convention allows him. Balancing the greater complexity of the reader's consciousness of the author in fictional imitations of autobiography—his awareness of a literal composer behind the announced originator of the narrative—is the intricacy of his perception of character in genuine spiritual autobiography. He experiences some version of discrepancy between the raw material and its mold, between the multi-dimensional human being who is subject and object of the narrative and the formalized version of him that the genre demandsexperiences this discrepancy not simply as a theoretical fact but as a tension of personalities. And since the character in this case is the author, the tension existing between his imagination of himself as central figure of a spiritual odyssey and his need to project his full personality, we come full circle, back again to the problem of how one responds to the writer—the literal spiritual autobiographer proving in fact quite as mysterious a being as the figure of Defoe hidden behind Crusoe.

Barrett John Mandel has considered from a theoretical point of view the problem of the "unreliable narrator" in autobiography. "The narrator who reveals incongruities between either what he says and the governing design of the work or between what he shows and how he analyzes it may be said to be unreliable . . . The novelist's unreliable narrator is part of the artistic whole, but viewed formally the autobiographer's unreliable narrator . . . is a shortcoming in the art of the piece." ¹⁴ Mandel acknowledges the possible psychological interest of discrepancies between intention and effect in autobiography but persists in affirming the artistic failure involved in such divergences (p. 225).

From the perspective I am suggesting, the spiritual autobiographer almost invariably presents aspects of the unreliable narrator, because of the necessary discrepancy between willed submissiveness to God and the elements of personality not contained by that submissiveness. This kind of discrepancy is particularly striking in William Cowper's *Memoir*—a work written in the 1760's, late in the tradition of spiritual autobiography—because his version of his experience, concentrating on his extreme passivity, contradicts the activity involved in his com-

mitment to writing: an expression of fuller personality. The Memoir displays both the kinds of incongruity that Mandel designates: between statement and design, between event and analysis. Yet one cannot readily dismiss it as an artistic failure, or even as seriously flawed. Although the memoirist does not invent his world or his characters, although he humbly accepts an externally dictated pattern for his experience, he expresses through his writing an imaginative and psychic conflict not fully resolved by conversion. His imagination as the object of attention reminds the reader of the sinister potential of energy in the capacity to fantasize, suggesting that the young man's passivity may have represented an attempt to avoid the dangerous action to which he felt unconsciously impelled.

The experience of reading the *Memoir* is enriched by the perception of such conflict. One might even argue that the account would possess less artistic power if the author exercised more rigorous, conscious command over his material, since the complexity of unconscious suggestivity provides a vivid source of energy in the work. But if we reject the author's capacity adequately to interpret his experience, we suggest that an autobiography's value may derive from qualities unrelated to its degree of perceptiveness or artistic control.

Some partial escapes from the resulting critical dilemma readily present themselves. To claim that the reader creates the work he values is manifestly absurd, but one can believe in creative collaboration. The book we read exists as we read it; the author may control his reader's response without understanding the nature of his own control. Cowper provides us with the raw material to interpret his life in complex fashion. Defoe emphasizes Robinson Crusoe's religious development, but he also describes an unconsciously valued imaginative progression. We can grant both authors hegemony without total awareness.

But to think specifically about autobiography revives critical misgivings. The level of dependability involved in the provision of evidence differs in autobiographer and novelist, and not to the advantage of the recorder of fact. The novelist's knowledge of his character necessarily sets the standard of completeness. He may not know everything we wish to be told about Crusoe, but in the nature of things no one can know more. A person's understanding of himself is far more problematic, and so is the relation between what he understands and what he tells. If a novelist reveals more than he directly states about a character, we give him credit for irony or complexity or

indirection or other such literary virtues. If an autobiographer describes himself as a good person while providing evidence that makes us doubt his virtue, we may damn him on both literary and moral grounds. Reading autobiography, we expect truth, yet always suspect the reliability of self-interpretation. Norman Holland speaks of the "tension" with which one evaluates reports claiming to be factual, as opposed to the relative relaxation of reading fiction. ¹⁵ We demand more of the autobiographer; his unreliability obviously creates a more pressing issue than that of the novelist.

Twentieth-century autobiographers often deal with this problem by calling attention to their work's status as artifact, implicitly arrogating the authority of the artist, the maker, over his material and suggesting the irrelevance of factuality as a standard of judgment. Their eighteenth-century counterparts more frequently claimed the authenticity of the naïf, pouring everything out from a simple desire to reveal, or to teach, or to confess. But naïveté, too, may have the effect of artifice. Cowper as bland narrator of his experience accounts for every happening he relates, ostensibly selecting episodes for their fitness to his announced purpose. Gradually his blandness comes to emphasize its own insufficiency, the story he tells asserting other meanings than those he proclaims. The form of his narrative's unconscious psychic pattern, in fact, partly contradicts that of its rational elucidation. And the conjunction of forms creates the drama of the telling, in which the narrator's naïveté calls attention to the central emotional issue.

The form of a story both depends upon and determines the images it includes. Cowper reports a sequence of internal events; he also provides some vivid images of his life in the world, characteristically stressing his helpless passivity. Like Robinson Crusoe, he consistently judges both internal and external events in terms of orthodox religious expectation, but his judgment can rarely contain his experience. Crusoe acknowledges the possibilities of imagination for discovery, anticipating the theory of modern psychological researchers that fantasy can lead to fuller grasp of reality rather than confirm a separation from the real. His energetic activity, directed always toward mastery (of the external and of the internal), contrasts sharply with Cowper's characteristic posture of retreat. Yet Cowper's self-depiction has the absolute authority of authentic emotional experience: the struggle between imagination—not the shaping force worshipped by Coleridge and Wallace Stevens but simply Locke's image-making function—and

the principles that would control it. Defoe claims the factuality of his fictions ("The Editor believes the thing to be a just History of Fact; neither is there any Appearance of Fiction in it"; VII, ix), and we do not believe him; Cowper defines the meaning of his tale in terms that the reader cannot fully accept. For both men have done more than they claimed, leaving us stories of the self that make us respond to the forces of imagination. Alfred Kazin, arguing for the propriety of considering some kinds of "autobiography as fiction—that is, as narrative which has no purpose other than to tell a story," maintains that "the esthetic effect that gifted autobiographers instinctively if not always consciously seek would seem to be the poetry of remembered happenings, the intensity of the individual's strivings."17 Defoe's narrative and Cowper's manifestly fulfill purposes beyond that of story telling. But both also expose "the poetry of remembered happenings," both focus on individual strivings, and both simultaneously glorify and discipline the imagination, seeking the energies of fiction and of fact. Examining the ambiguities of imagination, as reported and exemplified in autobiography and pseudo-autobiography, one discovers that the novel's rigorous appearance of factuality, the memoir's close adherence to pre-established form, alike may embody efforts to control the possibly dangerous forces of fantasy.

> Obscurest night! involved the sky; The' Atalantic billows roar'd; When such a destin'd wretch as I, Wash'd headlong from on board, Of friends, of hope, of all bereft, His floating home for ever left . . .

No voice divine the storm allay'd No light propitious shone; When, snatch'd from all effectual aid, We perish'd, each alone; But I beneath a rougher sea, And whelm'd in deeper gulphs than he.

William Cowper composed "The Cast-Away," perhaps his best known short poem, on March 20, 1799, only a few months before his death. He had written his only memoir more than thirty years earlier, ending it with an account of his happiness in living with the Unwin family in "a place of rest prepared for me by God's own hand." The declared serenity of assurance in the early memoir and the open de-

spair of the late poem embody the polarities of Cowper's experience. The tension between those irreconcilable opposites frequently disturbs the smooth surface of his prose account.

Crusoe's self-depiction and Cowper's both present themselves as naïve narratives of simple purpose. Crusoe reports an adventure of survival, physical and spiritual; Cowper interests himself, nominally, solely in his own religious conversion. In fact, he, like Crusoe, does more than he appears to realize. The author of "The Cast-Away"—a poem permeated with the conviction that God has abandoned the speaker—that author differs dramatically from the writer who asserts his own spiritual peace at the end of his memoir and invokes the same peace for the reader. But he is also recognizably the same person. In almost the way that we glimpse or surmise Defoe as author behind Crusoe as narrator—never able exactly to locate him—we glimpse or surmise Cowper in despair behind Cowper claiming religious serenity.

"Man is not a state of being but a process of development, and . . . he can be known only in the story of his life," Roy Pascal writes. 19 Cowper announces in his first paragraph an intent to organize his story around a specific process of development, but his tone hints at some hidden dimension in the story he is about to tell. "I cannot recollect, that till the month of December, in the thirty-second year of my life, I had ever any serious impressions of the religious kind, or at all bethought myself of the things of my salvation, except in two or three instances. The first was of so transitory a nature, and passed when I was so very young, that, did I not intend what follows for a history of my heart, so far as religion has been its object, I should hardly mention it" (p. 13). A strong sense of reluctance, or withholding, dominates those sentences with their heavily negative constructions. The self-historian begins by announcing what he cannot remember. He then tells us not to pay too much attention to what he proposes to relate: its only importance derives from its highly special point of view. The introduction to this account of salvation marks itself by a tone so depressed that it immediately denies by implication the spiritual resuscitation the speaker prepares to assert.

The two trivial episodes that follow both belong to Cowper's child-hood. The one for which he so elaborately apologizes concerns a fif-teen-year-old bully who tormented the memoirist in unspecified ways from the age of six. (Cowper could, he suggests, specify if he wished to do so; he "choose[s] to forbear"; p. 14.) The bully's "many acts of bar-

barity" so terrified the narrator that "I well remember being afraid to lift my eyes upon him, higher than his knees; and that I knew him by his shoe-buckles, better than any other part of his dress. May the Lord pardon him, and may we meet in glory!" (p. 14). The startling conjunction of detail—the revelatory image of the little boy's knowing his persecutor only by his shoe-buckles—and the pious concluding wish, with its vague, theoretical, willed image, has a dislocating effect. It epitomizes the tension that pervades the narrative: between experienced misery and willed religious resolution for it. The speaker wants to hope for a meeting in heaven and declares that hope; yet the pain of his recollection must challenge the optimism that would resolve earthly conflict in heavenly peace.

Next, changing the focus of his piety, the writer recalls a spiritual experience connected with the bully. Melancholy and frightened, expecting only further torment, the little boy, "sitting alone on a bench," suddenly recalls a text from Psalms: "I will not be afraid of what man can do unto me." Becoming instantly cheerful, he abandons his seat to walk "several paces up and down the room with joyful alacrity." Then follows a strange narrative hiatus: we learn nothing of what the bully does next, only that Cowper wishes he himself had continued thus to trust in God. The episode ends with his recollection that the bully's cruelty "was at length discovered. He was expelled from the school, and I was taken from it" (p. 15).

The moment of cheerfulness in the account is declared more important than all the experience of misery—specifically, the author claims, because of its source in religious devotion. And the relief of being able to take "several paces" instead of remaining locked in dismal paralysis compensates for many torments. Yet the proportions of the narrative unavoidably force emotional emphasis not on salvation but on the secular damnation that Cowper was repeatedly to endure. Like Crusoe, Cowper faces the problem of self and other. He imagines his castaway and himself, in the poem, as perishing "each alone"; he remembers himself as a child "singled out from all the other boys" (p. 13), isolated in misery. He sits alone and helpless on his bench, awaiting renewed persecution, an instant of cheerfulness, a moment of action, the most he can hope or recall. Such are the visions of his imagination, which manifestly controls his memory. Finally, after an eternity, the bully is expelled, but his victim, simultaneously, is "taken away" to the house of an oculist, because his eyes are weak and he is expected to

lose sight in one of them. Everything happens from without; the passive constructions of the final sentences emphasize the child's power-lessness. He remains a victim of outside forces even after the bully is removed.

The condensation of summary emphasizes the pain in this narrative, offered as an early instance of positive religious consciousness, but pain exists clearly enough in the text. So, too, with the next episode: the child (about nine years old by now) walking across a graveyard is hit on the leg by a skull cast up by a gravedigger. It supplies "an alarm to my conscience" (p. 15) through its reminder of mortality. The boy, feeling his own energy, briefly entertains a familiar youthful fantasy: "Perhaps I might never die." Soon, though, he is "struck with a lowness of spirits, uncommon at my age, and frequently had intimations of a consumptive habit." Although he understands these "intimations" to foretell his death, he never reveals them, "for I thought any bodily infirmity a disgrace, especially a consumption." Again, hiatus: we do not learn the source of this idea or the result of the consumptive intimations. Cowper concludes his account, "This messenger of the Lord [presumably he means the signs of consumption], however, did his errand, and perfectly convinced me that I was mortal" (p. 16).

This time the terrible isolation seems to stem from pride: unwillingness to risk whatever disgrace might be involved in confessing bodily weakness—and, for that matter, psychic weakness. The autobiographer, failing to acknowledge his "lowness of spirits" to anyone, remarks on its uncommonness with some apparent gratification in being thus marked as "special." But the tonal pattern reiterates that of the previous episode: a moment of cheerfulness, when the boy imagines his own immortality, and a surrounding emotional miasma. The brief fantasy of everlasting life yields to more prolonged imaginings of imminent death, assertedly emanating from God. Even as a child, it seems, Cowper could not allow himself the comfort of self-indulgent image-making. He substitutes a masochistic indulgence of fear that deprives him of even interior sources of reassurance.

Robinson Crusoe proceeds through a series of actions to compel interest and assert meaning, the individual episodes creating a larger pattern of action that might be formulated as "to take care of the self." Crusoe originally expects to fulfill the self's needs by realizing his boyish fantasies. Then, settling in Brazil, he seeks wealth as the proper

means of taking care; in further pursuit of money he embarks on the voyage that ends in his shipwreck. On the island, taking care of the self first involves meticulous attention to physical requirements. Crusoe's religious experiences, however, direct him in new ways, until his understanding of self comes to include soul, hence moral perception and purpose. He learns to confront and control his own emotions. Returning to civilization, he demonstrates his capacity to take care of himself in several senses: to protect himself against external danger, to function as a man in society, and to conform to his own standards of right. When his imagination impedes him from external action, this fact receives emphasis. Usually Crusoe's imagination leads him to direct confrontation with the obstacles of the external world, and Defoe's imagination concentrates on the evocation of such confrontation.

Cowper works differently, creating images rather than pieces of action: repeated visions of isolation, separateness, and uniqueness, ambiguous in their nature and expressing the ambiguity of a state that might epitomize the "specialness" of election or damnation. To convert this set of images into an action of salvation without sacrificing their somber implication demands remarkable imaginative grasp: the capacity to imagine the gap between God's ways and man's, yet not to abandon personal experience in favor of theory. The action in this instance is God's; the protagonist of the memoir remains locked in stasis.

Cowper's memoir announces a drama of spiritual triumph but reports a process of development that stresses an opposite movement. John Morris sees it as a narrative of heroism. "Cowper's autobiography may be described as an account of the attempt to wrest meaning from the experience of guilt." "It seems likely to me that, in his assertion of his uniqueness, the sufferer may sometimes be proclaiming at the same time the integrity of his self that refuses to submit finally to the sanctions of a religion that in its inclusiveness promises—or, as it appears to the self, threatens—salvation at the price of identity." Doth these comments emphasize the struggle in Cowper's Memoir: to wrest meaning and to avoid submitting. Whether the struggles succeed or fail remains ambiguous, partly because one can hardly determine what would constitute success in any given instance. The story of the poet's first attempted suicide and of the events leading up to it epitomizes the perplexities of his entire career.

He asks a relative (his cousin, Major William Cowper) to grant him a sinecure in the House of Lords. His desire for the position itself originates, he explains, in imaginative sin: he has wished the death of the Clerk of Journals so that he might take his place. "It pleased the Lord," he summarizes, "to give me my heart's desire, and in it, and with it, an immediate punishment for my crimes" (p. 23). Major Cowper offers him two "profitable places," which he accepts, "not immediately reflecting upon my incapacity to execute a business of so public a nature" (p. 23). After a miserable week, though, the young man resigns the offered posts, requesting instead a less public job. To his distress, it turns out that even this position, given the immediate political climate, requires a public examination at the bar of the House. "They, whose spirits are formed like mine, to whom a public exhibition of themselves, on any occasion, is mortal poison, may have some idea of the horror of my situation; others can have none" (p. 26). He tries to study but cannot. He takes drugs that do not help. He wishes "earnestly" for madness as his only escape, anticipating it "with impatient expectation" (p. 30). Then comes the idea of suicide: he will poison himself in a ditch with the half-ounce of laudanum he has purchased, thus avoiding that "mortal poison" of self-display. Having sought and found solitude in the fields, he suddenly decides instead to flee to France. Returning to his rooms to pack, he shifts again. Now he plans to drown himself in the river, but the tide is out and a porter is watching. One fantasy succeeds another. Back to his room: he will drink the laudanum after all. "A conflict that shook me to pieces suddenly took place; not properly a trembling, but a convulsive agitation, which deprived me in a manner of the use of my limbs; and my mind was as much shaken as my body" (p. 35). An "invisible hand" stops every attempt to drink. So it continues. Paralyzed fingers interfere with drinking; a mysterious impulse makes him throw the laudanum away; he unlocks his door under the impression that he is locking it; when he tries to stab himself the penknife is broken at the tip. Fantasy and reality merge and interchange; he cannot assess actuality. Two attempts to hang himself fail because of inadequate supports. In a third effort he actually loses consciousness before the garter by which he hangs breaks. He returns to bed, summons Major Cowper, tells him what has happened. His cousin assures him he need not retain the post.

Despite the Marx Brothers flavor of summary, in Cowper's telling the story, recording bitter and unresolvable internal conflict, contains

no comic elements. Recognizing its bizarre aspect, he seems a little uncertain how he should relate it. "It would be strange, should I omit to observe here, how I was continually hurried away from such places as were most favourable to my design, to others, where it was almost impossible to execute it" (p. 34). Again, the passive verb form: Cowper can only understand his actions in terms of external forces acting upon him. God, he explains, has intervened to keep him from the sin of self-murder.

In terms of the psychology of his era, Cowper's approaches to and retreats from suicide demonstrated the operations of a disordered imagination. When Robinson Crusoe speaks of his own imagination, he is referring to the image-making faculty, which has no power to assess the validity of the pictures it creates and which may function on the basis of mistaken and misleading association of ideas. The images of devil and cannibal that haunt him misdirect his attention away from God and away from his proper functioning on the island because he attributes to them more reality than they possess, allowing fancy to triumph over sensation. The madman makes precisely the same mistake. Cowper's imaginings of the horror of public examination assume preeminence over direct impressions from experience; his visions of successful suicide ignore immediate physical realities. As he tells the story, he emphasizes how fantasies replace one another so rapidly as to make each impossible to realize.

Almost consistently throughout his narrative, he reports dangers of the imagination, a force leading him ever toward separation, isolation, and dramatic misery. "There never was so abandoned a wretch; so great a sinner!" he tells himself (p. 43). The attempt at suicide itself declares that he is special. Ten years later he again tried to hang himself, believing this time, apparently, that he was sacrificing himself to God. "When the attempt failed, he thought that he had so displeased God that his Maker barred him from all hope of salvation." The fantasy that he had committed the unforgivable sin had come upon him, in a different form, during his earliest attack of madness, shortly after the first suicide attempt. And the sense of himself as specially set apart and doomed remained in one form or another through most of his adult life. Cowper uses the word alienation to allude to his terrible separation from God (p. 50), and he describes constantly and painfully his experience of separation from other men.

Suicide constitutes an act of aggression—obviously toward the self,

less obviously toward the others whom it reproaches for inadequacy to the victim's need. After Cowper's conversion, he finds himself disturbed by anger, although "sensual gratification" had previously been his main temptation. "Being naturally of an easy quiet disposition, I was seldom tempted to anger; yet, that passion it is which now gives me the most disturbance, and occasions the sharpest conflicts" (p. 59). He seems to perceive it as an alien force imposed from without on his "easy quiet disposition," but one may speculate that anger had always troubled Cowper more than he knew. His report of his early life stresses his difficulty in human relationships. Never alluding to his parents except to emphasize the shock of early separation from a loving mother (who died in childbirth when he was six), and reporting himself as isolated among his peers, Cowper describes himself before the suicide attempt in harmonious relation only with Major Cowper, who offered him the poisoned blessing of public office, and with two virtual strangers encountered in coffee houses, who encouraged him to suicide. Paranoid fantasies always tempted him. Reading the parable of the barren fig tree, he feels persuaded "that when our Saviour pronounced a curse upon [the tree], he had me in his eye; and pointed that curse directly at me" (p.44). A newspaper story that he feels refers to him encourages him to suicide. The world, as he understands it, focuses malignly on him. He describes himself as early passive under the devil's suggestions (p. 17); his sense of incapacity persists.

The history of the heart, as Cowper relates it, records a struggle to love: to love God, others, the self. In some respects he resembles Alexander Selkirk—a manifestly angry man who chose to be marooned on his desert island—more than Robinson Crusoe, who was doomed to isolation but increasingly yearning for community. Cowper feels tempted by solitude, a manifestation of anger rather than of serenity and tempted, always, to turn his anger on himself. He does so even in his account of his life, although he also betrays his sense of grievance against the world.

Crusoe's dramatic development derives from increasing self-awareness and increasingly fruitful action; Cowper delineates a drama of denial. His inclusive, theological explanation of his experience defends him against full realization of his suffering. Yet his imagination, too, becomes a means of self-assertion, despite all his efforts to subordinate it. The complexity of his narrative, a narrative entirely ordered by the conventional form of spiritual autobiography, reflects the conflict

between personal and orthodox meanings of the imagery he employs.

Summarizing his career since his conversion Cowper observes, "No trial has befallen me since, but what might be expected in a state of warfare" (p. 58). His understanding of life as endless battle has more than its Christian meaning. Imagery of warfare occurs on almost every page: allusions to fighting, wounds, enemies let loose upon the speaker, rebellion, weapons, the artillery of Satan. The struggle rages between Cowper and the devil, but also between him and God, and between him and his heart.

The heart, source of spiritual and emotional energy, is most characteristically alluded to in negative terms, as hardened, sinful, sick. The very form of spiritual autobiography partially accounts for this fact: stress on the unregenerate character of the sinner intensifies the glory, and the significance, of his salvation. As a confirmed Christian, Cowper can berate the self he used to be; he can also testify to the anguish he had endured, as though tortured on the rack: frightened by his own insensibility (a crucial paradox; p. 16); "lying down in horror, and rising up in despair" (p. 17); afflicted by terrors of the mind (p. 43); yearning "to stupify my awakened and feeling mind; harassed with sleepless nights, and days of uninterrupted misery" (p. 45). "Every thing preached to me," Cowper says, adding "and every thing preached the curse of the law" (pp. 44-45).

Robinson Crusoe expresses his fears through imagery of the threatening other; the danger is being eaten. Cowper's fears of others center on the horror of rejection. "I never went into the street, but I thought the people stood and laughed at me, and held me in contempt" (p. 45). His most compelling images evoke terrified isolation. "I dined alone, either at the tavern, where I went in the dark, or at the chop-house, where I always took care to hide myself in the darkest corner of the room. I slept generally an hour in the evening; though it was only to be terrified in dreams . . . I reeled and staggered like a drunken man. The eyes of man I could not bear" (p. 45). For him as for Crusoe, reconciliation with God involves reconciliation with man. He values solitary communion with God, which leads him to the unexpected joy of feeling his "heart . . . full of love to all the congregation" when he goes to church (p. 62). His association with the Unwin family, he believes, confirms his salvation, furthering his knowledge of Christ by "communion with his dear disciples" (p. 67). He sums up the joy of his conversion as "the ardour of my first love" (p. 58).

Images of love, like those of battle, belong to the conventional rhetoric of Christianity by which Cowper controls his imagination. By spiritualizing his experience he in effect protects himself against it. If the agonies of approaching madness and of madness experienced attest God's concern to rescue a sinner through a heart softened by suffering, misery becomes more tolerable; the disordered imagination is retrospectively ordered, not by reference to the external world but in relation to the Christian scheme.

Yet spiritual interpretation cannot totally account for the reported psychic events. For one thing, conversion does not entirely solve Cowper's problem. "Oh that the ardour of my first love had continued! But I have known many a lifeless and unhallowed hour since; long intervals of darkness, interrupted by short returns of peace and joy in believing" (p. 58). From the Christian point of view, every "unhallowed hour" represents a relapse into sin (although, of course, the pattern of repeated relapse and rejuvenation is characteristic of the convert). But Cowper's rescue from his intermittent misery, although he naturally attributes it to God, comes in fact through the agency of man and depends upon his acceptance of responsibility for his own action even when that action temporarily appears to defy divine authority.

The mental state embodied in the poet's "lifeless and unhallowed" hours is presumably a version of that described in his elaborate narrative of attempted suicide: conflict that makes self-determination impossible. Trying repeatedly to kill himself, but trying to fail as well, he tries also to avoid responsibility for himself, arranging matters so that Major Cowper rather than he decides he must not accept the clerkship. His suffering associates itself with passivity. He is the bully's victim, the victim also of consumptive symptoms, of depression, of anguish of mind, of backslidings, of Satan: the potentially shipwrecked sailor (pp. 27-28) but never the sailor at the helm. His conversion occurs by shafts of joy, gleams of sunlight from without. He can do nothing for himself.

After his move to Huntingdon, Cowper reports, he suddenly experiences his situation as "a state of desertion," his communion with the Lord interrupted (p. 64). At this juncture, William Unwin takes the initiative of friendship, providing relief. Later, it occurs to Cowper that he might board in the Unwin family. "From the moment this thought struck me, such a tumult of anxious solicitude seized me, that

for two or three days I could not divert my mind to any other subject. I blamed and condemned myself for want of submission to the Lord's will; but still the language of my mutinous and disobedient heart was, 'Give me the blessing, or else I die' " (p. 66). Unable to resolve this clash of desire and guilt, he finally brings himself to focus attention on something else. A Biblical text comes into his mind; he feels convinced that the words, which seem to justify his wish, "were not of my own production" (p. 66). Thus fortified, he begins "to negociate the affair" (p. 67); his admission to the Unwin family constitutes for him a symbolic resolution to his conflicts.

The account both parallels and reverses the narrative of attempted suicide. Again panic attends the impulse to action; the resulting "tumult" of anxiety paralyzes the writer, as anxiety has always paralyzed him. Despite his self-condemnation, he condones the gratification of impulse by attributing to some outside agency its verbal sanction. He thus achieves the single self-determined action of the entire memoir.

Reality cannot save Cowper from his depressed fantasies. Reality has nothing to do with them. No Alpine wolves will test his courage and command. The only arena lies within. The threat of public office depends not on the office but on Cowper's fantasies about it. The appeal of the Unwins derives from his imagination. The episodes that provoke severe anxiety involve the need to function in the external world. Cowper is enabled so to function, on a single occasion, by an imaginative event: words suddenly appear in his mind. Imagination creates and intensifies his pain—drives him even into madness—but Christian piety can interpret and thus control the imagination, as reality cannot. It brings secular as well as religious salvation. Without it, Cowper finds it impossible to assert himself; with it, he can find the devious means of self-assertion that leads him finally to harmonious relationship with others: rescue of the heart as well as the soul.

In Robinson Crusoe the emotional level of narrative reinforces the religious, adding a dimension of meaning beneath explicit statement. Crusoe's development of Christian insight parallels his emotional growth. In Cowper's Memoir the clash between the memory which reports mainly pain and the interpretation which affirms a positive meaning for pain produces a drama that belongs both to his life and to his life story. His experience of isolation, persecution, paranoia, and helplessness would be intolerable without the descent of grace that

retrospectively justifies his misery. "A sense of self-loathing and abhorrence," Cowper tells us, "ran through all my insanity" (p. 52). He "became so familiar with despair" that not even hell could terrify him. Then, dreaming "that the sweetest boy I ever saw came dancing up to my bed-side," he awakens "for the first time with a sensation of delight on my mind" (p. 55). This joy, he says explicitly, seemed mysterious to him and to those about him. As it increases and endures, he comes to believe it the work of God. His physician obviously thinks it another manifestation of madness, but Cowper persuades him otherwise. His grip on sanity depends, he feels, on his preservation of religious faith with its possibilities of joy. His interpretation, which belongs to his shaping of his story, is also part of his experience. Memory declares the disproportion of misery to joy; interpretation insists on joy's ultimate validity. Memory tells of repeated sequences of psychic sinking; interpretation affirms a larger pattern of growth, culminating in the momentary assertion of independent decision and action, a deliberate seizing of happiness understood as something given from without.

Francis Hart, writing of the nature of autobiographical form, distinguishes between "the emergent narrative patterns of the recovered life" and "the dramatic patterns of the evolving act of recovery." The distinction helps to focus attention on the striking contrasts of Cowper's Memoir, in which the narrative pattern of the life delineates a battle won—the experiencer constantly victimized by his own passivity yet asserting the triumph of faith—while the drama of the telling depends on the teller's vivid awareness of the encroachment of despair. One feels the pathos of Cowper's need to assert a line of growth (that line which shapes Crusoe's story) against the experience of psychic decay, and one feels the degree to which the assertion itself constitutes growth.

Hart's distinction is particularly useful for understanding Cowper's Memoir because it emphasizes the significance of the act of writing. Cowper tells of himself the only story he can bring himself to tell, its shape determined by the formulae of conversion. The spiritual autobiography is by definition a success story, a record of sanctioned change in the service of incontrovertibly acceptable goals. To impose its form on troubled experience, forbidding the imagination to conjure more sinister meanings, might alleviate anxiety and confirm the possibilities of passivity. The man who has been given all that he has,

actively taking nothing, allows himself also to be given the forms of self-understanding.

But although he is given the form, he yet must write the book: an active process, taking place in time and involving the imagination. Evoking the images of isolation, struggle, and anger that possess his mind and making the reader feel the threatening paralysis of depression, he accepts through his writing more responsibility for himself than he directly admits. The narrative of Robinson Crusoe's adventures acknowledges from the outset the relation between imagination and action. Imagination can lead to fruitless or self-destructive action (building the giant canoe, needlessly elaborating fortifications) or to fulfillment (rescuing Friday, defeating the wolves). Or it can lead to writing, an act meaningless or valuable according to the degree of understanding that informs it. Cowper's account of himself nowhere explicitly grants the connection of imagination to action. It proceeds as though action comprises no part of the human obligation. The writer evades his responsibility for the crucial action of seeking admission to the Unwin household, claiming inspiration from without. Yet the writer writes: an action controlled by his religious commitment but putting him in constant contact with his unruly heart and making him vivify the forces that he declares subdued by his acceptance of Christian revelation. He was later to prolong his salvation by functioning as a poet, another activity encouraging the expression of greater complexity than Cowper would consciously acknowledge.

Given the notion that the imagination properly functions to draw man toward God, there need be no discrepancy between focus on the spiritual life and concentration on imagination as one of its components. But the fact remains: the imagination may lead also in other directions. Spiritual autobiography, literal or fictional, asserts the permanence of God's patterns. In it the writer delivers "his life up to a preestablished, sanctified model, allowing the genre, as much as anything, to communicate the meaning of the life." Yet the imagination that fills in the pattern's details simultaneously reminds the reader of the reality of possibilities rejected by the engaged human will. At its best, in fact or fiction, the literary form that appears to assert the sufficiency of considering each individual a soul in need of salvation demonstrates, in its eighteenth-century exemplifications,

how many elements of mind and heart must be controlled in the order of narration and the order of comprehension, to maintain that orthodox view. The spiritual autobiography can reveal the intricacies of the imagination: a force leading man toward or away from God in the living and the telling of lives, a force thus defining his ultimate identity.

3

Female Identities

o employ the conventions of spiritual autobiography has social as well as literary implications, declaring the writer's total conformity with a religious orthodoxy. Behind the screen of such conformity he may find the freedom to render intimate details of his psychic experience, even discovering unexpected meanings for that experience as he fits it into the established mold. Literary conventions with less obvious relation to a public system of belief may serve similar functions of concealment and revelation in projecting a version of self. Women wrote most of the novels of the eighteenth century (although few of those now read for pleasure), employing the highly artificial conventions of the romance or those of dreary domestic didacticism—and sometimes unlikely combinations of both. They are on the whole minor writers—third-rate, fourth-rate, tenth-rate—generally assumed to have only historic importance, filling in the space between Defoe and Richardson and closing the gaps around Fielding and Sterne. But in fact their novels are worth considering for psychological as well as historical reasons. They suggest some special relations between women and convention, some special purposes for which women used even the most seemingly empty literary forms, and some special strategies enlisted in the assertion of female identity.

Women—eighteenth-century women—employ the writing of novels to affirm the social order that limits them. They characteristically define a heroine by her weakness, showing how weakness and passiv-

ity become social resources, but they acknowledge the cost of weakness, either in terms of the diminishment a woman allows herself to endure or the anger induced in her by social necessities. Female goodness in novels does not go unrewarded; someone always appreciates the heroine. With its possibilities for glorifying the capacities and the virtues of women, fiction provides ready opportunity for wish fulfillment. The relation between the enlargement and the diminishment of female capacity as rendered in novels by women exemplifies the complexity of the psychic maneuvering involved in such work.

"Women should always be women," observes a male character in a novel by Charlotte Lennox; "the virtues of our sex are not the virtues of theirs. When Lady Cornelia declaims in Greek, and Miss Sandford vaults into her saddle like another Hotspur, I forget I am in company with women: the dogmatic critic awes me into silence, and the hardy rider makes my assistance unnecessary." Two pages later the novel supplies superior versions of the sporting and the learned lady. The good sports-woman follows the chase only in order to save animals; the good intellectual "is surprised, confused, to find her superiority acknowledged by those, whose higher attainments she considered with awe" (II, 167).

Entirely gratuitous in the action of the novel, this treatment of proper female conduct gives Charlotte Lennox the opportunity to endorse the conventional view that a woman may achieve only if apologetic. She must ask assistance, show her timidity, display confusion; thus she can justify competence at riding or Greek. One may take the whole episode as a covert apology for the author's presumption in writing novels. Other women apologize directly for themselves: "Convinced that I have not wrote a line that conveys a wrong idea to the head or a corrupt wish to the heart, I shall rest satisfied in the purity of my own intentions and if I merit not applause, I feel that I dread not censure." Like the good sportswoman, the good female author justifies herself by the claim that she has done no harm. Elizabeth Boyd requests her readers "to excuse the Errors of a Female Pen: The Book having been writ when its Author was very young, whose ill-state of Health hath not permitted her to make it so correct by far, as otherwise it had been." Again, in the "Advertisement," she explains that she has published only in order to support her aged mother. Such women offer weakness, harmlessness, youth, ill health,

Female Identities

lack of ambition, financial need—in short, femaleness—as excuse for presumption. Unlike the arrogant sportswoman, they desire understanding and assistance; unlike the confident speaker of Greek, they employ dogmatism only to reiterate their subordination. Their inadequacy supplies the rhetorical basis for their claim to attention.

In imagining heroines, on the other hand, women often create characters who appear to require no apology and to reveal no weakness. Mrs. Boyd's Amanda, for example, ideally beautiful and serene of soul, knows languages and science—"nay, dar'd the Sex that would monopolize them, in every Art, once taught her, to be more perfect. Would thus our Fair of Worth improve their Minutes, Woman would shine the Sun of Jove's Creation. Say, ye triumphing Learn'd, what bars the Species? Have we not Souls as rich, and Wits as pregnant?⁵ The fantasy of a woman so accomplished as to "dare" compete with those men who "would monopolize" the pleasures and prerogatives of learning emphasizes female superiority, women functioning in potential as the "Sun" of creation. But Mrs. Boyd finally suggests that the value of female education consists in making women more worthy of the good man's love ("Say, can the Man of Desert fond the Simple, or truly love the rude, unpolish'd Bride?"). A fantasy of feminine strength has transformed itself mysteriously into one more confession of inadequacy.

Women in fiction, like women in fact, discover restriction, forced to confine themselves to needlework because "reading and poring over books would never get me a husband." The obligation to get a husband involved a woman's fundamental duty in life. Jane Barker's heroine Galesia castigates herself by reflecting "how useless, or rather pernicious, Books and Learning are to our Sex. They are like Oatmeal or Charcoal to the deprav'd Appetites of Girls." Her mother assures her that she is frustrating the ends of her creation by living in solitude; she must strive, rather, to be a good wife, governess, and "friendly Assistant" to all (p. 80), or risk eternal damnation. Galesia, full of disgust for matrimony, yet makes every effort to meet her mother's standards.

The novels that contain such statements often demonstrate that the accomplished woman manages nonetheless to get her husband, proving herself, despite her peculiarity, a conventional woman at heart. Written largely for female readers, these books exploit contradictory appeals, suggesting that a woman may differ from her kind

without penalty but also assuring the reader that, even in the remote country of romance, orthodox definitions of virtue apply and compliance will be rewarded. The hints of strain and resentment that such should be the case rumble just beneath the surface.

Woman's weakness often supplies the basis for plot and detail. Pregnancy is weakness: a woman dies, "weak with many Children, Lifes common End with the too pregnant Fair." Women's dependence on reputation makes them vulnerable. Women recognize that their sex may be naturally wicked and that, in any case, men believe it so—yet a further social and psychological liability. When a woman behaves nobly, another comments on how glad she is to find before she dies "one Woman, whose Excellence of Nature will preserve my Sex from those Imputations the monstrous Wickedness of Berillia wou'd else draw on it." Her readiness to predict negative generalization from a single instance strikes the authentic note of female self-deprecation. Sufficient reward of virtue may be peaceful death and long remembrance; for women to combat their natural and necessary inadequacies in life amounts to a full-time occupation.

Pregnancy, reputation, wickedness: all relate to the great danger of passion. "Oh, my dear girls," Susannah Rowson beseeches—"for to such only am I writing—listen not to the voice of love, unless sanctioned by parental approbation: be assured, it is now past the days of romance: no woman can be run away with contrary to her own inclination: then kneel down each morning, and request kind heaven to keep you free from temptation, or should it please to suffer you to be tried, pray for fortitude to resist the natural inclination when it runs counter to the precepts of religion and virtue."11 If a woman admits her passionate feelings, her "natural inclination," she may be unable to set limits to her yielding. Passion may best be dealt with by flight. "I wish our Sex would use these Precautions frequently, and not trust their selves with themselves, there would not be so many Shipwrecks of Honour."12 A woman, unable to trust herself with herself, can certainly not trust her feelings for another. In one eighteenthcentury narrative, sexual passion leads Louisa to union with a scoundrel. He abandons her, the worthy lover of her youth proposes once more, but Louisa cannot interest herself in him. "Strange caprice of the human heart! whose motions nought can regulate, while, like a meteor, it shoots along, too oft portending ruin."13 References to, images of, the human heart as portending ruin abound in all these

Female Identities

popular novels by women. ¹⁴ Even the ineluctable fidelity of females destroys them. An Irish Catholic married to an English husband in seventeenth-century Ireland is the blameless object of his jealousy and rage because she remains childless. When a priest comes to warn her that a Catholic mob is likely to destroy their house, the husband beats the clergyman to death and confines his wife in a garden hut, from which she escapes when the house is burnt. She thinks her husband dead, but he reappears, having hidden in a cave. Transported with joy, she brings him sustenance and shares his hiding-place. Their sex life improves, she bears and nurses a daughter; her spouse becomes "the tenderest, best of husbands: as was Elvira, spite of her distressful circumstances, the most contented of wives." ¹⁵ But the fugitives are discovered, the man condemned to death for killing the priest; Elvira happily joins him in a prison suicide.

Unrealistic though this narrative is (despite its grounding in historical fact), its central fantasy of triumphant female masochism winning total appreciation illuminates reality at least as powerfully as Robinson Crusoe's devising of fortifications. It demonstrates how fantasy converts experienced weakness to imagined strength. All aggression belongs to the male in this interpretation, all virtue to the female. Proving her goodness—the faithfulness in love that a Jane Austen heroine would claim as a defining attribute of her sex—she creates her power: one more version of the energy of defeat. For the fable demonstrates the woman's ineffectuality as clearly (though probably not as consciously) as her strength. In society the heroine feels herself helpless; her husband, rejecting her, finds abundant other resources for exercising his emotional and physical energies. She, on the other hand, has none. Only in isolation and social alienation can she function effectively. Then she can demonstrate her fortitude, her faithfulness—even her sexuality, denied and obscured before. And her story ends in death, expressing anger against the male but also perhaps the devaluation of the self. Elvira initiates the plan for suicide and provides the dagger.

Many eighteenth-century narratives by women share the theme of self-punishment. Although some conclude in happy marriages, the events that precede those alliances and the illustrative episodes that cluster about the main plot insist on the desperation of women's condition. And quite commonly the account of an imagined woman's career will end not in happy marriage but in happy death. "Being

loved," a twentieth-century woman psychoanalyst writes, "not only is part of woman's natural life in the same way as it is part of man's, but it also becomes of necessity her profession." Truer still in the eighteenth century and cause for female resentment: a profession necessary rather than chosen constitutes a burden. Perhaps this fact helps to explain the degree to which eighteenth-century women wrote about their emotional and sexual capacity as weakness—involving them in a necessary profession—rather than strength.

The avoidance of sexual love, however, rarely solves a heroine's problems. A man and a woman, in an early epistolary novel, wary of love and marriage, have agreed to sustain a Platonic friendship by correspondence. They tell each other anecdotes, engage in political argument, exchange banter. When Artander declares himself eager to be Berina's lover rather than merely her friend, she refuses to believe him. Several letters sustain the interchange of protestation and denial. At the book's end, Artander is about to come to town to throw himself at Berina's feet, while she continues to proclaim her incredulity. "Deliver me from Cupid's random Shots," she begs, "and make my firm Resolution a Racket to repel 'em." But she also recognizes—in the same context—"the dismal Effects of not loving, to be call'd Ill-natur'd, and an old Maid, who wou'd not rather chuse to be undone?"17 Undone, of course, carries a specifically sexual meaning: the heroine perceives as her alternatives the destructions of love or the dismal sterility of chastity. Women in novels sometimes praise virginity, but not often convincingly. The Artander-Berina plot, in which all real events are held in abeyance through the entire action of the novel, demonstrates as clearly as those tales in which disaster succeeds disaster the conviction that to yield to love means ruin, psychic if not social. And Berina embodies anew the antithesis of intellect and emotion. Like Congreve's Millamant, her weapon is her wit. She can forestall all happening—this her apparent goal, since all that can happen to a woman is likely to involve love or other forms of disaster—by her verbal dexterity, which keeps her lover at a distance yet enthralled. But woman's wit amounts only to temporizing, and the novel ends evasively like other minor novels, suggesting that, given all the freedom of fantasy, the female author finds herself unable to imagine, even for a perfect heroine in an unreal world, any solution to women's psychic dilemma.

Many works of fiction endorse a rigid punitive sexual morality.

Female Identities

Women must be punished more severely than men for their lapses: the innocent girl seduced and betraved will die in subsequent childbirth. her seducer, repentant, punished only by fits of melancholia.¹⁸ The fundamental fantasy that sexuality represents total destruction for women involves also a belief that only severe external restraints will control their potential looseness. Mrs. Griffith's "novellettes" show sexual weakness eventuating in death. A moment's sexual indiscretion produces at best a lifetime's remorse, yet the danger of being overwhelmed by passion is omnipresent. Love must be, yet cannot be, controlled by duty: a hopeless female dilemma. Some writers find more ingenious punishments than death for failures of discretion; a minor character in a Jane Barker novel, for example, becomes a merman's paramour as a consequence of her indulgence in extra-marital sex. "She that refused the honest Espousals provided by her Father, became Wife to a Monster; she that disgraced herself and her Friends by unlawful Lust, was a Prostitute to a Fish."19

The point is not simply that eighteenth-century popular novels reflect the rigid and simplistic morality to which the society paid lip service: one could assume so without reading them. More interesting is the fact that female novelists, upholding the established system, find images and actions to express profound ambivalence. They convey the energy of impulse as well as of repression; asserting that women are to be valued for their goodness, they wistfully hint a yearning for other grounds of value. The ineptitude of their writing and the improbability of their plots have prevented critics from taking them seriously; yet their special kind of expressiveness—the capacity to convey through conventional structures the private intensity of divided impulse—illuminates not only the condition of women but that of the novel. Even in its more amateurish manifestations, it seems, the novel can contain and express through its patterns of action complexities of feeling that it nowhere directly acknowledges: complexities, indeed, often contradicted by its explicit, moralistic statements. Even the most conventional fictions find ways to convey the personal. Most eighteenth-century novels by women emphatically communicate the world's impingements on the personal, while expressing also the fantasies through which women combat impingement—enthusiastic endorsement of the system at the same time comprising a subtle mode of combat.

Although women imagine themselves destroyed by their passions,

they see also ambiguous possibilities of power over others implicit in their sexuality. Like Artander, other lovers hold forth, with presumable sincerity, the promise that their beloveds will continue to wield the power in marriage, the men "being all Obedience." But women know that male obedience will not survive female compliance. The possibility of pleasing diminishes once a woman yields. The dominion women appear to possess is given them by men, who can withdraw it at will; it is only another form of dependency. Although many women imagine glamorous heroines, rich, intelligent, beautiful, seductive, with men at their feet, conquered or eager to be conquered, they do not imagine that even such marvels are able to retain their ascendancy. Indeed, the woman who gives up in advance, some novelists suggest, wins greater rewards than the one who aspires. The plot of Euphemia is particularly instructive. In the main line of action (there are many subplots), the heroine contracts a loveless marriage in compliance with her mother's wishes. When she accompanies her husband to America, her devoted friend Maria comments, "To die for the man she loves, is not an act of such heroism, as to chuse misery with the man one has no reason to love, because we consider it to be our duty to do so" (II, 63-64). Acts of such heroism comprise Euphemia's life. She performs in every respect like a model woman, although Neville consistently refuses to accept her admirable advice, considering her suggestions, however wise, "a liberty not to be endured in a woman and a wife" (IV, 5). Despite her distaste for the man she has married, Euphemia bears him a son and a daughter; when her son drowns in childhood, she endures the loss with Christian fortitude. In Volume IV, she gets her reward. The drowned son comes to life: he has been captured by Indians. Her husband's rich uncle makes it possible for them to return to England and then dies, leaving Euphemia a large inheritance in her own right, explicitly in order to prevent her husband's control of it. Her attractive son assumes the place of lover in her life, in all but a literally sexual sense, and Euphemia's final happiness derives from her possession of her son and her hope of controlling his destiny.20

Never failing in compliance to mother, husband, and socially accepted principles of conduct, Euphemia does not allow herself the weakness of sexuality. Her flawless passivity amounts to effective invulnerability. Agreeing to marry because her mother likes a man, Euphemia protects herself from emotional damage, just as her pas-

sivity before God and her ready acceptance of conventional pieties protect her from damage in the loss of her son. In the long run, the novel demonstrates, a disagreeable husband need hardly hamper a woman. Euphemia has, in effect, pursued the logical implications of the many romantic novels that detail the damage women suffer by allowing themselves love. Superficially she too suffers damage in the form of economic and physical misfortunes—and, of course, at least temporarily in the loss of her son. But the lost is found and misfortunes compensated; the novel's conclusion displays a note of smugness missing from the books that end in marriage. The author has imagined a blameless way for a woman to attain her own money, her own power. To give up sexual love is a small price to pay, since love, woman's profession, is also often her doom.

The novels here discussed are, on the whole, clumsily written, sometimes to the point of incoherence, and their tones are therefore difficult to interpret with certainty. Yet although most of their heroines manifest apparently complete acceptance of the values of their society, leaving minor characters or wicked ones to articulate discontent, the patterns of action do suggest at least the possibility of hidden female anger. Euphemia does not complain, nor do the fictional young women who disguise themselves as men, suffer attempted seduction and rape, are abducted or even enslaved in the process of proving themselves worthy of the men they love. The plots in which they figure bear little obvious relation to workaday reality. But the consistency with which women suffer and endure—men being typically the causes and the agents of their pain—obscurely declares some psychic meaning: masochism, rage, or both? At the very least, the fact that even in fantasy women see themselves always as victims suggests their dim awareness of social victimization and their resultant sense of helplessness. Through the conventions of romance women tell themselves and one another the meaning of their fate.

Philosophers have pointed out that periods define themselves more cogently by the questions they fail to ask than by those they actually formulate. The eighteenth century did not inquire why a woman's profession must be love, although individual women were quite aware of the fact as a problem; nor did eighteenth-century thinkers investigate their assumption that men and women differ so fundamentally as to seem almost members of different species. Most women novelists

agree that women are weaker than men; sometimes they argue that women are also more naturally virtuous—although the equation of weakness and wickedness tempts many. They do not explain how they feel about their assumptions, and their society's.

Two novels by women, one written early, the other late in the century, use rage at the female condition as a shaping force, thus demonstrating another way in which weakness can yield literary strength. Jane Barker's A Patch-Work Screen for the Ladies appeared in 1723; Mary Wollstonecraft's Mary: A Fiction in 1788, four years before her Vindication of the Rights of Women. In all obvious respects, the two books differ enormously. Mary Wollstonecraft, committed feminist, writes a more or less realistic novel dominated by a clear moral intent, inventing episodes to make points, relying on a stilted though emphatic polemic style. Her predecessor, lacking any apparent focused, conscious purpose, produces an almost incoherent melange of happenings related to one another only by the often peripheral involvement of the heroine and interspersed with samples of her poetry, including several recipes in verse. Like Jane Barker's earlier collection of Entertaining Novels, A Patch-Work Screen seems at first merely an outpouring of fantasy. The title suggests a structure of random pieces stitched together in decorative fashion. Yet ostensible randomness and ostensible purpose create similar effects: the reader encounters in both cases the writer's genuine fury.

A Patch-Work Screen purports to continue the story begun in The Amours of Bosvil and Galesia, an elaborate tale of unrequited love included in Entertaining Novels.²¹ Galesia, in the earlier account, appears afflicted by vanity, but she displays her genuine powers by running a country estate and by learning what her brother is willing to teach her. She decides to study syntax as compensation for being thwarted in love; her brother, who procures for her a grammar book, expects her to give up her effort at the first difficulty, since beauty is for women easier to achieve than learning. Galesia persists in her devotion to internal rather than external cultivation and is duly punished for her presumption: Bosvil, whom she loves, marries another.

One might expect A Patch-Work Screen to bring its heroine to a more satisfactory conclusion, educating her to achieve happiness in wedlock. On the contrary. Galesia never manages to marry, the book ends in medias res with her mother's death and a series of poetic meditations on religious subjects, and the heroine's failure to unite herself

with a man has come to seem oddly like a triumph. A bit past the middle of the novel, Galesia produces a poem praising "A Virgin Life." It begins,

Since, O good Heavens! you have bestow'd on me So great a Kindness for Virginity, Suffer me not to fall into the Powers Of Man's almost Omnipotent Amours. But let me in this happy State remain, And in chaste Verse my chaster Thoughts explain.²²

The "almost Omnipotent" power of men pursues her; her successful evasion of it, although she never offers open defiance, constitutes a triumph.

On the other hand, not to be courted would be a disaster: a woman's failure to attract men suggests that she bears some moral flaw. Bitter consciousness of male power, equal consciousness of the demand that women attest their virtue by attracting men, awareness of the need for female passivity and the fact of male arrogance: these perceptions control women. Neither Galesia nor her creator demonstrates in words any anger more open than that hinted by the verses on virginity. The novel's action, on the other hand, makes anger apparent. The deaths of two would-be husbands rescue Galesia from the necessity of marriage. One young man commits the "detestable Frolick" of a robbery, simply for the sake of adventure, and is duly hanged (p. 38). Galesia feels alienated even from her own sex. She can neither share her society's values nor believe in her right to adhere to others. She encounters a woman who has been dreadfully wronged by a man of apparent piety; the experience heightens her sense of alienation (p. 55). People seek her advice in illnesses; valued as a doctor, she feels obliged to apologize for her resulting self-esteem. Other betrayed women cross her path. At her mother's insistence, she agrees to marry Lysander, whose mistress thereupon causes him such vexation that he kills himself (p. 88). Galesia begins "to be displeas'd at my-self, for hoping or expecting any thing that tended to Happiness" (p. 89).

The final significant event of Galesia's narrative before her mother's death concerns a kinswoman who has married a seemingly eligible man. Shortly after their marriage, it appears that he is also sleeping with a servant, who bears him a child each year. The wife, mysteriously, "became a perfect Slave" to her husband's paramour, "and, as if she was the Servant, instead of the Mistress, did all the Household-

Work, made the Bed, clean'd the House, wash'd the Dishes; nay, farther than so, got up in the Morning, scour'd the Irons, made the Fire, &c. leaving this vile Strumpet in Bed with her Husband; for they lay all Three together every Night" (p. 98). The husband tries to rid himself of the "Strumpet," since he wishes no more children. His wife announces that if the other woman leaves, she will go along. Persuaded of the idleness of this threat, the husband evicts his mistress. The wife, proclaiming the other woman her truest friend, accompanies her into the country, and subsequently back to London. After the husband's death, the wife begs in the street to support her friend. Not even the offer of a pension from the queen persuades her to abandon her husband's ex-mistress. The listener to whom Galesia tells the story can only conclude that "this poor Creature was under some Spell or Inchantment" (p. 105). Galesia herself draws no conclusions and offers no explanation.

One can hardly fail to notice, however, that no man in the entire narrative manifests comparable fidelity. Jane Barker tells of women betrayed by men, of men only occasionally punished for their irresponsibility. She recognizes, as does her heroine, the social expectation that women be dependent and inadequate, and she recognizes the inadequacy of the expectation. In the grotesque story of wife and paramour, she exemplifies her mode of presenting socially acceptable opinons and undercutting them by fictional action. All judgments given on the unaccountable loyalty of one woman to another echo the social assumptions that a woman's concern for keeping a man must supersede all other interests, that sexual rivalry governs the female psyche, and that any woman will yield to pressure. Yet the events deny such assumptions, affirming the loyalty and fortitude of women, their capacity for devotion to their own sex, and, in these respects, their essential superiority to men. Such devotion may be folly or madness (insanity, by Voltaire's definition in Dictionnaire philosophique, is "a brain disease that keeps a man from thinking and acting as other men do") but folly or madness morally superior to that of engaging in robbery for a prank.

No one, however, says so. Nor does anyone suggest that Galesia may be justified in preferring her studies and her writing of poetry to social maneuvering. The novel provides no alternative authority to her mother, who believes her wrong. It only provides implications: male weakness implied in the pattern of male betrayal, female hostility implied in the ways that men come to bad ends, and the value of

poetry-writing contrasted to that of face-painting. To say that the book fails to use these implications is to say, among other things, that it is a weak novel, lacking integration of plot, character, and point of view. Social perception does not produce literary strength, although in such episodes as the story of wife and mistress it generates conspicuous imaginative energy. Galesia's career, like the interpolated tale of the woman devoted to her husband's paramour, raises the possibility that genuine female self-fulfillment may demand the pursuit of other goals than happiness. The ostentatious incoherence of Barker's novelistic structure, amounting to a disclaimer of serious intent, releases a complaint with revolutionary implications.

Mary Wollstonecraft, taking an openly bitter view of the assumption that happiness and marriage bear any relation to one another, appears more conscious of her revolutionary message. Mary: A Fiction offers as its first surprise a portrayal of an inadequate mother, exemplifying the failures of female education. "She was chaste, according to the vulgar acceptation of the word, that is, she did not make any actual faux pas; she feared the world, and was indolent; but then, to make amends for this seeming self-denial, she read all the sentimental novels, dwelt on the love-scenes, and, had she thought while she read, her mind would have been contaminated; as she accompanied the lovers to the lonely arbors, and would walk with them by the clear light of the moon. She wondered her husband did not stay at home. She was jealous—why did he not love her, sit by her side, squeeze her hand, and look unutterable things? Gentle reader, I will tell thee; they neither of them felt what they could not utter."23 Wollstonecraft clearly perceives the human stupidity enforced by social conditions, which, in this instance, allow a woman to indulge herself in reading that separates her from actual experience. The harsh divergence between the sentimental vision of love inculcated by romantic fiction and the horrible actuality of sexual alliance forms much of the novel's action. While explicitly rejecting the sentimental novel, however, Wollstonecraft relies on its structures and devices, subjecting her heroine to the traditional series of hardships in order to enforce a new point.24

At her father's insistence, Mary is married to a young man whom she does not really know. The marriage unconsummated, her husband travels on the Continent with his tutor; Mary takes her consumptive friend Ann into her household. Gradually she develops strong feelings of disgust toward her absent husband. She loves no other man, but

"her friendship for Ann occupied her heart, and resembled a passion" (p. 51). Mary takes Ann to Lisbon for her health and there meets and falls in love with Henry, who enjoys discussing "very important subjects" with her while everyone else plays cards and to whom she tells her story after Ann dies. He urges her at least to tolerate her husband, but she insists that love cannot be feigned. Besides, "she knew she was beloved [by Henry]; and could she forget that such a man loved her, or rest satisfied with an inferior gratification" (p. 112). Returning to England, Mary settles near Ann's mother, spending her small substance in doing good. Henry too comes back to England, where he dies, having given Mary her first real pleasure in life by allowing her to nurse him. He urges his mother to adopt Mary, who spends some time traveling with the older woman after their mutual loss. An intermediary effects a reunion with her husband. She wins permission to spend a year traveling alone; then agrees to live with him. "The time [of traveling] too quickly elapsed, and she gave him her hand—the struggle was almost more than she could endure. She tried to appear calm; time mellowed her grief, and mitigated her torments; but when her husband would take her hand, or mention any thing like love, she would instantly feel a sickness, a faintness at her heart, and wish, involuntarily, that the earth would open and swallow her" (pp. 184-5). The book concludes with the prospect of her imminent death. When she contemplates it, "a gleam of joy would dart across her mind —She thought she was hastening to that world where there is neither marrying, nor giving in marriage" (p. 187).

Although this novel contains some strikingly new elements in fiction by women, it also recapitulates familiar themes: the woman's compliance with parental wishes, involving her acceptance of social expectation; her loyalty to a female friend; her effort to assert her worth by intellectual pretension (talking of serious subjects with Henry while others play cards); her essential helplessness in a man's world, despite what gifts she possesses. Unlike A Patch-Work Screen, Mary supplies a portrayal of a good man, among the male weaklings and would-be seducers. Henry represents the ideal of a man with woman's virtues, capable like Mary herself of loyalty, fortitude, and endurance, devoid of aggressive and obvious male pride. He can only die, since his continued presence would render Mary's position intolerable. Like many other heroines, she does only what is good, and she manifests the woman's habit of nurturance not merely, like Galesia, in caring for dying parents but in nursing her friend and her Platonic

lover. She demonstrates that virtue finds adequate reward only in heaven, and her negative formulation of the desired reward—the absence of marital ties—emphasizes the fierce detestation of woman's lot that informs the novel.

The consequence of making love woman's profession, Mary argues by its action, may be profound sexual loathing. Although nominally the book directs its most powerful opposition to the social monstrosity of arranged marriages, it suggests—even more emphatically than A Patch-Work Screen—a more radical position than it explicitly supports. Marriage as a social institution in eighteenth-century England implies, like many other social institutions, the subordination of women. In friendship with another woman, in Platonic alliance with a man, a woman can assert her equality and maintain her freedom. In Mary Wollstonecraft's final, unfinished novel, Maria or The Wrongs of Woman, published posthumously in 1798, her heroine, wrongfully confined in an insane asylum, wonders, "And to what purpose did she rally all her energy?—Was not the world a vast prison, and women born slaves?"25 This vision of women's lot informs the earlier work as well. The sickness and faintness Mary feels when her husband takes her hand express intense passive defiance. The good characters die, one after another, unable to survive reality. More vividly than any fiction preceding it, Mary reveals how the novel might lend itself to women's purposes of complaint and opposition. Such purposes in the eighteenth century rarely produced good fiction, perhaps partly because of the necessities of disguise. But the tedious and improbable novels of female suffering and insufficiency affirm as energetically as the fictional masterpieces of the period the inevitability with which fiction conveys psychic truth, and they affirm a particular kind of truth nowhere directly stated until the end of the century. Women transform their experience of social oppression to make their apparent compliance the mark of their protest.

The term *masculine* in psychology, Freud concluded in 1933, means active; the term *feminine* means passive. These equivalents represent the best approximate definitions anyone has arrived at, but using them, the analyst observes (an addendum often forgotten), "seems to me to serve no useful purpose and adds nothing to our knowledge." The numerous theorists who have struggled with the problem of definition in the past fifty years have not progressed far beyond this point of bafflement. Many people who believe that gender makes a

psychological as well as a social difference find it impossible to describe the difference it makes.

As a social description, at any rate, Freud's formulation is useful—more useful in relation to women of the past than in the present. The women described in the novels we have been considering, active though they may be in caring for others or in conventional female occupations, are strikingly passive—even Mary Wollstonecraft's heroine—in accepting the suffering inflicted upon them. Cowper's self-described passivity seems pathological, justifiable only by the rigid theological scheme that converts it into acceptance of God's will. Euphemia's willingness to marry the man her mother chooses may strike the reader as ferociously misguided, but it is by no means outside a common range of eighteenth-century possibility. Women of the period knew their appropriate social stance and their assumed social condition to be passivity; in this sense, at least, the term defines the female state.

Women produced many eighteenth-century autobiographies as well as many novels.²⁷ To write about themselves for the public eye represented significant activity, defying the social expectation of female inertness and invisibility. In autobiographies of the period we can see in purer form than in novels the operations of social convention, since scanty literary convention existed for such writing by women. Spiritual autobiography provided a respectable mode of expression for the regenerate female; actresses and women of dubious repute published their life stories as part of their more or less scandalous self-display. Throughout the eighteenth century women of reputation almost never offered for publication accounts of their own lives except with heavy overlays of piety. In some ways, therefore, we might expect the most revealing female autobiographies of the century to emerge from collections of letters or diaries not avowedly intended for the public eye. When one puts such collections side by side with the sensationalized life stories of female adventurers, however, surprising similarities reveal themselves. A self-flaunting literary entrepreneur and an aristocrat living in retirement tell in some respects a single tale, reveal a similar sense of self.

The impulse to speak of the self must find forms for its fulfillment; social like literary conventions provide categories of interpretation. Making themselves heroines of their own life stories, women autobiographers describe their lives in ways analogous to those in which fictional careers are depicted. Many of the women pioneering in the

genre demand attention, respect, and understanding for their necessary insufficiency. The identities they define derive mainly from their exploration of vulnerabilites: sexual, social, psychic. As they describe themselves, women of the century demonstrate how powerfully social fact shapes personal perception and how, therefore, it may shape autobiography.

More emphatically than fiction, eighteenth-century autobiographies reveal the claims women wish to make. With great variety of episode, technique, and focus, they display a tendency to stress what has been done to the protagonist more intensely than what she herself has done—even when she has done a great deal. The fact that the enlargements of self-depicting fantasy assume this form in women means not simply that the female of the species has traditionally been victimized; it indicates that she makes a mythology of her victimization, verbally converting it into the badge of her freedom. Letters, diaries, memoirs sketch a drama of self-defense: women writing about themselves defend integrity both by the declaration of the self implicit in the writing process and by the retelling of what they have endured, individually and generically.

Four divergent examples may demonstrate these points: Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, whose Clarissa-like early career resolved itself not in edifying death but in unhappy marriage; Hester Thrale, bourgeois, semi-intellectual friend of Dr. Johnson; Laetitia Pilkington, expelled by her husband and seeking sustenance in Grub Street; and Charlotte Charke, daughter of the poet laureate Colley Cibber, struggling to support herself by means as diverse as stage acting and selling oil. Despite their great differences of social class, education, experience, and literary sophistication, these women shape their stories (formal autobiographies by Mrs. Pilkington and Mrs. Charke, voluminous diaries by Mrs. Thrale, a collection of letters by Lady Mary) to emphasize similar themes and preoccupations.

Society approves identities for women achieved through relationship rather than accomplishment. Charlotte Charke admires her own spirit of constant endeavor but cannot esteem what she does since she invariably fails. Dr. Johnson reminds Mrs. Thrale of her total lack of public achievement, inquiring why she thinks her husband should be interested in her, since she knows nothing about anything that matters. ²⁸ Mrs. Pilkington's pride in what she has suffered far exceeds her pride in her authorship; Lady Mary gains satisfaction from raising

silkworms but knows that she can claim no outside recognition for such activity. In three out of the four instances the crucial relationships through which the women more successfully identify themselves are filial. Lady Mary, the exception in this respect, finally centers her emotional life on the relationship with her daughter, Lady Bute, where she can offer a kind of intellectual nurturance. She is sadly aware that it will not necessarily be valued but achieves her own satisfaction in the act of giving. Even she makes vivid woman's emotional dependency. Remaining at a distance in her Italian exile, unable to interfere directly in the lives of her English descendants, she sustains her precarious tie with her daughter only by her extreme tact—and the degree of that tact is the measure of her neediness.

The father-daughter bonds described by the other three help literally to define the women through their weakness and subordination. Fathers—these fathers, at any rate—encourage their daughters' charm and quasi-sexual affection. Content to see herself as the "something" her father fondled (p. 281), Mrs. Thrale preserves a vivid consciousness of the art necessary to maintain herself in that role. And she comes to know its penalties. "Matches enough were offered to be sure, some of 'em good ones—tho' God knows my heart, I never regretted a Refusal in my Life—but my Father was by this Time so attached to me, who alone could please his very particular Temper; that the least mention of a Proposal to his Daughter put him in the most violent passion imaginable; & as his Ill humour generally fell heavy on my poor dear Mother, who I thought had already suffered sufficient Misery; I used to keep clear of Solicitations to Marriage with more Assiduity than other Girls use to procure them." (p. 296). Like many passages from Mrs. Thrale's writing, this one establishes all the terms of her sexual drama: her claim of her lack of sexual passion (evinced by her never regretting a refusal) and her attractiveness (to her contemporaries and to her father), her sense of the male threat to women, her implicit identification of herself and her mother as fellow victims, her reiteration of her virtue (defined with stress on chastity and filial devotion). Her ambivalence about her father's feeling toward her never disappears. His love amounted to tyranny (his final tyrannical act his death from apoplexy in a rage over Henry Thrale's proposal), but it testified, in Hester's fantasy, her power over him. Like her intellectual gifts, this power, manifested by the refusals that kept her from entering womanhood, seemed strangely allied to weakness. The girl's

attachment to her father, however, persisted long after his death. Seventeen years after her marriage, Mrs. Thrale met the Italian musician Piozzi. Her first reference to him in her journal includes the comment (in a footnote), "He is amazingly like my father."²⁹ Shortly after Thrale's death, his widow finds herself possessed by passion for the Italian. She will die, she says repeatedly, if she cannot marry him. She has already played out, with her first husband, her fantasy of total subordination to the demanding male; now she will find emotional security in guiltless alliance with an image of her father.

Her mother too figures in the drama. If the father embodies passion, the mother exemplifies control. Father is a rake, mother a silent sufferer (and an advocate of silent suffering) unwilling to be separated from her daughter. Mrs. Thrale reports her husband's courtship as taking place entirely under her mother's eye. She herself never felt passionate love for Thrale; her mother, she believes, did. Marrying him, Hester thus enacted a permissible Oedipal fantasy, though the reenactment of her second marriage proved more enjoyable. But she continued to accept her mother's guidance, discipline, and example and to remain at her side (Mrs. Salusbury lived with the Thrales), until the mother's death.³⁰ Her compliance with her parents' wishes declare to her her goodness: her identity of passivity.

Less successful than Hester Thrale in asserting their status as good daughters, Charlotte Charke and Laetitia Pilkington both record more openly ambiguous relationships with their parents. Mrs. Charke writes her autobiography, she insists, as an effort toward reconciliation with her unaccountably alienated father, Colley Cibber. Her adult encounters with him have apparently been marked by conflict. She tells two stories, both of which she declares apocryphal, about their recent clashes. Fact or fantasy, they express intense hostility. In one, her father meets her when she is working as a fishmonger; she slaps him in the face with a flounder. Again, disguised as a highwayman, she knocks him down and robs him. But the hostility, she declares, does not truly belong to her. Other people-principally Charlotte's stepmother—have created the antagonism between father and daughter. As a matter of fact, in Mrs. Charke's version of things, Cibber has been at fault himself in encouraging his daughter's aggressive self-will by his own indulgent fondness in her childhood.

Like Mrs. Thrale, Mrs. Charke believes that "nature" preserves love between father and daughter, regardless of appearances. She too com-

bines a faint tone of reproach with her claims of devotion, and she displays a familiar ambivalence, both priding and condemning herself for her self-will. Her autobiography, apologizing constantly for her personality, character, and career, insists simultaneously on her remarkableness. Its narrative incoherence (a frequent characteristic of early women's autobiographies) reflects her manifest difficulty in coming to terms with herself. Rarely does she sound a note of certainty. On one point, however, she is clear: reporting her girlhood state "in the happy Possession of my Father's Heart; which, had I known the real Value of, I should never have bestowed a Moment's Thought in the obtaining Mr. Charke's, but preserving my Father's." Hester Thrale's father had to die before she could marry; Charlotte Charke's father inconveniently failed to die, thus perpetuating her dramatic sense of conflict between sexual and filial feeling.

Her childhood relation with her father, unlike Mrs. Thrale's, did not center on feminine wiles or efforts to charm through intellect, beauty, and personality. Indeed, Charlotte entered into early competition with Cibber. As a small child, she won attention, amusement, and even praise by evidence of such competition. She dressed herself, at a tender age, in her father's wig and hat and appeared early in the morning in the street; at the age of four or five, she mounted herself on an ass's foal and led a train of ragged children into town, provoking her father to strong utterance: "God damme!" he observed, "An Ass upon an Ass!" (p. 22). But her performances became more serious, involving her mother as audience and recipient of her force. Her mother feared robbers; Charlotte gathered up all the firearms in the house and shot them out the window when the dog barked, in order "to acquire the Character of a couragious Person" (p. 46). When a gardener left, Charlotte plotted to make sure no one else was hired, digging furiously in the garden to convince her mother "of the Utility of so industrious a Child" (p. 44).

Charlotte's ceaseless efforts to make her utility equivalent to that of a boy, despite her female nature and body, have considerable pathos. She found herself alienated from her father not only, as she readily grants, by her sexual alliance with another man, but more seriously by her futile insistence on accomplishment. Her efforts were usually ludicrous, always ineffectual, and perceived as such by the performer, but they represented her continued ambivalent defiance of her female role. Desperately wanting both her father's love and his admiration,

imagining admiration attainable only through direct competition, she also evidently knew that a woman wins approval from men for weakness rather than for strength. Her compulsive failure in life declares the division of impulse that also informs the writing of the autobiography, at once an appeal to and a defiance of her father.

More passive in her relationship with her father, Laetitia Pilkington found it almost equally difficult to preserve a tender tie with him, her mother intervening at every point to frustrate father-daughter devotion and her father protecting her against maternal severity. By the time she was thirteen years old she had many lovers, "and no doubt but I should have been happily disposed of in Marriage, but that my Mother's capricious Temper made her reject every advantageous Proposal offered, and at last condemn me to the Arms of one of the greatest V——s, with Reverence to the Priesthood be it spoken, that ever was wrapt up in Crape."32 No external evidence supports Mrs. Pilkington's claim that her mother bore responsibility for her disastrous marriage, but she blames her mother and exculpates her father for every eventuality. Her husband quarrels with her father, forbidding her to see him. Explaining that she owes a superior duty to father, she promptly goes for a visit. Received coldly because of her connection with Pilkington and ordered to leave, "I took the Hint, and departed from him, in such inconceivable Sorry, as I never in my Life experienced before, because I really loved him more than any thing in the World" (I, 182). Never does she lavish comparable language on husband or lover. When she hears that her father has been stabbed, she rushes to his side. Her mother and sisters try to prevent her, but determined, she steals to her father in the middle of the night, finding the sister who was supposed to be watching fallen asleep—because, Laetitia blandly explains, she loved her father less. In this competition of love, Laetitia wins, "curing" the dying man with hot wine. A few days later, however, he falls into a consumption and dies in her absence.

One may doubt, again, the authenticity of narrative detail, but not the truth of the emotional conviction that the father focuses the energies of a woman's love. A daughter's love for her parent is no safer than an acceptable erotic attachment: Mrs. Thrale, Mrs. Charke, and Mrs. Pilkington all record tumultuous, sometimes destructive, father-daughter relationships. No safer: but more intense? more natural? Lady Mary in 1784 expressed astonishment that her

daughter's husband continued to care for her.³³ Almost forty years earlier, before her own marriage, she had expressed concern about the probability that her suitor would become bored with her.³⁴ Women did not expect their husbands' continued love. Emotional investments in fathers, made earlier and enduring longer, paid off more dependably, although sometimes stormily. Women identifying themselves as daughters thus declared their dependency, their need, and their sense of where that need might be gratified, asserting their identities to inhere in their roles rather than their deeds.

Mrs. Pilkington emphasizes her narrative's intimate truth. After a highly literary display of melancholy, after proclaiming her desire for rural retirement, she considers what effect she may be having: "My Readers will, I hope, acknowledge I deal candidly with them, when I not only acquaint them with my Actions, but reveal to them even the inmost Recesses of my Soul as freely as to Heaven" (II, 155). The reader's acquaintance with the writer's soul in fact derives less from her announcements of what emotions she believes herself to have felt than from her shaping of her story. All four of the writers at hand construct their stories in similar ways. If a story emerges from letters and diary, it must issue from necessities deeper than the author's planning, but the self-proclaimed autobiographies too reflect more unconscious than conscious design, organized by a principle closely akin to free association.

Although the four women employ three different genres, one can readily postulate similar needs behind their writing. Cowper needed to place himself in a divine scheme. Mrs. Thrale, Mrs. Pilkington, Mrs. Charke, and Lady Mary demonstrate little desire to rationalize their experience by locating it in some system. They seem to need simply to authenticate their lives by setting them down, sometimes even—at least in Mrs. Pilkington's case, probably in Mrs. Charke's, and possibly in Mrs. Thrale's—to authenticate them by fictionalizing. They declare the self's reality and significance by heightening its experience. To turn happenings into stories, to tell somebody, makes the trivial seem to matter.

With an almost mythic insistence all four of these women reiterate a theme common in the century's fiction: the female apology, heavily tinged with resentment, for the life of the mind. Men think, therefore exist; women, who—men believed—hardly think at all, have there-

fore perhaps a questionable hold on their own existences. On the other hand, they endanger their reputations and their value to others by any apparent commitment to the intellectual. The curious emphasis of these autobiographical records attempts to resolve both sides of this dilemma: to assert the reality of the protagonist and her mental life but also to declare that she is nonetheless a good and valuable woman. Hester Thrale, taught in childhood to use her mental powers to charm a rich uncle and an erratic father, thought at first that her feminine value derived partly from her cleverness. Her first husband, however, failed to admire her achievements; her second husband undervalued them. Her mother, who had encouraged her youthful display, insisted once she was married that she devote herself to her babies. In her old age she explained to her nephew that learning in women, never a means to love, would probably produce misery rather than satisfaction for its possessor. 35 She published some books—anecdotes of Dr. Johnson, collections of her letters and his, accounts of her travels, and a fanciful exploration of etymology—and projected grander ones than she ever published, but she continued to express her dissatisfied recognition that to be a woman was to be insufficiently valued. Lady Mary, with more sophisticated ways of incorporating and expressing her similar belief, used quickness and learning as private ornaments. She possessed considerable reputation as a wit (some of her poetry and prose were printed during her lifetime): vet she professed that a woman must conceal much of what she knew and thought, though knowing and thinking were vital female resources. A girl should study English poetry, she explains to her daughter Lady Bute; it "is a more important part of a Woman's Education than it is generally suppos'd. Many a young Damsel has been ruin'd by a fine copy of Verses, which she would have laugh'd at if she had known it had been stoln from Mr. Waller."36 This ironic, charming justification of poetry as a branch of feminine study emphasizes that women need every means of self-protection as they endlessly guard their natural condition of vulnerability by which, finally, they must justify themselves.

They do what they can, but as they describe their efforts they depict the pitfalls of their dangerous state: "teach [your daughters] not to expect or desire any Applause from [learning]. Let their Brothers shine, and let them content themselves with makeing their Lives easier by it, which I experimentally know is more effectually done by Study

than any other way. Ignorance is as much the Fountain of Vice as Idleness, and indeed generally produces it. People that do not read or work for a Livelihood have many hours they know not how to imploy, expecially Women, who commonly fall into Vapours or something worse."³⁷ Boredom, vice, and neurosis menace the idle woman; criticism threatens the woman who displays her learning. A girl improves her life by study through what she forestalls, not through what she gains. Not even so accomplished and self-sufficient a woman as Lady Mary suggests that she can hope to do more than make a bad situation better.

Learning, in fact, often made a bad situation worse. Mrs. Pilkington explains the disasters of her life as results of her early commitment to intellectual pursuits, beginning in her "earliest Infancy," when she displayed "a strong Disposition to Letters," frustrated by her mother, who regarded "more the Beauty of my Face, than the Improvement of my Mind," and forebade her learning to read (I, 13). Her father, on the other hand, encouraged her precocity, praising her prowess in memorizing poetry. Married young to a clergyman, she became acquainted with Jonathan Swift, who interested himself in her intellectual and literary development, displaying his concern by pinching her each time she used an inelegant phrase (I, 108). A Mr. Smith observed that she was a better poet than her husband; the result was her husband's contempt (I, 117). Her husband viewed her "with scornful, yet with jealous Eyes," although she never presumed to compete with him, both because she respected his "natural Talents" and because she thought herself admired only conditionally, since anything beyond ignorance seemed surprising in a woman (I, 119). She observes that men cannot endure their wives' writing because "it seems to set them too much upon a Level with their Lords and Masters" (I, 122). Her husband wished to get rid of her, trying in vain over a long period to lure her into compromising sexual situations with other men. (So, at any rate, Mrs. Pilkington claims.) Finally he caught her with a man "at an unseasonable Hour in my Bed-Chamber; but Lovers of Learning will, I am sure, pardon me, as I solemnly declare, it was the attractive Charms of a new Book, which the Gentleman would not lend me, but consented to stay till I read it through, that was the Motive of my detaining him" (I, 230).

The wild implausibility of this anecdote raises the possibility that Mrs. Pilkington's self-depiction may owe more to fantasy than to

memory, but her report becomes in some respects even more compelling as a product of the imagination. Autobiography as well as fiction provides opportunities for reshaping experience closer to the heart's desire. The hard facts of Mrs. Pilkington's life included her gradual alienation from her husband, her separation from him, and her desperate financial need as a woman alone. In her interpretation of those facts, she chooses to emphasize her devotion to learning as an emblem of her hopeless lot and that of women in general. The weakness of women, she implicitly argues, derives from the insecurity of men, who need always to demonstrate their superiority. Consequently, her manifest pride in her intellectual attainments (in fact her poetry, liberally interspersed in the memoir, is atrocious) mingles with her awareness that such achievement produces dire social effects. The illiterate and stupid woman will be chosen for love before her gifted sister. Mrs. Pilkington's specific example of her own betrayal by reading—the man in her bedchamber while she engrosses herself in his book—is less than convincing, but the example, invented or distorted though it may be, epitomizes her repeated experience of finding her gifts turning always to her disadvantage. Her sense that she is not allowed fully to use her own gifts provides her ultimate self-justifying rationalization: how can she be more than she is allowed to be? Her greatest financial success comes from permitting a Mr. W——to print her poems as his own. He pays her for the privilege; she thus wins, as rewards for her literary achievement, anonymity and cash. Anonymity, she feels (as do her female contemporaries), is women's essential condition, emblemizing their weakness.

All four of these autobiographers imply the same conviction that the revelation of a woman's effort to develop her mental capacities will make her more rather than less vulnerable to male aggressiveness. Even Charlotte Charke, a woman, unlike the others, whose claim to notoriety does not depend on her literary accomplishment, explains her inability to succeed in the world as resulting from the positive and negative aspects of her education.

I was never made much acquainted with that necessary Utensil which forms the housewifely Part of a young Lady's Education, call'd a Needle; which I handle with the same clumsy Awkwardness a Monkey does a Kitten, and am equally capable of using the one, as Pug is of nursing the other.

This is not much to be wondered at, as my Education consisted

chiefly in Studies of various Kinds, and gave me a different Turn of Mind than what I might have had, if my Time had been employ'd in ornamenting a Piece of Canvas with Beasts, Birds and the Alphabet; the latter of which I understood in *French*, rather before I was able to speak *English*. (p. 17)

Later she refers to the fact that she has learned geography, "which, by the Bye, tho' I know it to be a most useful and pleasing Science, I cannot think it was altogether necessary for a Female" (p. 26). What kind of "Science" is necessary for a female? To ornament a piece of canvas with beasts, birds, and alphabet seems insufficient exercise for a rational being. Mrs. Charke's scorn for the skills she has failed to acquire emerges as clearly as her embarrassment about her own awkwardness in woman's arts. Like Mrs. Pilkington (and Lady Mary and Mrs. Thrale) she takes pride in what she knows; yet she recognizes all the while that her superiority in knowledge, always interpretable as its opposite, will be perceived by men as an instance of feminine inadequacy. Women should do needlework.

These autobiographical records are linked to one another, such examples suggest, more by common elements of narrative content than by struggles with form or choice of genre. The experience that women share gives to their accounts of themselves often a characteristic subterranean tone as well as subject. Behind Lady Mary's irony, Mrs. Thrale's resignation, Mrs. Pilkington's aggressive self-justification, one hears a single note of complaint and feels the bitter tensions of passivity; a social condition, a fate, embodying the concealment rather than the absence of force.

Although she often strikes an inadvertent note of self-parody, Mrs. Charke speaks in some grotesque way for her sex, creating a comic version of justification by weakness. She defiantly dedicates her book to herself, lacking other worthy objects, and having failed to win her father's approval for its early installments. But she has to face the question always implicit in formal autobiography: why am I worth writing about? Her ingenious answer avoids any claim of significance: "those that like to laugh I know will encourage me; and, I am certain, there is none in the World MORE FIT THAN MYSELF TO BE LAUGH'D AT. I confess myself an odd Mortal, and believe I need no Force of Argument, beyond what has been already said, to bring the whole Globe terrestrial into that Opinion" (p. 86). It is almost the note of Tristram Shandy, although without Tristram's self-awareness. Mrs.

Charke's self-mockery pervades her accounts of her failures as "Oil-woman and Grocer" (p. 70), of her repeated incompetence, of her position as "a Sort of Creature that was regarded as a favourite Cat or mischievous Monkey about House" (p. 65)—always self-deprecating, yet making global claims of uniqueness. "If Oddity can plead any Right to Surprize and Astonishment, I may positively claim a Title to be shown among the Wonders of Ages past, and those to come" (p. 13). Her worthlessness creates her worth: she will be laughed at if she cannot be praised, claiming preeminence as an oddity if unable to win it as an artist.

It seems a sad resolution for the child's desire to be admired, for her effort to win esteem by filling male roles. In her adult life, Mrs. Charke spent many years dressed as a man, for reasons that she refuses to divulge. Women fell in love with her, she acted out her aggressive wishes. But she could not claim respect for acting forcefully as though she were a man. She could only claim eccentricity as a woman who admitted and realized her desire to act forcefully and who thus became ridiculous. She does not take refuge in the cynicism and bitterness discernible in Lady Mary and Mrs. Thrale, although her self-pity seems as strong—and probably as justifiable—as Mrs. Pilkington's. For she feels, as all four of these women feel, that male oppression creates female misery. Mrs. Pilkington puts it in sexual terms: "Of all Things in Nature, I most wonder why Men should be severe in their Censures on our Sex, for a Failure in Point of Chastity: Is it not monstrous, that our Seducers should be our Accusers?" (I, 167). But her point can be extended. Men also establish the system that makes Hester Thrale sit home and tend her babies; then they find her boring for her limited interests. A man lures Lady Mary into the romantic elopement that springs the trap of marriage; she escapes only through exile. Men supply the models for Charlotte Charke, and mock her ludicrous attempts to follow them. She even tries to write like a man-and a twentieth-century male commentator suggests the kind of assessment she thereby invites: "The effect produced by her narrative is one of undirected power, thunderous and murky, masculine."38 Undirected power, murkiness, and masculinity become an implicit flaw: Mrs. Charke reveals the impossibilities of her hope to evade female limitations.

Because they are weak women are at the mercy of their passions.

Female sexuality amounts, in female perception, to weakness: that point is clear enough in women's fiction. All four autobiographers feel tricked by sexual feeling into life-destroying relationships. One may speculate about the connection between their unsatisfactory marriages and their impulse to write about themselves. Certainly Hester Thrale's need for self-exposure did not vanish after her second, happy marriage; yet her drive toward justification, like that of the others, must bear some connection to her sense of being perpetually undervalued, first by her parents and then by the men in her life. 39 Mrs. Thrale and Mrs. Pilkington married with parental consent, although the point is slightly ambiguous in the latter case. The memoirist claims that her parents pretended to disapprove a marriage that her mother, at least, had actively encouraged. Lady Mary eloped, foiling her family's plans for a more profitable alliance, and Charlotte Charke married young, rashly, against opposition. All four, finding surprisingly revealing ways to write about their sexuality, thus delineate identities partly shaped by the effort to preserve channels for feeling despite the rigidities of social demand. The force of their narrative often seems to derive from the conflicts it does not altogether consciously contain.

Because of her high degree of self-awareness, Lady Mary provides the most interesting case of such profit by conflict. Her premarital pose—especially in relation to Wortley—emphasized her emotional immunity. Writing to the man she was soon to marry, she announces, "If you expect Passion I am utterly unacquainted with any. It may be a fault of my temper. Tis a stupidity I could never justify, but I do not know I was in my Life ever touch'd with any. I have no Notion of a Transport of Anger, Love, or any other."40 Although her apologies acknowledge the social assumption that women should be dominated by strong feeling (she suggests that her own lack of such feeling may be "fault" or "stupidity"), the strength of her denial testifies awareness of potential danger within. Other dangers surrounded her. When she writes of the social misfortune of remaining unmarried, the force of her language suggests that passionate intensity she would not admit. "I have a Mortal Aversion to be an old Maid, and a decaid Oak before my Window, leavelesse, half rotten, and shaking its wither'd Top, puts me in Mind every morning of an Antiquated Virgin, Bald, with Rotten Teeth, and shaking of the Palsie."41 The equation of decay with preserved virginity delineates her emotional dilemma: to yield physi-

cally to a man implies acknowledgment of vulnerability, an end to (or a modification of) self-protective denial; to refuse to yield implies desuetude and rot. She tried to compromise by allying herself with Wortley while preserving her dignity, claiming some untouched essence, refusing to grant that passion influenced her decision.

For almost a quarter of a century after her marriage, Lady Mary continued to claim total lack of interest in sexual matters. But in 1736 she found herself prey to a hopeless and devastating passion for the young Italian Francesco Algarotti. Robert Halsband tells the story in detail; Lady Mary's letters only imply it. Bisexual or perhaps entirely homosexual, Algarotti encouraged the rivalry of the middle-aged woman (twice his age) who adored him and the powerful courtier Lord Hervey, also fascinated by the Italian. Lady Mary pursued him to Italy; he evaded her. She wrote him intense, self-revealing letters; he ignored them. Finally she resigned herself once more—with new knowledge—to a life devoid of passion, resigned herself, in fact, to boredom. She understood now from harsh experience what she had earlier deduced: sexuality can destroy women, both by its effects in the outer world and by its devastation from within.

To submit to passion means to abandon the controls by which women even more than men—given their social condition—must live. "I no longer know how to write to you. My feelings are too ardent; I could not possibly explain them or hide them. One would have to be affected by an enthusiasm similar to mine to endure my Letters. I see all its folly without being able to correct myself . . . What has become of that philosophical Indifference that made the Glory and the tranquility of my former days? I have lost it never to find it again, and if that passion is healed I foresee nothing except mortal ennui."43 "One must have a Heart filled with a strong passion, to be touched by trifles which seem of such little importance to others. My reason makes me see all its absurdity, and my Heart makes me feel all its importance. Feeble Reason! which battles with my passion and does not destroy it, and which vainly makes me see all the folly of loving to the degree that I love without hope of return."44 To endure in the conviction of one's own foolishness is a hard fate, but also a paradoxical success. "I am torn by a thousand conflicting feelings," Lady Mary writes, "that concern you very little."45 Perhaps the last clause simply acknowledges Algarotti's lack of interest in her, but the writer may be saying more. Recognizing and clinging to her private possession of her emo-

tions, she suggests that those emotions, stimulated by Algarotti, yet do not center entirely on him. Her feelings do not concern the man because they belong to her alone, and her heart declares to her their importance. Reason's relative feebleness in comparison with passion provides cause for regret, but also for triumph. Lady Mary pays lip service to the view that reason should dominate; she knows that she has lost forever that "philosophical Indifference" she once treasured and that ennui will succeed the excitement of love. Yet she declares loving a self-sufficient occupation. Fully admitting, even glorying in, her vulnerability—having confessed her infatuation to a man who does not reciprocate it—she makes it an index of strength. Yielding to that passion so long kept at bay, she proves her womanhood in the energy of her emotion and her willingness to rest in hopelessness.

In the story of her life told by the collected letters, the Algarotti episode provides a nexus for the forces of social pressure and personal need. It has almost the flavor of allegory, exemplifying women's resources for self-identification in the eighteenth century. Here most clearly Lady Mary affirms who she is: a woman, a feeling and thinking being, a member of society, herself. She tells a story in which the man has all the weapons, the man gets what he wants and only that, and the forces of society mass to make the woman ludicrous. "Except to the heroine of such a love affair," Halsband writes, "there was something ridiculous—or so the world would judge—in the spectacle of a lady past middle age and physical charms hurling herself at a handsome young stranger. Fortunately for her, as her impulses alternated between head and heart, she herself could see, even in the midst of her passion, how ridiculous it would seem to the world."46 She was discreet enough; yet she implies in every letter her willingness even to be laughable and her perception of some value system by which she would be quite the reverse. In such implication she finds herself. The emotional power of her letters derives from their firm sense of self. Despite Lady Mary's full awareness of her limited opportunities for action or public status, she constructs a self-image by recognizing the positive possibilities of richly acknowledged vulnerability.

The other three women whose presentation of selfhood and personal history we have been considering neither knew nor acknowledged so much. Mrs. Pilkington tells of terrible humiliations and degradations, of a life involving the steady diminishment of dignity. She claims that Pilkington publicly accused her of having killed her

father and three of her bastards, of poisoning her husband, of being a common prostitute (II, 90); that he attempted to sell two of their children as slaves (II, 135-138); that she was forced to increasingly desperate expedients by his slander and by the limited possibilities open to a woman alone (e.g., II, 160-161). The Gentleman's Magazine, commenting on her record of herself, observes, "To those who read her life she cannot surely have lived in vain since she has scarce related a single incident which does not concur to prove that no natural excellence can attone for moral defects nor any power of pleasing others secure an equivalent for the chearful independence of honest industry."47 The standard of virtue for women is absolute. The critic dismisses Mrs. Pilkington for her "moral defects"; she insists about herself that her apparent defects imply actual virtue. The act of defiance involved in writing her book insists on the dignity of her degradation, which embodies her determination to preserve her autonomy. Even Charlotte Charke's self-mockery testifies to her almost unbelievable persistence of survival and self-assertion. The dedication of her book to herself, defiantly asserting her self-sufficiency, conveys her determination to celebrate herself if no one else will celebrate her, to endure and to value her endurance, however unappealing its modes. Mrs. Thrale, recognizing the necessity for a woman not to encroach on male privilege, recognizes also that woman's special power derives paradoxically from her lack of threat.

The power of one Sex over the other does certainly begin sooner, & end later than one should think . . . I should not have the same Power myself over Johnson's Spirits or Sir Philip Clerke's, if I were not a Woman; they would neither of 'em have trusted their own Sex with such Secrets as they have entrusted to me.

They may well compare Notes as sometimes they do;—each little thinking how much t'other is my Slave! (p. 423)

If her smug superiority strikes a disagreeable note, the rest of her journal accounts for it. She knows that women's power comes from their weakness; they are trusted because they are not dangerous. Her life teaches her the severe limitation of her effectual force and the need of affirming what she is: a being willing to accept only conditional power.

Autobiographies and novels, in different ways, concern the relation between public and private versions of the self. The autobiographer must reconcile some form of the face he presents the world with an ac-

ceptable rendition of his personal self-image. Thus Cowper qualifies his despair by his image of public piety. One uses such terms as *role*, *image*, *appearance*, even *pose*, to describe the public self, but the reality of self-presentation in action to the world is in fact as meaningful as that of feelings largely concealed, perhaps only dimly recognized. The novelist, revealing his characters through their feelings and through their actions, also exploits the complex relation between the appearances a human being offers to his society and his experience of his own existence.

The nature of public and private selves, these eighteenth-century texts suggest, is for women, in some ways, the reverse of what it is for men. The face a man turns to the world, much literary evidence indicates, typically embodies his strength. Cowper presents himself as convinced Christian; Robinson Crusoe, when he is among other men, functions as leader, not victim of his fears. For women, on the other hand, as we have seen, the public self often stresses weakness. Passivity and compliance comprise the acceptable poses that fictional and factual heroines alike employ. Autobiographers reporting their activity boast their passivity; women in novels who openly manifest aggression are inevitably and harshly punished. The extreme incoherence of Charlotte Charke's autobiography manifestly derives at least partly from the tension between the writer's desire to share male prerogatives and her awareness that the only acceptable models for her sex involve self-deprecation and yielding. Mrs. Charke and Mrs. Pilkington alike have to manufacture villains of almost mythic proportions (stepmother in one case, husband in the other) in order to justify their own expression of anger.

Anger, aggression, forcefulness belong to the inner self. Mary Wollstonecraft's heroine never tells her husband she loathes him; she quietly dies. Euphemia acknowledges no wish to control the lives of others; the ideal huntress acknowledges no wish to hunt. Mrs. Thrale presents herself to the world as self-sacrificing wife and mother, confiding only to her diary her resentment at being insufficiently appreciated. Lady Mary occupies herself in decorous domestic pursuits, her anger emitted in maternal confidences. The distance between public and private selves is no greater for such women than for their male counterparts, but one must suspect that the psychic cost of concealing force to assert passivity, with the resulting experience of diminish-

ment, exceeds that of the opposite kind of concealment.

At any rate, it has clear literary consequences. The apologetic pose characteristic of so many woman writers, their plea to be judged leniently because their sex provides excuse for all inadequacies, reflects the same realities as the fictional and factual narratives they produce. To write forcefully and coherently about subjects that matter constitutes significant self-assertion. Women novelists claim to offer lessons to their sex, not to offer interpretations of the world or to inaugurate new ways of writing. Women autobiographers who consciously intend their narrative for publication write often clumsily, at odds with themselves. Of the writers here considered, only Lady Mary consistently writes well—energetically, purposefully, wittily, with sensitivity to the structure of sentences, paragraphs, arguments—and she is writing private letters.

It would be, of course, far too simple to maintain that the eighteenth century lacked powerful women writers because social conditions encouraged female self-suppression. In fact, the powerful writers soon emerged. Jane Austen was born in 1775, product of the same social conditions, and hardly more than a quarter-century after Pamela, Fanny Burney produced diaries as compelling as the published privacies of any male contemporary and novels, if not equal to those of Richardson, Fielding, or Sterne, better than most in her era. But Burney and Austen, after their fashions, confirm the implications of works by less obviously gifted women. Their strength derives from successful exploitation of the dichotomy between public passivity and private energy that weakened those women unable to use their sense of division as material for strong images of female experience. The most successful women writers of the century richly examine what others only imply: the fact that society makes women dwell in a state of internal conflict with necessarily intricate psychic consequences.

To assess the precise literary merit of women autobiographers and novelists, however, is relatively unimportant here. More significant to my purposes are the implications of their production for an understanding of their world and of the genres in which they wrote. Novels by women shaped experience into imaginative patterns in order to convey female identities strikingly similar to those evoked in autobiographical records. Women asserted identities of weakness. In life, their

discovery of social inferiority might produce quickly suppressed anger, resentful acceptance, and qualified triumphs of self-assertion. In fiction, weakness could be glorified as leading to happiness through suffering, or understood as hopelessly incompatible with happiness on earth. Through fiction some women radically reject their sexuality, which virtually all women writers of the eighteenth century appear to have associated directly with female vulnerability. Charlotte Lennox, Jane Barker, and Mary Wollstonecraft suggest that women can defy their sexual subservience by avoiding passion and focusing their interest elsewhere, by evading marriage, or by dying in order to demonstrate their total rejection of their fate on earth. The anger implied in such positions clarifies some possible suggestions of less manifestly aggressive novels, in which apparent acceptance of the necessity that female life consist mainly of suffering may conceal resentment that such should be the case.

Clumsy or subtle, self-revealing or self-concealing, these writers help to define what it means to perceive works of imaginative literature partly as social documents. Tom Jones describes the kinds of interchange that commonly occur in eighteenth-century inns; Charlotte Temple tells how a proper young woman occupies her time. But both reveal also, in their very textures, the values that informed contemporary perceptions and—more important—how those values affect private experience. Similarly, Laetitia Pilkington's modes of self-justification and the forms and limits of Lady Mary's resignation outline a society's definitions of possibility. Even the romancer who sets her scene in fanciful realms and allows her heroine trials and triumphs outside the norms of probability shows by what she can imagine and by the feeling she conveys the effects of cultural pressure on personal definition. Because eighteenth-century women experienced such pressure more restrictively than most men, the testimony they offer reveals with particular clarity the inadequacy of any understanding of self and its presentations that fails to consider also the fact of society and its shaping force on identity and identity's documentation. Lacking our vocabulary of ego and buried life, women of the eighteenth century yet reveal as powerfully as their more self-conscious twentieth-century successors deep currents running beneath the placidities of social conformity. Their psychic strategies of survival unconsciously shape their stories of self and of others.

Of course, the highly conscious structuring of life stories may also

reveal psychic depths even in writing with the highest respect for privacy and decorum. Edward Gibbon, a professional author in a far more total sense than any woman of his time, obsessively rewrote his autobiography to convey precisely the correct view of his own history, presenting himself as the public figure he essentially was. His careful, dignified, reworked, final self-presentation shares with the more spontaneous utterances of his female contemporaries and predecessors the capacity to reveal unexpected and hidden truths, emphasizing what has been suggested both by Cowper's conventionalized spiritual autobiography and by the memoirs of socially conventional and unconventional women. The very fact of writing about the self, whatever techniques of concealment an era recommends or an autobiographer adopts, implies profound exposures. The disguises of formal rhetoric, like those of fiction, may function finally as instruments of revelation.

4

The Defenses of Form: Edward Gibbon

he autobiographer and the novelist must struggle alike to devise or to discover the narrative form that will reveal and conceal as they wish. Defoe and Cowper, employing a clearly defined preexistent form as the mold to shape recorded experience, demonstrate the expansive possibilities of even a limited genre. Although their decision to write spiritual autobiography seems to imply a predictable mode of interpretation for the lives they report, they demonstrate how the securities of the genre allow them to investigate unmapped territories of imagination and feeling.

At the opposite extreme of formal predictability stand two late eighteenth-century writers who, obsessively concerned with discovering the proper literary form to reveal their particular varieties of truth, demonstrate yet more perplexing ways in which structure can obscure or convey meaning. Edward Gibbon and Laurence Sterne, by the accounts of orthodox literary history, embody opposite ideological commitments: to pure rationality and to indulged emotion. But Gibbon as literal and Sterne as fictional autobiographer both heroically investigate the possibilities of pattern. The ostentatious formlessness of *Tristram Shandy*, the extreme formality of Gibbon's memoirs, embody extensive explorations and remarkable achievements of revelatory and defensive literary structure.

The relation in autobiography between the self depicting and the self depicted may prove, as Cowper's example suggests, richly com-

Edward Gibbon

plex. Gibbon's accomplishment as depicter depends heavily on his achievement of a careful, ironic, balanced style. The high gloss of the surface he presents has misled some critics into believing that surface is all, that Gibbon exists essentially only as a stylist. Thus Donald Stauffer says: "With Gibbon the turn of a phrase takes the place of passion, and he lives in his prose . . . His philosophy of life is hardly inspiring; his career was indeed dull; nothing ever happened to him because he spent his life in making it certain that nothing ever would." But Roy Pascal (not writing specifically of Gibbon) suggests a more useful perspective: "The value and truth of autobiography—and its value is always linked with its truth—are not dependent on the degree of conscious psychological penetration, on separate flashes of insight; they arise out of the monolithic impact of a personality that out of its own and the world's infinitude forms round itself, through composition and style, a homogeneous entity, both in the sense that it operates consistently on the world and in the sense that it creates a consistent series of mental images out of its encounters with the world."2 Through composition and style Gibbon indeed makes a homogeneous entity of his life. He concerns himself with form in its large and minute meanings—the shape of the narrative, the structure of sentences, the choice of metaphor and vocabulary— and with form as technique and as philosophic grasp. The form he achieves in his narrative (despite the fact that the autobiography was never completed) allows him finally to display an extraordinary degree of psychological penetration into himself as object of contemplation and to demonstrate how much actually happened in that superficially uneventful career. The historian setting down the story of his life shows himself a master of marmoreal style. The boy and young man he describes, struggling toward mastery, is finally defined by his suffering, which, as boy and young man, he cannot comprehend but which as mature writer he can accept, judge, and contain. His final style of containment allows him to reveal what he remembers, what he wonders, what he concludes and to reveal the indecorous interior beneath the surface of flawless decorum.

The first of the six autobiographical fragments that Gibbon wrote announces that "truth, naked unblushing truth, the first virtue of more serious history, must be the sole recommendation of this personal narrative." The phrase "naked truth" recurs in a letter to

Lord Sheffield, Gibbon's most intimate surviving friend, written ten months before the historian's death. He has decided, he confides, to "undraw the veil before my state of health, though the naked truth may alarm you more than a fit of the Gout. Have you never observed through my inexpressibles a large prominency circa genitalia. It was a swelled testicle which as it was not at all painful, and very little troublesome I had strangely neglected for many years." He had neglected it, in fact, for more than three decades. Friends, noting the great swelling at Gibbon's groin, lacked the temerity to urge him to notice it. In his next-to-last attempt at autobiography (written in 1791), Gibbon observed of himself that "the play of the animal machine still continues to be easy and regular" (p. 292). Four feet eight inches tall, he had by this time grown so fat he could hardly move. He estimated, in the same memoir (p. 294), that by the laws of probability he still had fifteen years before him. Less than three years later he was dead, after an operation on his insistent hydrocele.5

His continued veiling of the facts of his physical condition, in autobiographies and in social intercourse, suggests how much his notion of truth depends upon the context in which it is to be communicated. Decorum demands that he ignore genital disabilities; the falsity of tone with which Gibbon reports his ailment to his friend suggests, in fact, the impossibility of his finding a language in which to convey such realities adequately. And the tonal uneasiness, like his prolonged denial of physical fact, emanates from his characteristic posture of defensiveness. To study his successive versions of his life story in chronological sequence reveals the evolution of a brilliant strategy of defence. Gradually discovering an acceptable form for his life story, Gibbon uses that form as a means finally to come to terms with his experience.

After Gibbon's death, Lord Sheffield consolidated into a single narrative the six distinct versions of the historian's autobiography that had survived his many attempts, in the four years before his death, to compose an adequate life story. For a century this composite version comprised the received text. Even now, critics who praise Gibbon's autobiography are usually referring to this or a succeeding eclectic version. But Gibbon in fact left, instead, a kind of autobiographical palimpsest. Deciphering its successive layers, we can perceive the drama and the meaning of his efforts to achieve appropriate form.

Edward Gibbon

The search for form—a form for his life to be created by the telling of his story—involves first of all a struggle to find appropriate content. In the first version of his memoir, a thirty-page fragment, Gibbon speaks of himself only indirectly. The first-person pronoun occurs mainly in judicious appraisals of others: "I can pronounce with more confidence on his writings than on his person" (p. 325). He focuses attention instead entirely on his ancestors. His memoir was uncompletable, one suspects, because it would have been difficult to shift emphasis to himself, given the almost obsessive single-mindedness of his treatment, which he implicitly rationalizes in a separate undated fragment, declaring that interest in one's forebears derives from "some common principle in the minds of men. Our imagination is always active to enlarge the narrow circle in which Nature has confined us . . . We stretch forwards beyond death with such hopes as Religion and Philosophy will suggest, and we fill up the silent vacancy that precedes our birth by associating ourselves to the authors of our existence" (p. 349).

Although he claims that his insistence on interests apart from himself constitutes imaginative enlargement, consciousness of limitation and frustration pervades this memoir. The man who believed history "little more than the register of the crimes, follies, and misfortunes of mankind" perceived the careers of families as resembling those of empires. 10 So he tells of his predecessors, stressing revenge, murder (an ancestor beheaded by an angry mob for the sin of encouraging grammar schools), loss, improvidence, and emphasizing always the patterns behind particulars. At the age of twenty-five, he had criticized a study of the Greeks for "attributing more consequence to the particular Characters of men, often ill drawn, than to the general manners, character, and situation of nations."11 In this first draft of his autobiography, his resolute subordination of "particular Characters" to general truths attempts to master retrospectively a past preceding his own existence and to dominate it by understanding it. On the other hand, his imagery acknowledges the impossibility of finally controlling a world in which "hereditary splendour" turns into a "chain," businessmen are "buried" in the "ruins" of their schemes, thirty years' labor can be "blasted in a single day," the gaming table becomes a "dark and slippery precipice," and cobwebs and clouds create subtle obstacles. Conflict, gloom, and danger lurk always be-

neath the surface. Recognition of omnipresent frustration and loss must qualify the ironic satisfactions of contemplating patterns of ancestral experience.

The immediate personal issue—and its intimate pain—involves the historian's relation with his father, its nature emerging even through the guarded and judicious summary he offers. "Economy is seldom the virtue of a gay and sanguine temper; my father's youth had been penuriously stinted; he was dazzled by a sudden influx of gold; but his possessions proved inadequate to his hopes, and his expences soon exceeded the measure of his income" (p. 319). Gibbon is saying—as he would continue to say in varying tones—that his father squandered his money. He chooses the stance of the moral philosopher to confront this painful subject, in the fashion of Pope suggesting divine wisdom as the source of paternal wastefulness (a "wise dispensation," he explains, makes idleness "the heir of industry"). By summarizing his father's financial difficulties as reflecting the inadequacy of possessions to hopes, the historian distances his private dilemma and assimilates it to a favorite theme: the vanity of human wishes. Hope, "the best comfort of our imperfect condition" (D & F, I, 40), consistently leads its possessor astray. Who learns not to hope has learned not to be deceived, but the lesson is, in fact, unlearnable, as later fragments of Gibbon's autobiography testify.

The heavy use of generalization here as elsewhere demonstrates his achievement of control: lacking power over his father, Gibbon yet can shape his father's story. The balance of his sentences and the measure of his cadences proclaim his mastery. In his telling, the father bears no responsibility for profligacy. Passive constructions and grand generalizations remove paternal guilt while demonstrating the son's effective power: to praise, to blame, to withhold praise and blame, to shape his father's story and his own.

In Memoir B, continuing to seek appropriate form, Gibbon discovers a more satisfactory principle of control and of defense against dangerous emotion. His vocation now begins to dominate his narrative, as it would explicitly govern all succeeding versions, and he depends upon a sense of destiny not altogether reassuring but richly elucidating.

From one point of view, Gibbon's father determined much of his early experience. His mother in his memory hardly matters—or so he

Edward Gibbon

implies in this version of events. He recalls a single encounter with her: driving with him to his school, she explained that now he was going into the world where he must think and act for himself. When he was ten years old, she died. Both parents, he believed, neglected him (p. 135). Having little hope of his survival, they bestowed on him, he reports, "the favourite appellation of Edward," only to provide "a substitute, in case of my departure, by successively adding it to the Christian names of my younger brothers" (p.97). In fact only one of his five brothers had Edward as a middle name; three were christened James. None survived childhood. Gibbon's erroneous memory reveals his powerful fantasy that his parents did not care about him, thinking him an interchangeable part for which any of his brothers might adequately substitute. His father demanded his submission to arbitrary whims and made him suffer as a consequence of parental self-indulgence. Without reflection, we are asked to believe, the father sent fifteen-year-old Edward to Oxford. There, ungoverned by precept or example, the boy converted himself (with the aid of books) to Catholicism, eliciting yet another arbitrary paternal decision: he must go to Lausanne to be reconverted. Still financially dependent on his father, Gibbon could not leave Lausanne, have a personal servant, or pay his gambling debts. Nor could he marry the woman he claimed to love. When he was slightly older but still conventionally filial, he could not avoid—since his father desired it—four years' service in the militia. He could not prevent his father from squandering his patrimony. The details add up to a picture of a boy and a young man victimized by selfish and uncaring parents, deprived alike of maternal and paternal love. When Gibbon reports his own compliance in financial arrangements that would increase his father's supply of ready cash at the sacrifice of part of the son's inheritance, he summarizes, "The priests and the altar had been prepared, and the victim was unconscious of the impending stroke" (p. 134): a highly charged evocation of powerlessness.

Yet although he supplies the details and even the images of victimization, he does not in fact delineate himself as weakened by his father's authoritarianism. His vigorous denial produces a counter-affirmation that he and his father alike functioned as instruments of some large, impersonal force of destiny. In retrospect he links his own "religious folly" (evidenced in the brief Catholic episode) with his father's "blind resolution" in sending him to Lausanne as fortuitous

events that ultimately "produced the effects of the most deliberate wisdom" (p. 131). Fate, in other words, may operate through apparent chance. Looking back, Gibbon perceives his life's necessities. Leven his father's extravagance and his forcing the young man to militia service produced unexpected and valuable benefits.

Robert Folkenflik has observed the implication in Gibbon's memoir manuscripts that he "had a great deal of trouble deciding how to describe" the episode with Suzanne Curchod. 13 In his first attempt to tell this story he summarizes in two sentences: "On my return to England, I soon discovered that my father would not hear of this strange alliance, and that, without his consent, I was myself destitute and helpless. After a painful struggle I yielded to my fate; the remedies of absence and time were at length effectual, and my love subsided in friendship and esteem" (p. 130). Earlier in the memoir, Gibbon has remarked of himself in his younger days, "The wanderings of my fancy subsided in the historic line" (p. 104). The subsiding of fancy into the historian's discipline and of love into friendship and esteem both belong to a single pattern, of the historian's yielding to his fate. We need not conclude, although many critics have reached exactly this conclusion, that Gibbon did not love Suzanne Curchod or that he was incapable of true love. 14 "I understand by this passion," he writes, "the union of desire, friendship, and tenderness, which is inflamed by a single female, which prefers her to the rest of her sex, and which seeks her possession as the supreme or the sole happiness of our being. I need not blush at recollecting the object of my choice; and though my love was disappointed of success, I am rather proud that I was once capable of feeling such a pure and exalted sentiment" (p. 129). We may feel in this statement, which concludes in a characteristically self-deprecating irony, the crucial conflict between the historian's desire to control his experience by generalizing it and his awareness of diminishment in the repeated choice of such control. His emotional resources, like his fancy, have atrophied, as Darwin's capacity to appreciate poetry was to wither—and for the same reason: sacrificed to ardent intellectual commitment.15 Unlike Darwin, however, Gibbon did not fear that to enfeeble his emotions would weaken his intellect, nor does he worry about his moral character.

But his emotions, Gibbon insists, have not been sacrificed to his father. Although he makes it clear that filial obedience (along with his open-eyed awareness of economic reality) dictated his initial

Edward Gibbon

renunciation, his choice of detail in telling the story (Mlle. Curchod's virtues of mind, body, and conduct, the financial arrangements involved or implicit in his plans, his fiancée's subsequent economic hardships and—this a cause for curious pride on his part—her eventual splendid marriage) insists on the rightness of the renunciation. His father may have been selfish, shortsighted, and dictatorial, as usual. Gibbon believes, at least in retrospect, that his own compliance derived from a necessity of his destiny, a destiny involving loss (of love and fancy) as well as gain, forcing his subordination to larger purposes. By comparison his father becomes insignificant. To declare that insignificance is an important, if presumably unconscious, function of Gibbon's theory of personal destiny.

Similarly, his theory of destiny enables him to triumph in the telling over the other miseries of his life: illness, awkwardness, social failure. His nature is, he appears to believe, given. Gibbon, like Cowper, often presents himself as acted upon, receiving impressions and supplied with form from outside. He claims no active involvement in his own education; he refrains from action in order to allow benign fulfillments. "I never handled a gun, I seldom mounted a horse; and my philosophic walks were soon terminated by a shady bench, where I was long detained by the sedentary amusement of reading or meditation" (p. 139). His refrainings, like his incapacities, cut him off from the conventional life of his era and class. Yet his reading and meditation, which are not quite self-justifying, belong to his destiny, detaining and amusing him so that he can become successfully himself, a historian.

"After his oracle Dr. Johnson," Gibbon writes, "my friend Sir Joshua Reynolds denies all original Genius, any natural propensity of the mind to one art or science rather than another. Without engaging in a metaphysical or rather verbal dispute, I know, by experience, that from my early youth I aspired to the character of a historian" (p. 165). He will leave to others the explanations, remaining himself certain of the fact. The "natural propensity" of his mind to history, the foundation of his self-presentation, enables him to unite an external with an internal view of the self.

Stephen Shapiro has written, "Truth in autobiography is not merely fidelity to fact or conformity to 'likeness,' to the way one appears to others, but rather the projection of a story of successive self-images

and recognitions or distortions of those self-images by the world; it is the story of identity as the tension between self-image and social recognition."16 Similarly, Stephen Spender points out that the autobiographer "is confronted not by one life-which he sees from the outside—but by two. One of these lives is himself as others see him—his social or historic personality—the sum of his achievements, his appearances, his personal relationships. All these are real to him as, say, his own image in a mirror. But there is also himself known only to himself, himself seen from the inside of his own existence."17 Both commentators assume—as a moment's introspection would make almost anyone assume—some inevitable discrepancy between what the autobiographer sees in himself and what he believes the world may see. Gibbon virtually denies "the tension between self-image and social recognition." He seeks in his experience a universal logic. The struggle for autobiographical form in which he engages involves an effort to assert the ultimate validity of the "social or historic personality," to discover how a public sense of self can guard against the dangers of the alternative, private, mode of self-perception. Memoir B does not explicitly justify itself by any claim to truth. At its beginning Gibbon suggests that as "author of an important and successful work" he must be of interest to the public and that he is necessarily best qualified "to describe the series of my thoughts and actions" (p. 91). The word series suggests how orderly will be the sequence he presents, and his explanation of motivation prepares for a memoir in which his role as author will dominate his depiction.18

Robert C. Elliott, describing the problems of coming to terms with fictional first-person narrative, writes: "Ordinarily, when a writer commits his opinions and ideas to the printed page, the situation between him and his readers is like that of a man beginning a new social relationship. According to Erving Goffman, society is organized in such a way that upon entering the presence of others an individual 'projects a definition of the situation and thereby makes an implicit or explicit claim to be a person of a particular kind.' By this claim 'he automatically exerts a moral demand upon the others, obliging them to value and treat him in the manner that persons of his kind have a right to expect'." To think of Gibbon in terms of social self-presentation directs attention to the emphatically public character of his version of himself. The complexity of his moral demand on his audience derives from the complex self-evaluation concealed beneath his

whole-hearted participation in a role that he can formulate with deceptive simplicity. He projects a narrow self-definition—"I am a historian"—and systematically enlarges it. His claim on his readers depends partly on his insistence, stylistic as well as substantive, on costs paid and sacrifices made in the service of vocation. As the historian offers his weighty rhetorical structures and his orderly sequences of cause and effect, he demonstrates the implications of his commitment to a public personality, systematically deprecating the importance of merely private experience and elevating that of his historian's role, which he shows as absorbing more and more of his being.

Through his metaphors he hints how fully his vocation has come to contain his most intimate experience. He systematically enforces, for example, his conviction that his intellectual history involves natural growth, through frequent references to "ripeness" and "unripeness," allusions to the "shoots" of childish fancy, the "fruits" of his time at Oxford, and, conversely, the "first shoots of learning or genius," which at Oxford "rotted on the ground without producing any fruits either for the owners or the public." His social intercourse in Paris, which brought him in contact with important thinkers of his time, produced "new shoots, spreading branches, and exquisite fruit." Such metaphors, declaring his career inevitable and natural, suggest that it cannot be questioned.

Gibbon not only contemplates but experiences the processes of intellectual commitment. The seriousness with which he considers his life work emerges by indirection through the sexual metaphors that he sparingly but revealingly employs in Memoir B. (He would use more such images later.) One expresses his revulsion at the briefly entertained fantasy of a military career. "In the first sallies of my enthusiasm I had seriously wished and tryed to embrace the regular profession of a soldier. The military feaver was cooled by the enjoyment of our mimic Bellona [the exercises of the militia], who gradually unveiled her naked deformity" (p. 161). The metaphorical potentialities of "embrace" prepare for the elaboration by which the goddess, "enjoyed" by her devotee, reveals ugliness beneath apparent beauty. The image conveys with unexpected intensity the historian's emotional rejection of an alternative to his real commitment as "man of letters."

That commitment too can be expressed in sexual terms. "I still

shrunk from the press with the terrors of virgin modesty," Gibbon observes (p. 145) and later, in a logical development, "I have expatiated on the loss of my litterary maidenhead; a memorable era in the life of a student, when he ventures to reveal the measure of his mind" (p. 147). Fear of and desire for exposure: both images reveal the special kind and degree of importance Gibbon attaches to first publication, a symbolic giving that marks his life choice as inexorably as a woman's first sexual yielding might determine hers. Writing and publication for him replace enduring heterosexual relationship, emotional or physical. Female sexuality implies generative power; Gibbon's devotion to his own creativity involves the rewards of procreation as well as the danger of vulnerability.

Through his metaphors he implicitly acknowledges what he will not confess directly: the ambiguities of his submission to his vocation. Like a growing plant, like sexual feeling in men and women, his profession as he lives it has a life of its own. It demands sustenance from its practitioner. Gibbon employes imagery of food to suggest a disturbing aspect of his avid purpose. Eating is good and necessary to sustain bodily life, but bad when greedy. His metaphorical allusions to it suggest both value judgments, dwelling on nourishment but hinting at the danger of excessive appetite and conveying a need to incorporate that amounts to an addiction. Taking in knowledge, Gibbon establishes a viable relation with the external world. The world thus gives him what he needs to survive; conversely, he struggles to gratify an insatiable appetite by taking what he wants. Like the metaphors of growth, those of eating associate intellectual development with natural process, while implying awareness of the extravagant intensity in the historian's yearning for sustenance from without.

Everyone experiences his own uniqueness; everyone belongs to a species. Gibbon, trying to record his history as he might set down that of an empire, wished to see himself in both ways. His metaphors declare that his personal predilections, analogous to universal processes, do not separate him from mankind. As he contemplates more directly the fate he shares with his species, he finds new sources of uneasiness. "The first moment of animal life may be dated from the pulsation of the heart in the human foetus; but the nine months which we pass in a dark and watery prison, and the first years after we have seen the light and breathed the air of this world, must be substracted [sic] from the

period of our rational existence. When I strive to ascend into the night and oblivion of infancy, the most early circumstance which I can connect with any known aera is my father's . . . election" (p. 98). Only Tristram Shandy, besides Gibbon, pauses in the eighteenth century to contemplate in print himself as a fetus in the womb. Gibbon's recognition that he cannot think about this hidden period, or about his early infancy, dictates his metaphors of prison, night, and oblivion. What reason cannot grasp must remain dark and confining; rational existence does not include his beginnings, which reason cannot comprehend. He shares this history of nine-month confinement and blank babyhood with the rest of the human race, but not all his striving enables him to understand it.

Similar uneasiness emerges in the account of Suzanne Curchod. Discoursing on the nature of love, Gibbon explains that he does not mean merely "the grosser appetite which our pride may affect to disdain, because it has been implanted by Nature in the whole animal creation, 'Amor omnibus idem.' The discovery of a sixth sense, the first consciousness of manhood, is a very interesting moment of our lives; but it less properly belongs to the memoirs of an individual, than to the natural history of the species" (p. 129). Recognizing the ridiculousness of disdaining what everyone shares, as well as the easy temptation of such disdain, Gibbon reveals his own attempt to rise superior to his animal nature in the irony of "very interesting." The pubescent youth's discovery of lust feels interesting to him because it feels unique; the historian's ironic understanding informs him of egotism's erroneous perception, but memory assures him that he has shared it. All the historian's training and discipline and knowledge do not, after all, enable him to control his own past as he may pretend to control his father's. Much remains inexplicable.

Yet his profession supplies solace. The central metaphors of sexuality and eating suggest Gibbon's feeling that through his work he has established some viable relation between inner and outer worlds. Memoir B ends with an account of young Gibbon's visit to Paris, emphasizing his reading. It concludes on a note of anticipation: "And thus was I armed for my Italian journey" (p. 180)—that journey on which he would conceive the idea for *The Decline and Fall*. The autobiographical fragment, in other words, reports not the great work but the preparation for it. Despite the heavy reliance on passive verb

forms and the stress on what the boy and the young man were given from without, it shows the youth assuming responsibility for himself through his gathering sense of an unknown commitment.

The writer of the autobiography, of course, knows the commitment, although his subject—that very different person, an untried youth—cannot. He recalls the pain but also perceives the logic of his development, and denies the one for the sake of the other. What he can do and be guards him from feeling the anguish of what he cannot. His youth created him in a shape he can acknowledge and admire: "Such as I am, in Genius or learning or manners, I owe my creation to Lausanne: it was in that school, that the statue was discovered in the block of marble" (p. 131). Elsewhere, although with hesitation, confusion, and restriction, he claims directly to be his own creator. "In the life of every man of letters, there is an aera, from a level, from whence he soars with his own wings to his proper height, and the most important part of his education is that which he bestows on himself" (p. 118). Despite the anomalies of sentence structure, the point remains clear: his own wings, his proper height—he has discovered his destiny. If he cannot do much in the world, he can yet do something well. Specifically, he can read, taking in but also evaluating and finally using what he absorbs. The proportion of active verbs increases as he relates his intellectual activity in Lausanne. Through the historical and philological controversies in which he engaged by correspondence, and through his active study, he developed an increasing sense of personal capacity. His preparation for greatness absorbed all his energies. Narrowness, Memoir B implies, creates depth.

Memoir B announces the major themes and sketches the major images that dominate Gibbon's succeeding autobiographical attempts. Why, then, did he not continue it, instead of breaking off the narrative just before his epochal trip to Italy? He had not yet found the right story. Memoir C, composed later the same year (1789), containing fewer pages but much more material, suggests how Gibbon had earlier failed to solve his problems of self-definition and self-presentation. In Memoir B he had not yet understood what his self-dramatization as historian might mean. In C he evokes more fully the significance of his vocation.

Memoir C creates an immediate impression of bareness, offering no reflection on the possibilities of autobiography, no excuses for

writing, only a flat account in the first paragraph (recast from a later paragraph of B) of where, when, and to whom the historian was born. The succeeding narrative of ancestors, much reduced from the previous telling, suggests that Gibbon's interest in generalization has materially diminished. References to his time in the womb and to the natural history of the species have disappeared. No longer does he preface his account of Suzanne Curchod with a disquisition on the nature of love, or his story of the militia years with general reflections on the militia's function. The marked condensation of this account reflects a view that experience justifies itself.

The special qualities of the writer's sensibility and style display themselves once more with particular emphasis in the story of aborted romance, where he conveys a complex attitude toward his father and himself. "The romantic hopes of youth and passion were crushed, on my return, by the prejudice or prudence of an English parent. I sighed as a lover, I obeyed as a son; my wound was insensibly healed by time, absence, and the habits of a new life; and my cure was accelerated by a faithful report of the tranquillity and chearfulness of the Lady herself" (p. 204).20 Brilliant use of the passive construction emphasizes the young man's relative powerlessness, the result not only of his dependent role but of the comparative evanescence of his motivation, which, produced by youth, passion, and romanticism, embodies a particularly treacherous version of the universal human malady of hope and is far less permanent than the prejudice or prudence that opposes it. These alternative definitions of his father's motivation reveal the narrator's continued resentment as well as his mature perception of the possibility that parental opposition stemmed from wisdom rather than blindness. His metaphors of crushing and wounds declare his pain, but he readily admits the subsequent cure. The mildness of his response "as a lover" helps to account for his obedience as a son; he says of himself, in effect, that he lacked both force and motivation for effective opposition. Once more he invokes natural process in his report of his healing. His tone declares that all has been for the best, although growth has involved suffering. The confidence of assertion, the reliance on condensation and understatement, and the absence of elaborate explanation point to a new stylistic freedom as this memoir develops.

Freedom, in Memoir C, is both a stylistic fact and a psychological issue. Behind the writer's accomplishment of freedom lies his history

of emotional deprivation. In this memoir, for the first time, he observes specifically of his mother that because her "heart was solely devoted to her husband" (p.187) she severely neglected her son, an admission of defeat in the Oedipal conflict tht betrays continuing resentment. Gibbon's truncated account of his stay at Oxford again emphasizes neglect, and he insists that the Catholic Church also neglected him in his Swiss exile, never making the slightest overture to her beleaguered convert. Church and university thus prove as unsatisfactory as the mother for whom they substitute. Gibbon also describes his physical and social ineptitudes as a young man, emphasizing his failure to achieve the graces of personality that attract others or to manage even minimal physical competence. More vividly than before, he demonstrates that the historian's positive sense of self desperately depends on his intellectual achievements, since he claims not to hope for love from others or for success in diverse accomplishments.

For his emotional problems Gibbon sought an intellectual solution. Yet to separate emotional and intellectual is only a convenient formulation: in fact his solution involved a merging. Suffering a fundamental wound to self-love in recognizing his mother's preference for another, he repaired that wound by aggressively insisting on his own unworthiness ("you made me feel inadequate, look how incompetent I've turned out to be"), by identifying with his lost mother even in his account of his intellectual endeavors (through increasingly numerous metaphors of female sexuality), and by redirecting his emotional intensity away from people (who betray one) and toward ideas. Thus, Memoir C suggests, he finds internal freedom from his anger and from his love.

The intensity of passion redirected becomes apparent, in this memoir, through metaphoric and literal statement alike. The naked deformity of Bellona and the terrors of virgin modesty survive from the previous version; we find also a reference to the "pregnant" state of a young mind and, more crucially, to the "moment of conception" of *The Decline and Fall*, both underlining the procreative implications of earlier metaphors. Gibbon now asserts directly that his sexual passion lacks intensity. He puts his youthful friendship with D'Eyverdun into the same sentence as his attachment to Suzanne, suggesting the equivalent importance of friendship and love. Later he observes that his passions never, after his youthful indiscretion, led

him to think of marriage. On the other hand, he confesses his true and continuing emotional focus: "The love of learning was so deeply implanted in my mind, as an amusement and even as a passion, that it could no longer be eradicated by any change of place or circumstance" (p. 211). "My temper is not very susceptible of enthusiasm, and the enthusiasm which I do not feel I have ever scorned to affect. But at the distance of twenty-five years I can neither forget nor express the strong emotions which agitated my mind as I first approached and entered the eternal City" (p. 227). The nouns passion and enthusiasm acknowledge that intellectual experience assumes for Gibbon the place that sexuality and religion take in other lives. Although he claims inability to express his feelings, the intellectual realm defines his area of expressiveness in which feeling need not be constricted or suppressed.

The story this memoir tells, concentrating on the contrasted experiences of freedom and restriction, describes how Gibbon's feeling found new channels. Events internal and to some extent imaginary often determine his course: the myth that his parents named all his brothers Edward, which here recurs, and the childhood of bizarre physical ailments, which may have been due to infantile rheumatism but must surely have involved some psychological component.²¹ His father's erratic decisions, his aunt's permissiveness (he here calls her "the mother of my mind," thus resentfully deprecating the importance of his real mother), his self-conversion, his promiscuous reading, his trip to Rome: none of these facts or events seems intrinsically remarkable, but Gibbon makes us feel their significance. They forced him to realize the psychic necessity of freedom and prepared him to achieve it.

After his childhood of extreme restriction, resulting from his illness and from his father's arbitrary decisions, after his few months at Oxford, where the complete absence of external control—heightening his awareness of missing internal direction—urged him toward the imagined securities of Catholicism, the youth found himself an exile in Switzerland, deprived of comfort and impeded from conventional self-gratification. Here he discovered internal guidance. He metaphorically suggests that his mental voraciousness did not imply the abandonment of distinctions: he could achieve nutrition as well as pleasure from his "litterary food" (p. 200). His freedom meant to him the opportunity to concentrate; the self-determined choice of narrowness

seems very different from the suffering of externally imposed limitation.

Now Gibbon can afford to be relatively charitable toward his father, because he understands that he has won their battle—partly as sons usually win, by surviving, but partly also by the increasing clarity of his dealing with his past. He recognizes as an issue in that past his lack of control over his own life (p. 233), a problem not only because of his father's tyranny but because of his own inability to commit himself to a profession that would define his role and authority in the world. Financially dependent, unable to claim the obligation of any externally dictated duties, Gibbon endured, as he poignantly recalls, endless petty obligations: to go visiting with his father, to converse with his stepmother, to attend family meals. He did not, he protests—and perhaps protests too much—ever wish for his father's death, although he recognized that it would mean enlargment of possibility. When that death occurred he realized that "the tears of a son are seldom lasting. I submitted to the order of Nature, and my grief was soothed by the conscious satisfaction that I had discharged all the duties of filial piety. Few, perhaps, are the children who, after the expiration of some months or years, would sincerely rejoyce in the resurrection of their parents; and it is a melancholy truth, that my father's death, not unhappy for himself, was the only event that could save me from an hopeless life of obscurity and indigence" (p. 245). Literally saved by his father's death (although subsequent images of entangling nets and necessary sacrifice suggest how his father's power persisted, as the son tried to disengage himself from financial complexities), he found himself in a condition of perfect external freedom: enough money but not too much (twice in this memoir he insists on that point), no demanding alliances, no professional commitments. He frees himself from retrospective guilt for the joy of his independence by asserting that all sons feel the same way; the death of fathers and the resulting liberation of children belong, like the dark months in the womb, to the natural history of the species.

This memoir ends at a moment full of possibility. Gibbon had, he tells us, conceived the idea of *The Decline and Fall*, although he had made little progress toward executing his grandiose undertaking. He had succeeded in selling one piece of his father's property, thus alleviating immediate financial anxieties; he had settled his stepmother at Bath. The world lay all before him, thirty-five years old, rich in his

consciousness of unrealized potential, and asserting the power of his freedom.

That freedom, declared in the writer's capacity to choose a vocation, would be affirmed by his success. His increasingly numerous and adventurous metaphors, in Memoir C, reflect his experience of liberation. When Gibbon speaks of himself as being "permitted to crawl as high as the third form" (p. 189) or congratulates himself for not having "herded with the young travellers" of his own nation (p. 205), his language has new imaginative vigor, condemning by implication all the forces impeding self-assertion. The outside world provides obstacles as well as help. He is offered only "dim light"; the "elasticity" of his mind is almost "compleatly broken" by Oxford. Threatened by the "servitude of superstition," he subsequently recognizes the "heavy and intolerant yoke" of Calvinism; he must submit to sacrifices, fetters, domestic bonds, military servitude, the yoke of education, the intricate net of his father's finances. Old metaphors and new mingle in a structure full of linguistic energy that counteracts the metaphors' dark implications. Such imagery reinforces the memoir's explicit emphasis on freedom as a theme. Yet, like its predecessors, this fragment proved impossible to complete.

Each of us has a history, the sequence of actual events that comprises his individual past; Gibbon, who thought history generically superior to fiction in interest and in vitality, believed himself to be writing a history of himself. ²² As he provides successive versions of it, he implicitly raises questions about the nature of his enterprise. Cowper's *Memoir* suggests that autobiography may thrive on sources of energy unsuspected by its author; Gibbon's succession of memoirs raises the possibility that it thrives from the creation of meanings which themselves constitute fictions: stories issuing from the author's imagination.

The aspects of Gibbon's narrative that evolve most unmistakably from his imagination involve the ordering rather than the invention of happenings. The first three memoirs in fact report different events: in Memoir A the happenings of a partly legendary past, in B and C, those of the historian's own memory and surmise. The divergencies of substance and technique create an impression of fictionality, heightening our awareness of the invention involved in narrative. Obviously, Gibbon could not successfully describe his life by avoiding

the subject, as he attempted in A. Neither could he adequately describe it by insistence on the explanatory power of destiny, the effort of B. In C, the major themes of his story were announced: freedom, control, and vocation justified by providing both at once. Yet the story itself did not satisfy its author. As historian and writer, he still felt the need to reshape it.

As historian. Gibbon's discussions of his vocation thus far have not investigated specifically that vocation's nature, only its organizing and justifying function in his own psychic life. But in writing his autobiography, his personal history, he necessarily demonstrates something of what he believes the writing of history to mean. How does a man recapture the past? Gibbon's metaphors of eating and his allusions to the emotional intensity with which he encountered historical settings suggest his passionate desire simply to incorporate. His efforts at reporting his own life, on the other hand, reveal that the struggle to recapture the past constitutes, in practice, an attempt to remake it.

Alfred Kazin has pointed out that when a good novelist reuses in autobiography material "he has already used as fiction, it is obvious that he turns to autobiography out of some creative longing that fiction has not satisfied."23 Similarly, Gibbon's reflection on the great themes of human destiny and human error in relation to his own career suggest that something in him remained unsatisfied by his enormous historical achievement with its contemplation of those same themes in the affairs of nations. To dominate by intellect and imagination the chaotic course of centuries may metaphorically represent the perhaps more difficult undertaking of dominating one's own life. Cowper assumed the theological context through which he interpreted his youth; the reader finds that context inadequate. Gibbon feels obliged to create the proper context, which will both emerge from and shape the appropriate story.24 The reader, following his successive attempts, feeling with him their inadequacy, participates vicariously in the struggle to find the "objective correlatives" for subjective emotion, to convey and justify that emotion without allowing it entirely to dominate the record of the events that have elicited it.

The unique experience of contemplating so many false starts, which allows the reader to ponder the nature of their falsity, must provoke speculation about autobiography's literary power. Gibbon makes us realize that autobiography—even one man's autobiography—allows

many ways of telling a story, involves a choice of kinds, and uses its strategy to various purposes. It issues, like other forms of artistic expressiveness, from an author's compulsions; it dramatizes, often inadvertently, his psychic struggles.

In Memoir D, written in 1790-91, Gibbon retreats from some possibilities that C had opened. Twenty-one pages long (C contained sixtyeight pages), it relates the historian's career from his birth to his father's death, adding little to the material of preceding versions but excising much. Scanty in its use of figurative language, it systematically eliminates or distances references to feeling. Gibbon seems again, as in A, to wish not to tell his story: his history as the narration of a consecutive series of events, yes, but not an imaginatively linked series or a narrative with form, feeling, and climax. "In later life," one of Gibbon's critics asserts, "as soon as he felt, he began at once to think and, by taking thought, usually stifled the emotion before it disturbed his repose."25 If this had proved the last of Gibbon's revisions, it would have supported such a view of him. Coming as it does at the middle of the sequence, preceded and followed by memoirs different in kind, it suggests, rather, a man struggling to make reason a defense against the dangers of emotion.

Awareness of response withheld dominates the memoir. The first paragraph now reports the bare fact of birth, eliminating all commentary—eliminating even the observation that Putney was a "pleasant" location. The account of Pavilliard relies on negatives: "Nor will my gratitude for the virtuous Pavillard allow me to extend his praise beyond the merits of kindness, assiduity, and a pleasing method of inculcating the general principles of human learning" (p. 331). Merits enough, one might say, but Gibbon chooses to stress the limits rather than the extensiveness of his praise. The Suzanne Curchod affair now merits a single sentence: "I felt (and I am proud that I felt) the beauty and merit of a Lady who has supported with equal propriety the scenes of fortune, from the daughter of a country clergyman to the wife of the first minister of the Finances of France" (p. 337). The feeling in which Gibbon declares his pride amounts to a rational acknowledgment of value. The grotesque reductiveness of the account, its aggressive presentation of irrelevant information (about Suzanne's fortunes) in place of relevant (about the relationship) epitomize Memoir D's deliberate refusal of intimacy.

Like its predecessor, Memoir D relates the origin of The Decline and

Fall, with more emphasis than the preceding version on the union of thought and emotion that precipitated it. Rome's "heroes and her writers," Gibbon says, "were present to my mind, and the flame of enthusiasm was blended with the light of critical enquiry. I must not forget the day, the hour, the most interesting in my litterary life. It was on the fifteenth of October, in the gloom of evening, as I sat musing on the Capitol, while the barefooted fryars were chanting their litanies in the temple of Jupiter, that I conceived the first thought of my history. My original plan was confined to the decay of the City; my reading and reflection pointed to that aim; but several years elapsed, and several avocations intervened, before I grappled with the decline and fall of the Roman Empire" (p. 339). He introduces only two minor visual details as new facts. Earlier, the friars were Franciscans; this time Gibbon observes, instead, their bare feet; previously the scene took place at the close of evening, now in evening's gloom. These tiny specificities heighten immediacy. In Memoir C Gibbon remarks that his journal records this moment, which he summarizes from the journal's account. No journal intervenes between historian and reader in D, and the author directly characterizes the event as "the most interesting in my litterary life": a startlingly subjective assertion, given the usual bareness of this memoir. Moreover, the account of the conception invites the reader's emotional response to the ironies of barefoot Christian friars in pagan temples near the ruined Capitol of a culture long gone. Gibbon's own reaction to these ironies issued in a "thought," one product of his characteristic, arduous combination of "the flame of enthusiasm" and "the light of critical enquiry." The direct force of "before I grappled with the decline and fall" exemplifies his willingness now to confess both the direction of his energies and the difficulty with which he focused them.

Although Memoir D discovers a form far from fictional, betraying the historian's reluctance to tell a story, it creates an image of character partly defined by the narrator's declared distance from his imagined reader. Gibbon's effort to make his profession identical with his nature shapes this version of himself. The static quality of Memoir D, its lack of driving narrative force, intensifies the impression that it invites assessment of an achieved man. It claims for itself, as for the character it depicts, a creative transformation of limitation.

Gibbon's sincerity depends on formality. In this way especially, his

style mirrors his character. He defines himself as a definer. A twentieth-century commentator invites approval for Gibbon on the ground that "he was personally an admirable man. He was a good son—more difficult still, a good stepson—a good nephew, a good friend . . . And he was certainly a good citizen of the world, a friendly link between three countries." Memoir D makes those characterizations singularly remote. All very well, it suggests, to be a good friend, son, citizen, but how unimportant such virtues must seem in comparison with the grand passion by which Gibbon here justifies his own life. His passion operates through his reason; so he will demand of his readers only the assent that reason can give. Presenting himself as a man who withholds, he demands the reader's acknowledgment that total devotion to the life of the mind must preclude other forms of closeness.

Invited to judge the created image of a man as the embodiment of pure and passionate reason, we must also come to terms, as when reading a novel, with the document that incorporates the image. Gibbon declares himself a monolith, but his memoir exemplifies a process. It shows him constructing his defenses while refusing to acknowledge what he is defending against. In his final attempts to come to terms with his life, he would confess more openly the nature of his pain and admit more fully the dynamic necessities of narrative.

In Memoir E for the first (and last) time Gibbon manages to bring his record of himself to the present, even to project it into the future. Only one previous account had extended even as far as 1772. Now the author contemplates his entire past while considering the prospect of his death. He focuses his attention on the "ends of being," making the reader feel both the splendor and the severe limits of his achievement.

The E text creates a curiously disjunctive effect. Its first eleven pages contain a new version of all the material of Memoir C's sixty-eight pages: the first thirty-five years of Gibbon's life; the thirty-five succeeding pages recount the next nineteen years. Eleven pages for ancestors, childhood, adolescence, Oxford and Lausanne, conversion and reconversion, mother's death and father's, Suzanne Curchod, the Grand Tour, the militia, the author's early literary efforts, the inception of *The Decline and Fall*; thirty-five pages for a period in which little happened. A sharp break in tone divides the two parts. At the beginning, Gibbon largely rewrote previously formed material, creating an atmosphere so emotionally denuded that it seems an

attempt to deny the importance of the narrative's substance. The last three-quarters of the memoir, on the other hand, displays a new expansiveness, which suggests a different kind of story. And the final reflectiveness amounts to a self-assessment more forthright than Gibbon had offered before—an explicit interpretation, in fact, of what his account implies.

In the early pages of Memoir E references to freedom and its alternatives provide the clearest emotional focus in an account systematically purged of most allusions to feeling. Thus Gibbon reports, rather vaguely, the fact of his childhood illnesses; then remarks that he does not share the "fashionable" envy and regret for lost youth, since "I never could understand the happiness of servitude" (p. 251). Remembering boyhood so, he does not choose to recall its details, except for the significant paradox that "the long hours of confinement to my chamber or my couch"—an image of lack of freedom—"were soothed . . . by an early and eager love of reading"—source of the true freedom of the mind (p. 251). The Catholic episode, like the Oxford experience, almost disappears from this account; the youth's conversion is summarized as entrapment in "the toils of sophistry and superstition," through which "my growing reason soon broke" (p. 252). Again, the mind creates freedom from a bondage sustained by influence from without. He returns from Switzerland, to be "indulged" by his father "with a decent allowance of money and liberty," subsequently "stealing" from his family duties hours to be "deliciously passed in a library" (p. 254). More emphatically than before, he refers to his yearning to be "master in my own house" (p. 257). When his father died, he reminds the reader, enlarged liberty and "domestic command" resulted for the surviving son. Orphanhood allows him possession of "the solid comforts of life," but, far more important, "these advantages were crowned by the first of earthly blessings, independence. I was the absolute master of my hours and actions; nor was I deceived in the hope that the establishment of my library in town would allow me to divide the day between study and society. Each year the circle of my acquaintance, the number of my dead and living companions, was enlarged" (p. 260).

These sentences indicate not only freedom's importance but its function for Gibbon. Unlike domestic life, which demands that one "steal" time from human obligations for intellectual pursuits, his independence allows him full control over his time and creates the possi-

bility of reconciliation: he need hardly distinguish between his dead and his living companions. Freedom depends on the absence of profound human ties, the choice of many companions whose inanimate status precludes their making inordinate demands, and the satisfaction of human needs by "society" and "acquaintance" rather than passion or devotion.

In the more leisurely bulk of this narrative, the theme of freedom acquires complexity. Gibbon attempted some kinds of action apart from his central vocation, becoming a Member of Parliament, sitting on the Board of Trade: occupations producing prestige and financial reward. Stripped of his "convenient salary" from the Board of Trade (p. 276), he was promised a seat at the board of customs or excise, "but the chance was distant and doubtful, nor could I solicit with much ardour an ignoble servitude which would have robbed me of the most valuable of my studious hours" (p. 277). Although Gibbon had in fact sought preferment with apparent eagerness, 27 his retrospective summary of his good fortune in reachieving the freedom of his study points to a profound truth. Elsewhere in the memoir, he sums up his service in the House of Commons and the Board of Trade by remarking, "My personal freedom had been somewhat impaired . . . ; but I was now delivered from the chain of duty and dependence" (p. 279). Having discovered his true arena of freedom, he could understand alternatives only as forms of slavery, excluding from his life conventional occupations despite the acknowledged threat of resultant insignificance.

The single persuasively rendered instance of inner struggle in Memoir E centers on the issue of liberty. (To be sure, Gibbon claimed to have suffered conflict over Suzanne Curchod. Conflict recollected in such tranquillity, however, seems hardly real.) Thus he summarizes his first decision to settle with his friend D'Eyverdun in Switzerland: "Before I could break my English chain, it was incumbent on me to struggle with the feelings of my heart, the indolence of my temper, and the opinion of the World, which unanimously condemned this voluntary banishment. In the disposal of my effects, the library, a sacred deposit, was alone excepted . . . Since my establishment at Lausanne more than seven years have elapsed, and . . . not a day, not a moment has occurred in which I have repented of my choice" (p. 278). Struggling with heart and "temper" (i.e., temperament) as well as with public opinion, the historian achieves the choice that he can-

not even momentarily regret: exile for the sake of freedom. The "sacred deposit" of his library (elsewhere he calls it his "seraglio"; p. 288) helps to effectuate that choice, reminding him and his readers that by giving up much he preserves what he values most. The rejection of England completes what the rejection of Suzanne began: a systematic cutting away of irrelevancies, including much that most men find essential.

The desire for liberty and the hatred of bondage belong to the human species. Like his relief at his father's death, Gibbon's unwillingness to follow a conventional career can be explained as deriving from a trait he shares with all mankind. The artfulness of Memoir E as narrative stems from its imposition of a single pattern on diverse experience, achieving literary unity through tactics of emotional defense. Yet the apparent effort to minimize the personal creates resonant tensions as Gibbon finds himself forced, after all, to acknowledge his own "specialness."

The ideals of the French Revolution, Gibbon feels, constitute a "disease" marked by "wild theories of equal and boundless freedom" (p. 290). His rage at revolution reflects his recognition that freedom depends on its bounds; the uniqueness of his personal solution consists in his choice of bounds. After producing three volumes of *The Decline* and Fall. Gibbon tells us, he hesitated about writing more. He could read now simply for pleasure, indulging his private tastes. "Yet in the luxury of freedom I began to wish for the daily task, the active pursuit which gave a value to every book, and an object to every enquiry" (p. 276): only enacting his compulsions could make "freedom" meaningful. His "final deliverance" from The Decline and Fall is an ambivalent experience. "After laying down my pen I took several turns in a berceau, or covered walk of Acacias, which commands a prospect of the country, the lake, and the mountains. The air was temperate, the sky was serene, the silver orb of the moon was reflected from the waters, and all Nature was silent. I will not dissemble the first emotions of joy on the recovery of my freedom, and perhaps the establishment of my fame. But my pride was soon humbled, and a sober melancholy was spread over my mind by the idea that I had taken my everlasting leave of an old and agreable companion, and that, whatsoever might be the future date of my history, the life of the historian must be short and precarious" (pp. 282-3). Nowhere else in

any memoir does Gibbon so carefully establish an inanimate scene—not the miniature drama of friars singing in a ruined temple, but the idealized, generalized eighteenth-century vista of temperance, serenity, and commanding prospect. He "sees," in literary terms ("silver orb") or in terms of classical painting, generalized country, lake, and mountains, not particularized objects in a setting. But at least he sees. His "deliverance" enables him suddenly, and unusually, to turn his eyes outward instead of always inward and backward. First he thinks of "freedom," forgetting how often freedom for him has meant firm commitment, and of fame, forgetting its evanescence. His subsequent melancholy implies both recognitions. The arduous historical enterprise has provided his equivalent of companionship, a stay against confusion and drifting. Lacking this stay, he finds himself thinking of death.

And continuing to think of it through the final pages of this memoir, where he assesses himself in full awareness of his mortality, he simultaneously avoids and embraces the personal. Never does he acknowledge any terror of death. His account of his health emphasizes the positive, deprecating his attacks of gout and stressing how much better he feels now than he did as a boy (p. 292), and ignoring the malady of which he was to die. Fontenelle and Buffon claim that old age is the most agreeable stage of life; Gibbon feels inclined to agree. Yet, turning on himself the sharp gaze of the seeker after truth, he recognizes how desire may affect perception in such matters. Because he fully recognizes the comfort of Fontenelle's doctrine, he cannot after all succumb to it. He must contemplate what the prospect of his death means.

Facing but also trying not to face that prospect, he offers a new self-assessment permeated with a melancholy sense of lost alternatives. He has "drawn a high prize in the lottery of life," born to a wealthy family in a free country and having survived, against the laws of probability, beyond the age of fifty. Conscious of his good fortune, he will "fairly estimate the present value of my existence in the three-fold division of mind, body, and estate." His conscience, he claims, does not reproach him. He finds himself cheerful and moderate with "a natural disposition to repose" rather than to action; his single passion is "the love of study, a passion which"—unlike its sexual counterpart—"derives fresh vigour from enjoyment" (p. 291). His mental

faculties have not decayed; "but it may be questioned whether some flowers of fancy, some grateful errors, have not been eradicated with the weeds of prejudice" (pp. 291-2).

Gibbon's evaluation of his mind thus concludes on a dubious note. Something, he suspects, has been lost in his making of himself into a historian: something beautiful perhaps, some source of pleasure from which he has separated himself. His consideration of "body" reveals only determined optimism; his assessment of "estate" again ends oddly, after more optimism, with the statement that he has never had to appear in a court of law. He then continues: "Shall I add that, since the failure of my first wishes, I have never entertained any serious thoughts of a matrimonial connection?" (p. 293). The flowers of fancy are dead indeed when matrimony can be subsumed, along with litigation, under an economic self-assessment.

Reference to what he has given up leads the historian to contemplation of what he has gained: literary fame. His work, he testifies, has formed him. To be sure, the freedom of his writing has provoked negative criticism. No matter: like Hume he boasts that "my nerves are not tremblingly alive" (p. 295). He values "the fair testimonies of private and public esteem," and fantasizes that "he is imparting some degree of amusement or knowledge to his friends in a distant land; that one day his mind will be familiar to the grandchildren of those who are yet unborn" (pp. 293-4). Only through his writing and his fantasies about it can he satisfy that desire for closeness unfulfilled by marriage and frustrated by the death of his few intimate friends. In his pursuit of order, harmony, and rational hierarchy, he has sacrificed the satisfactions of heightened sensibility, nerves tremblingly alive, intimacy, but he has sacrificed some emotional rewards for the sake of others: the happiness of work and of fame, the gratification of imagining that his mind—that best part of himself—means something to other minds unknown, even unborn, and the achievement through writing of an imitation of friendship in some respects more satisfactory than real relationship.

If we, modern readers, feel some sense of strain in this rosy summary, so does the historian himself. He concludes Memoir E not with further personal statement but with a powerful formulation of distilled general truth. "I must reluctantly observe that two causes, the abbreviation of time and the failure of hope, will always tinge with a browner shade the evening of life." Buffon and Fontenelle notwithstanding, the best is not yet to be. He deals summarily with "the ab-

breviation of time," an experiential fact to which all aging mortals must testify. Then, in a moving peroration, with the equally inevitable "failure of hope": "The warm desires, the long expectations of youth, are founded on the ignorance of themselves and of the World: they are gradually damped by time and experience, by disappointment or possession; and after the middle season the crowd must be content to remain at the foot of the mountain, while the few who have climbed the summit aspire to descend or expect to fall. In old age, the consolation of hope is reserved for the tenderness of parents, who commence a new life in their children; the faith of enthusiasts who sing Hallelujahs above the clouds, and the vanity of authors who presume the immortality of their name and writings" (p. 295). Gibbon's Johnsonian alternatives define the dreadful limitation of possibility: time and experience necessarily produce the wisdom that destroys the bliss of ignorance; to get what one wants will prove as frustrating as not to; to ascend the mountain generates alienation and fear; to remain at the bottom means failure. That hope springs eternal only comprises the ultimate irony: man must protect himself against knowledge of his condition. The lasting hopes Gibbon specifies complete his self-evaluation with recognition of his own participation in the flaws historians discover in others. First he suggests two sources of consolation that he himself has deliberately rejected. Yielding Suzanne Curchod, he avoided the possibility of parenthood; relinquishing Catholicism, he gave up forever significant religious faith. Other choices would have meant other compensations. As it is, he possesses only one: the vanity of authors. To recognize its fallaciousness does not protect him from the belief in the "immortality of [his] name and writings" that fulfills his deepest emotional needs. Trying always to be rational, he has learned that emotion outlasts reason. Yet he demonstrates rationality's triumph in the act of declaring its defeat: by reason he assesses himself. Frail because human, aware of that terrible frailty, he asserts his magnificent use of freedom: to create and fulfill his destiny as historian, to understand what he lacked and what he possessed, to know himself in his inadequacy and his achievement, to embody the full possibilities of rational control while understanding its futility. To epitomize the paradoxical nature of man.

Where could he go from there? With a sinking heart one approaches Memoir F, "the latest and most perfect" of the memoirs. Having risen to eloquent universality at the end of E, Gibbon might display

his doggedness by starting over once again, but surely he had by now said what he had to say.

In fact, he had not. In Memoir F for the first time he discovers how to express the personal. This version incorporates every fact contained in the earlier texts (down to 1753, where it abruptly ends), adds many fresh items of information, and displays an altogether new atmosphere of liberty: to reveal true feelings (the historian did not feel close to his mother, did not respect his father, does not regret the early death of his brothers—deep emotions summarized in negative terms), to make slightly bawdy jokes (about the love lives of his ancestors, even about the possible sexual activity of William Law), to expatiate on his similarity to and his difference from mankind at large. With an almost argumentative tone, Gibbon now explains himself. He is a man shaped by his pain, the suffering he shares with the rest of his species, and—perhaps even more important and more remarkable, in his century, as a subject—the anguish implicit in his unique family situation. Insisting that through a describable sequence of happenings he came to be his necessary self, he finds a narrative form that richly realizes the paradox of reason sustained by and sustaining emotion.²⁹

Reporting his experience of the family drama, Gibbon begins with the birth and death of brothers and sister. He claims not to grieve for the loss of his brothers. "They died so young, and I was myself so young at the time of their deaths, that I could not then feel, nor can I now estimate their loss, the importance of which could only have been ascertained by future contingencies. The shares of fortune to which younger children are reduced by our English laws would have been sufficient, however, to oppress my inheritance; and the compensation of their friendship must have depended on the uncertain event of character and conduct, on the affinity or opposition of our reciprocal sentiments. My five brothers . . . I shall not pretend to lament" (p. 24). Retreating from the complexities of love to the relative simplicity of money, Gibbon ironically contrasts his inability to "estimate [the] loss" of his brothers with his precise awareness of the loss of fortune implicit in their survival. He can confess his feelings about the real—money and laws—but will not permit himself to feel about the hypothetical: dead brothers, the dead grandfather who, long before the historian's birth, deprived his descendant of a fortune that he might by greater discretion have preserved. Perhaps his brothers'

natures would have "compensated" for their incursions into his fortune, but perhaps not. Using the language of finance to defend against the danger of emotion, he states his refusal to grieve for what might have been, implying an attitude that would protect him also against conceivable pain from the rupture with Suzanne Curchod and from his father's death. Marriage might have enlarged his emotional life; it would certainly have strained his finances and restricted his freedom. His father's longer survival might have meant happiness; it must have implied further waste of money. Discarded alternatives do not exist; Gibbon interests himself only in what does. His concern with money anchors him to the real.

But not always. He admits to having "deeply and sincerely regretted" the loss of his sister, mainly because he longs for "familiar and tender friendship with a female." The affection of brother and sister, he adds, is "perhaps softened by the secret influence of sex, but pure from any mixture of sensual desire, the sole species of Platonic love that can be indulged with truth and without danger" (p. 24). Females play a small part in this version of Gibbon's story, which ends with the Oxford years and before Suzanne Curchod. A tear again trickles down his cheek at the memory of his nurturing aunt, still termed the mother of his mind, and he uncovers more fully his view of his actual mother. "My mother's attention was somewhat diverted by her frequent pregnancies, by an exclusive passion for her husband, and by the dissipation of the World, in which his taste and authority obliged her to mingle" (p. 39). His father is to be blamed, in other words, for his mother's neglect. The child Edward's frailty demanded "the most tender assiduity" of care, which his mother was unprepared to offer. She drove with him once to school, and "admonished" him that he must learn to think and act for himself (p. 37): his sole specific memory thus emphasizes her rejection. Then she died, leaving "the image of her person and conversation . . . faintly imprinted in my memory" (p. 39). To his anger at her neglect, the boy added resentment of his father's protracted mourning for her, "much beyond the term which has been fixed by decency and custom" (p. 39), which emphasized how fully the father had possessed the beloved object. "As I had seldom enjoyed the smiles of maternal tenderness," Gibbon summarizes, "she was rather the object of my respect than of my love" (p. 38).

His earliest memory, Gibbon now reports for the first time, involved anger at his father. After being whipped, in "childish revenge" he shouted out the names of his father's opponents in a parliamentary election (p. 29). If he objects to his father's mourning as a widower, he also resents his mother's apparent inability to control "the passions of an independent husband" (p. 27). His father spent too much money: a grievance the son can openly acknowledge. Behind it looms the other, more fundamental grievance.

Barely concealed contempt and anger at his father, resentment and a sense of deprivation about his mother are closely related to that other anger. Gibbon repeats once more the significant myth about all his brothers having been christened Edward in denial of the only child's "specialness." His father kept his mother pregnant, another pretext for maternal neglect; the child lacked both siblings to love and the parental attention that should have been accorded the sole survivor. His fantasy of a sister's tender love, which might substitute for that of the mother of whom he felt deprived and the wife to whom he could never commit himself, expresses both the rage and the longing produced by his family situation. Such a fantasy allows him to avoid the danger of competition inherent in the relation to male siblings and the danger of sexuality implicit in relations to other women.

Gibbon now for the first time declares his acceptance of pain as a molding force: his identity derives partly from what he has suffered. This account offers a more detailed exposition than any of its predecessors of his incredibly numerous and miserable childhood ailments. In Memoir F, Gibbon makes a serious attempt—of a kind unprecedented in his own era and rare for long afterwards—to explain, for himself as well as his readers, why, in response to suffering, he turned to books. Although he can offer only the lame explanation that "the assiduous perusal of the Universal history" accounts for his intellectual direction (p. 48), he also tries, with great energy and with a manifest sense of frustration, to recapture much earlier stages of his mental history: stages of unremembered suffering.

Birth involves pain; the autobiographer looks back with some wistfulness on the unrecoverable peace that preceded it, no longer dismissed as a prison. "Decency and ignorance," Gibbon writes, "cast a veil over the mystery of generation, but I may relate that after floating nine months in a liquid element, I was painfully transported into the vital air. Of a new-born infant it cannot be predicated 'he thinks,

therefore he *is*;' it can only be affirmed 'he suffers, therefore he feels' " (p. 28). Suffering testifies reality. The historian striving for accuracy realizes with wonder his past dependence. "During the first year I was below the greatest part of the brute creation, and must inevitably have perished, had I been abandoned to my own care . . . Slow is the growth of the body: that of the mind is still slower . . . I strive without much success to recollect the persons and objects which might appear at the time most forcibly to affect me" (p. 29). What he cannot remember remains important and perhaps contains the hidden cause of that grand effect, his vocation.

What he can remember equally affirms the universality of misery. Men who claim childhood's happiness lie or deceive themselves. "I would ask the warmest and most active Hero of the play-field whether he can seriously compare his childish with his manly enjoyments; whether he does not feel, as the most precious attribute of his existence, the vigorous maturity of sensual and spiritual powers which Nature has reserved for the age of puberty. A state of happiness arising only from the want of foresight and reflection shall never provoke my envy; such degenerate taste would tend to sink us in the scale of beings from a man to a child, a dog and an oyster, till we had reached the confines of brute matter, which cannot suffer because it cannot feel" (p. 51). The vigor of Gibbon's prose emphasizes his startling suggestion that the capacity to suffer implies the power of intellection, lack of "foresight and reflection" corresponding to the oyster's relative inability to feel pain. Gibbon, like Gray (whose Eton College ode he cites just before this passage) but without Gray's nostalgia, rejects the bliss of ignorance—not, like Gray, because one must inevitably grow up, but because the choice of maturity, meaning full awareness of suffering, alone embodies adequate acceptance of human responsibility. More passionately than ever, Gibbon describes the suffering of the schoolboy (p. 51). He grants—deducing necessity from what seems universality—that "such blind and absolute dependence may be necessary, but can never be delightful: Freedom is the first wish of our heart; freedom is the first blessing of our nature; and, unless we bind ourselves with the voluntary chains of interest or passion, we advance in freedom as we advance in years" (pp. 51-2).

This statement of general truth epitomizes the story of Gibbon's life as he finally chooses to tell it: a progress of freedom, if also of hope's abridgement. Lacking freedom to love (deprived by death of his

siblings, by life of his parents, by illness of normal schoolboy friend-ships), he had liberty to think, the strait and narrow way of intellectual discipline leading to a heaven of opportunity. Through it he could understand, even embrace, the pain that formed him; he could develop the power of discrimination that would enable him to write his books and to master his sense of grievance; he could assert the "specialness" that his parents denied him; he could achieve gratification. He could triumph over his father.

Now he understands, and increasingly emphasizes, his own uniqueness, describing with mingled pride and irony his early intellectual accomplishments. At Oxford he might be treated like "live stock" (p. 69), but he had already proved himself something more. Emphasizing the enormous psychic importance of the Oxford episode (the previous memoir had avoided its implications through scanty summary), Gibbon states directly that the university functioned for him as a symbolic parent that he deliberately rejected (pp. 56-7). He obsessively stresses his responsibility for his own conversion to Catholicism. No outside influence intervened, he insists; by books he persuaded himself. Other wise men have done the same—he cites Bayle and Chillingsworth—and have thought it no shame to reverse their decisions subsequently. His rejection of the Church of England, no less significant for being impermanent, marks his escape from the father of whom Gibbon blandly observes, "his affection deplored the loss of an only son" (p. 75). In a single, self-determined act the young man had freed himself alike from real and symbolic parents.³⁰

His story, in Memoir F, ends here, inadvertently but appropriately: subsequent choices would merely confirm the implications of this one. To be sure, his father reclaimed ascendancy, forcing him into dependence in Switzerland, forbidding his marriage, and controlling his inheritance. Nonetheless, Gibbon had freed himself, declaring his mind his kingdom. In his intellectual freedom he found immediate gratification. His repeated metaphors of treasure, eating, and sexuality—all associated with reading and writing—testify to that. Money, food, and sex—the pleasures of the body—come to Gibbon through the mind. In early 1793 he wrote to Lord Sheffield, "Of the Memoirs little has been done, and with that little I am not satisfied: they must be postponed till a mature season, and I much doubt whether the book and the author can ever see the light at the same time." Yet he had, in fact, written a history of his own mind that vividly depicted the re-

wards and penalties of the intellectual life and the way that his choice of such a life developed from and compensated for his sense of child-hood deprivation. Declaring himself triumphantly rational, Gibbon gives more explicit emphasis than any other autobiographer of his century to psychic pain. His insistence on understanding leads him finally to acknowledge not only the compensations but the sufferings of total commitment to vocation and to perceive and record the connections between private internal experience and public achievement.

The process of growth that comprises a necessary subject of all autobiography functions also as a dynamic principle in Gibbon's sequence of memoirs. He reports his life as a progress toward freedom involving sacrifice and pain. He demonstrates through his successive attempts at personal history how arduously he achieves formal freedom and how intimately it involves self-confrontation that contains its own obvious suffering, implied by the acknowledgment of how deliberately the writer has diminished himself for the sake of his accomplishment. Yet the impression of pain does not, at last, dominate the series of memoirs. Stephen Shapiro has argued that autobiography is necessarily a comic genre because it "asserts the ego's transcendence of circumstance."32 Gibbon's sequence dramatizes that transcendence through its succession of false starts. The search for form involves a struggle for the appropriate—both true and emotionally acceptable—image of transcendence, involving a just balance between fact (embodying circumstance) and interpretation (through which the writer triumphs over circumstance).

The various versions of himself that Gibbon supplies in their co-existence emphasize for the reader autobiography's status as artistic achievement. The author seeks the strategies that will convey his reality. In this instance, his full self-rendition must include his defensiveness; through his strategies of defense he finally reveals himself. "Style," Gibbon had observed in Memoir A, "is the image of character" (p. 296). His style—increasingly ironic, unfailingly balanced and weighty—conveys a character concerned at once with self-protection and with truth. In Memoir F Gibbon establishes the truth of his pain and his mastery of it—the understood truth of freedom through vocation—while maintaining decorum and the judicious style of the evaluating mind. The decorum may obscure the

shocking truth, as Gibbon's conversation and his "inexpressibles" concealed the shocking truth of his hydrocele. Yet truth remains and remarkably remains expressed. What other writer of the eighteenth century would so openly expose his anger at mother and father, his lack of concern for lost siblings, his preference of books to people, his hatred of childhood, even (at least in hints) his regret for the lost securities of the womb? The psychological authenticity of Memoir F represents a laborious and highly personal achievement. It suggests the revolutionary possibility that a book can say anything at all, if it finds the proper mode of saying. The degree of freedom Gibbon finally demonstrates is matched only by that of the century's most ostentatiously liberated work, *Tristram Shandy*.

5

The Beautiful Oblique: Tristram Shandy

aving developed a sufficiently complicated public voice, Gibbon succeeds finally in revealing through it his private, suffering humanity. His six distinct versions of himself emphasize story's way of creating meaning. In his final attempts at a memoir, he suggests that self-discovery and self-depiction partly depend upon the acknowledgment of limits that dominates the important eighteenth-century novels of education. Tom Jones learns that he cannot enjoy with impunity every woman who fancies him, and Robinson Crusoe finds that he cannot forever live as a king; so Gibbon comes to recognize that the emotional fulfillment he has dreamed of as a result of literary achievement will always elude him.

Acceptance of human limitation belongs to a comic vision of life; refusal to accept defines the tragic. Gibbon's self-renditions are "comic" not only because they belong to the autobiographical mode that asserts the ego's transcendence but because they employ a perspective in which the vanity of hope, the pretension of aspiration, and the impossibility of ultimate knowledge epitomize not only the misery but the absurdity of the human condition. Yet the describer as writer also asserts his own dignity, the dignity of man, in the clarity of his vision and the authority of his pronouncements. His control of literary form, defending against the disorder of experience, implies the possibility of secular salvation.

In contrast, Tristram Shandy, a fictional autobiographer, denies

even the conceivability of telling a story. His history of himself deliberately imitates chaos. He describes his life and opinions as a farce, undercuts all attempts at dignity (his own and other people's), perceives nothing but limitation. Although with every sentence he invites the reader to laugh, he records only mishap. His narrative begins, "I wish . . ." and hopeless yearning for the contrary-to-fact continues to its end.

Tristram, doomed to be a private man, finds a "public" voice unachievable and would believe it ridiculous if achieved, just as Walter Shandy's pomposities are ridiculous. The idea of destiny, which richly reassures Gibbon, underlines Tristram's hopelessness. Isolated in his privacy (as all men, he believes, are isolated), he has only himself as a stay against the void, and he does not know himself ("—And who are you? said he.——Don't puzzle me; said I."1) or, apparently, believe in the possibility of such knowledge. But his narrative like Gibbon's, though through very different means, demands attention to its form: ostensibly its formlessness. Through form it too contains and judges experience, even while denying all containment and judging. Through form it consolidates an intricate drama of defense, not against society but against mortality. And this most eccentric of the century's novels in some ways provides a paradigm of the novel's conventional course, an illustration of its implications.² Constantly stating what narrative cannot do, it simultaneously demonstrates what it can. It shows how language creates the meaning Tristram denies it, how story declares identity, though the teller barely believes in his own continuing existence.3 It shows the inevitability and the power of form.

The novel's relation to autobiography, in one sense obvious from its very title (*The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*), has been less fully investigated than its affinities to other genres—burlesque, satire, anatomy, and rhetorical persuasion.⁴ Tristram, like a real autobiographer, must convey the intricate relation between the narrator as observer and recorder and the same person as object of observation. D. W. Jefferson has observed that "*Tristram Shandy* breaks off before the hero is mature enough to become what in literature is recognized as a character." The statement is not quite true even in the sense he intends. By his second trip to France, the character, Tristram is a grown (though perhaps hardly a mature) man. But it calls attention to the divergence as well as the identity between Tris-

Tristram Shandy

tram the narrator, a complexly realized, grown-up, and unchanging character, and Tristram the object of narration, for most of the novel a small boy if not an infant, fetus, or "homunculus," thus hardly a character at all. In both his roles, Tristram like Gibbon faces the problem of his pain, which presents itself to him as one of control. The drama of *Tristram Shandy* plays itself out as a series of conflicts over control: between fictive author and reader, between fictive author and characters, between characters and their environment, animate and inanimate. And, because this is fictional autobiography, the real author's control, an assumed but invisible fact, presents an additional dilemma for the reader.

The eponymous hero of *Tristram Shandy*—his balance of reason and passion precarious at best, his existence a losing struggle with death, and his goal unachieved and unachievable—exemplifies failure, except in the fact of his book. He is an anti-hero before his time. W. J. Harvey has summarized the notion of identity in the "classical" novel as lying "precisely in the unique pattern of past changes which constitute one's individuality." Tristram's despairing sense of self derives partly from his perception that no "past changes" make the slightest difference: apparent change (and change, in his depressed view, can be only apparent) merely reinforces the necessities that draw him toward failure. This tendency toward failure, like Gibbon's drive for success, organizes the events of his history of himself.

The symbolic accidents of his earliest days—his injuries of nose and name—together with the yet more loudly symbolic later episode of his near castration establish the limitations that determine his nature. We are not sticks and stones, Tristram has occasion to point out, nor yet angels, but creatures of body and imagination. Both epitomize the hopelessness of attempts at control, and the relation between them increases the complexity of every problem. The birth-damage to Tristram's nose begins a sequence of difficulties with the body, each made more intense by the imagination. An injured nose in itself would seem a minor mishap; its importance derives from the phallic significance that the imagination attaches to noses. Tristram's early experience tells him of his subjection to his own imagination and to that of others. When he comes to face the problems of his maturity—loving, living, and writing—he remains unable to control dependably either outer or inner reality. His potency is not in his power;

neither is his survival nor the ordered perception of events that might generate coherent history. Indeed, his imagination is not in his power. "It was an axiom of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century psychiatry that as imagination obtained greater control over the mind, men tended to think about fewer and fewer things and finally to become entirely preoccupied with one or two ideas. Willis took this to be one of the chief symptoms of insanity and his opinion was echoed repeatedly by later writers." Tristram's imagination, less obsessive than his father's or his uncle's, demonstrates its force by its erratic direction, controlling the mind to no clearly focused purpose: a troubling approximation of madness.

Tristram's sense of self involves his awareness of his body, impotent and ill and thus uncontrollable, as well as his imagination, potent but also uncontrollable. His sexual self-definition, most fundamental and unchanging focus of identity, is as precarious as his mastery of his imagination. Masculinity, in its traditional, assumed signification, implies power: assertiveness, aggression, dominance, effectuality. The men who inhabit Tristram's world, however, exercise little force, bring few actions to completion, and have difficulty dominating even domestic animals or inanimate objects. Tristram has no effective masculine models in the process of growth and education he reports. As subject of his own narrative he prolongs the ambiguities of his engendering: he can never fully discover himself as a sexual being.

The principal sexual emotion depicted by *Tristram Shandy* is not lust but fear: of the sexual imagination, of passion, of castration and impotence. Tristram shares with Sterne an awareness of the potential sexual stimulation of his readers' imaginations, and he affects, like Sterne, to consider this propensity dangerous, although of course he takes pains to exploit it. Everywhere in Tristram's experience conscious and unconscious purposes and interpretations clash with one another, the unconscious a perpetual embarrassment to all protestations of propriety. Thus the dramas of noses and whiskers and hot chestnuts—dramas, all, of the imagination, of the incursions of the unconscious into the realms of day and its relentless infection of fancy, dramas reflecting the fear of sexual danger and of lost control. Slawkenbergius's tale of the traveler with an amazing nose issues in "riot and disorder . . . occasioned in the Strasburgers fantasies" (p. 255). The affair of the whiskers endangers the associations of all common objects: "beds and bolsters, and night-caps and chamber-pots"

Tristram Shandy

(p. 347). The man who finds a hot chestnut in his breeches, provoked into instantaneous fantasies of genital damage (fantasies everywhere in the background if not the foreground of *Tristram Shandy*), allows himself free imaginative elaboration—entirely unjustified—about what has happened and what it means. Walter Shandy makes it "the whole business of his life" to keep sexual fancies out of his wife's head (p. 600), recognizing imagination as the source of action. Tristram himself finds his imagination so "overheated" by the notion of sticking a finger into a pie that he can hardly proceed with his story.

The unbridled sexual imagination expresses itself in fancies about crevices and whiskers, in midnight tossings and turnings, in masturbation beneath nuns' habits but rarely in heterosexual intercourse. The focus on imagination in Tristram's world reflects the pervasive fear of real sex. By substituting mental for physical life, a man can avoid the dangers of his animal nature. The real meaning of "hobby-horses" in the novel involves this perception: through their hobbyhorses men deny their physicality, avoiding or postponing the obligations of their sexual needs and the frightening emotional demands associated with them. Hobbyhorses quite literally replace mistresses for Uncle Toby and Walter Shandy (pp. 95, 225). Literal hobbyhorses, of course, supply instruments for childhood masturbation as well as play. Walter and Toby alike defend against the dangers of adult sexuality by substituting infantile gratifications.

Sterne identifies his notion of the hobbyhorse with the traditional concept of the ruling passion: "The ruling passion et les egarements du coeur, are the very things which mark, and distinguish a man's character;—in which I would as soon leave out a man's head as his hobby-horse." The redirection of passion toward the construction of imitation battles or the reading of learned books substitutes a situation of potential mastery—Toby and Trim control their battlefields, Walter takes what he wants from his books—for one that promises defeat or, at best, incomplete control, since another, unpredictable human being partakes in the sexual situation and since men, in the world of the novel, feel unconvinced at best of their effective sexual force.

"Man's recurrent fear that he will be found wanting," the psychoanalyst Leslie Farber writes, "makes him peculiarly vulnerable to challenge. And that fear, as life proceeds, becomes vague and amorphous in his experience, imposing its painful claim not only on sexual perfor-

mance itself but also on intellectual, emotional, and even spiritual realms."9 Dr. Farber is describing life, not literature, but Tristram Shandy elaborates his point in every conceivable direction. Walter Shandy fears to be found wanting not only through sexual incapacity. If he performs successfully, he will exemplify another form of failure. "—That provision should be made for continuing the race of so great, so exalted and godlike a Being as man—I am far from denying—but philosophy speaks freely of every thing; and there-fore I still think and do maintain it to be a pity, that it should be done by means of a passion which bends down the faculties, and turns all the wisdom, contemplations, and operations of the soul backwards—a passion, my dear, continued my father, addressing himself to my mother, which couples and equals wise men with fools, and makes us come out of caverns and hiding-places more like satyrs and four-footed beasts than men" (pp. 644-5). Because he defines himself first as philosopher, Walter fears losing himself in the act of merging, which couples wise men with fools by making them perform like male fools and by literally uniting them with female fools. The more fully he uses his animal nature, Walter believes, the more he endangers his intellectual and spiritual essence. Walter copulates, Toby tells Dr. Slop, only "out of principle" (p. 116). He thinks love folly, the body an ass that must at all costs be subdued. To act as a man means to be "found wanting" as a philosopher; he chooses, therefore, to act as little as possible, becoming finally a monument of ineffectuality, one of the novel's troubling images of male passivity.

The more conventional version of sexual failure, total or partial impotence, provides another focus of fear and a subject for frequent rationalization. Tristram's precarious begetting takes place after his father has suffered several months' sexual disablement from a sciatica. Readily distracted during the sexual act, Walter barely manages to bring it to completion. Women in the novel have considerably more sexual gusto than the men—another cause, perhaps, for male fear. The Widow Wadman allows her servant to pin together the bottom of her nightgown during the long nights of her widowhood, but when Toby stirs her affections she kicks away the pins. Her intense concern with the degree of his sexual power (her dead husband, too, was subject to sciatica) reflects her acceptance of her own physical nature. The young widow who marries Trim's brother and the young nurse who patiently strokes Trims's upper leg testify to female sexuality.

Tristram Shandy

Women, Tristram frequently hints, masturbate; men, so far as this novel is concerned, do not, except metaphorically. Even the lascivious readers whom Tristram imagines are predominantly female.

Of course literature abounds in jokes about the libidinous longings of women. The context of Tristram Shandy, however, gives special force to this particular joke. Women are randy, men impotent. Tristram, unable to perform sexually (p. 517), describes himself standing, garters in hand, "reflecting upon what had not pass'd" (p. 518). What his Jenny has to say on the subject remains concealed by asterisks, but the figure of Tristram reflecting on what has not happened looms over the novel. Provoked by Walter's theorizing, Toby announces that he would not beget a child to please the greatest prince on earth. Would, Walter points out, hardly matters; the guestion is whether he *could*, and Walter doubts it (p. 586). Toby's ambiguous wound may or may not interfere with his potency; at any rate, his realization that the Widow Wadman cares about such matters cools his regard for her. Corporal Trim, stroked for weeks by his beautiful nurse, never has an erection. Of course, it requires the lascivious imagination of a reader to make this point. What Corporal Trim actually says is, "'It was not love'-for during the three weeks she was almost constantly with me, fomenting my knee with her hand, night and day—I can honestly say, an' please your honour—that * * * * * once . . . It never did, said the corporal" (p. 572). The corporal's criterion of love obviously underlines the novel's pervasive concern with physical potency, emphasized also by the fact that even the Shandy bull proves incapable of impregnating the neighborhood cows. To summarize the narrative as the tale of a cock and a bull emphasizes not only its ostensible pointlessness but its obsessive concern with male sexuality and the fears associated with it.

And those fears, in the novel as in life, indeed spread outward. William Holz describes "one of the grand comic themes in *Tristram Shandy*: the general inadequacy of man's abilities to his conceptions, the disparity between his apirations and his accomplishments." Men (and women), aspiring to exercise control, accomplish only what they do not intend. Even with his hobbyhorse, a carefully defined, small area for control, no one achieves the mastery he imagines: Toby is frustrated by external events (the breaking of his bridge, the Peace, the lack of equipment), Walter by his own incapacity for commitment, Tristram by his inability to ascertain just how his story should be told.

Tristram Shandy imitates the action of impotence: the ever failing effort to exercise masculine power in the world. It perceives impotence as a genuine action, not an inaction, involving a series of defensive substitutions for direct, natural experience. By his manifest difficulty and circuitousness in telling a story, Tristram dramatizes the difficulty of all human endeavor. Death, which makes all men impotent, stalks the author and reminds the reader of the sense in which Tristram, as an Everyman, must trace the shapes of failure.

The imitation of an action of impotence need not imply a total experience of impotence, nor is Tristram's masculine identity his only identity. For all its intertwined assertions and imitations of failed control, *Tristram Shandy* can also be understood—and its nominal author occasionally so understands it—as epitomizing the possibility of mastery exactly where Gibbon found it: through vocation. Not that Tristram is ever so presumptous as to claim a vocation; his single book seems yet another accident of his life, one more area of unpredictability: "Ask my pen,—it governs me,—I govern not it" (p. 416). Yet as author merges with character, he begins to articulate the saving possibilities of that imagination from which his book emanates.

John Preston observes that Sterne fills his "novel with people who in various ways wish to remake the conditions of reality. His novel is about the fictive imagination. It is a novel about authors and quasiauthors."11 Tristram cannot in life control his begetting, his birth, his education, or his emotional or physical capacity to love; he cannot extend by will the term of his existence. By imagination, on the other hand, he can dominate all those uncontrollable facts. He can populate a desolate plain, make barrenness abundance through his mental capacity to make rich use of whatever and whomever he finds (p. 536). He dances across France in an exaltation of fancy, the flight from death transformed into a celebration of life. At "every step that's taken," he points out, "the judgment is surprised by the imagination" (p. 539). And the imagination embodies life-force: "but where am I? and into what a delicious riot of things am I rushing? I—I who must be cut short in the midst of my days, and taste no more of 'em than what I borrow from my imagination" (p. 495). Imagination, opposing itself directly to death, offers its possessor vicarious life so rich and tumultuous that it compensates for the brevity of physical existence.

The imagination has ostensible dangers, for possessor and observer

Tristram Shandy

alike. Yet imagination also makes Tristram's triumphant "play" possible: with his readers and their imaginations, with language, and with his experience. Experience, language, and readers remain the same despite his manipulations; yet all are also temporarily mastered and transformed as Tristram absorbs them into his imagination, not operating like his father or his uncle from obsession, but declaring the freedom of the inner life in the face of the fully recognized forces of determinism.

Beneath the structure of Tristram Shandy as narrative lies, as in Gibbon's memoirs, a reality of pain. The psychoanalyst John E. Mack, writing of the biographer's problems, remarks that the most valuable psychological data "are those documents . . . which are written in pain and which reveal most clearly the subject's struggles to master his psychological realities and personal conflicts. Although one eye always remains on posterity in such writings, the inner self gains its own ascendancy and its own stage through the psychological priorities that accompany pain. It is harder to hide our inner selves when we are in the throes of dealing with conflicts that are incompletely mastered."12 Conflict evoked generates drama. Experienced rather than written about, it produces pain. Tristram tells the story of his conflicts and frustrations, producing a document not necessarily "written in pain," but one reporting pain and struggle and conveying an inner self by dramatizing a protagonist "in the throes of dealing with conflicts that are incompletely mastered."

"The inner self gains . . . its own stage." Exactly. Tristram, setting the scene for others, bringing down curtains, wheeling off ordnance, and inviting pity or condescension or ridicule for father, mother, uncle, simultaneously stages quite another drama, an inward action that uses the ludicrous activity of others as a way to express the self. His imagination declares the self-reference of all happening. His central conflict pits his desire to control his own life against his desire that life should not be controlled—superego against id, mind against body, reason against emotion. Toby and Walter Shandy find mechanisms to contain their fears, but Tristram recognizes the inadequacy of mechanism. Art serves man far better: Tristram is an artist of his own life.

But art—at any rate eighteenth-century art—involves the imposition of form on experience and so leads us back to the original problem, of *Tristram Shandy's* apparent formlessness. If Tristram's

imagination truly compensates for his failures of control, it must presumably assert some control itself. Yet Tristram as author repeatedly insists that no design operates through his narrative and that the principles of its construction are as arbitrary as those of life. His assertions of his narrative's lack of integral form, however, belong to the novel's comedy with its insistent perceptions of disparity. As Huckleberry Finn proclaims the absence of moral significance in his story, thus stimulating generations of critics to seek morals, Tristram challenges the critic (of whose existence he is vividly aware) to penetrate the tangle of his prose and discern what principles lie beneath. To claim a narrative's formlessness in some respects resembles Walter Shandy's opposite insistence on his choices' utter rationality. Both assertions deny significant facts. Henri Fluchère's penetrating account of Tristram Shandy's "absurdity" emphasizes absurdity's origin in the gap between the nature of human minds and the nature of the world outside. "The world is absurd in so far as it refuses to present itself to man as his mind chooses to conceive or imagine it when it follows the laws of reason or of common-sense."13 Moreover, "the mind also is absurd, trying to impose its own order on the world in the face of all probability" (p. 137). But the flexible order, the form, of comedy evades the absurdity of Walter Shandy's rigidity and qualifies the nihilism of Tristram's explicit statements.

Tristram trains his readers. ¹⁴ The reader learns that his expectations will be consistently violated, experiencing a sequence of frustration and confusion essentially duplicating Tristram's experience of life. And he learns what Tristram knows, how to take pleasure in contemplating the spectacle of his own offended sense of logic and decorum. This is a novel of education in which the hero, incapable of change himself, succeeds in altering the perception and knowledge of the reader who encounters him.

The reader's altered perception informs him, rather disturbingly, of the comedy of life, which Tristram has noticed first, recognizing that misery provides an appropriate target for mockery. Tristram acknowledges the universality and necessity of suffering with no spirit of acceptance. By converting anguish to the material of play, he masters it, but he knows that in the form of death it will finally master him. And before death, conflict abides. Dr. Slop and Susannah throwing cataplasms at one another provide a slapstick version of fundamental truth, their physical clash precipitated by their rival (and equally

false) claims to "know" one another. No one really knows anyone in this novel—not husband and wife; nor lover and mistress; nor parent and child. Nor can the individual fully know himself.

But Tristram's comic imagination finally provides him a way of self-knowledge and self-definition and of understanding the world. The perspective it supplies generates the book's form and meaning. The novel's central character, as inflexible as King Lear and as inevitably doomed as Lear to suffer from his inability to make reality conform to his expectations of it, is perceived—perceives himself—so differently that we hardly notice how painful is the universe he inhabits. Tristram's laughter declares his capacity to see, to face the consequence of his seeing, and to record his vision in all its disorder. His narrative of failure, fully realized, exemplifies his success. Tristram Shandy and Gibbon's memoirs duplicate one another in their reliance on dynamic form and in their exemplification of how one's way of telling a story creates the story's meaning. To think back to Gibbon at this point may help to illuminate the triumphant achievement of Tristram's imagination. (I am accepting, for the moment, the novel's explicit claim that the imagination at work belongs to Tristram rather than to Sterne.) Both Gibbon and Tristram seek ways to record and to defend against their pain, which derives from identical sources: the conflicts of family life, the helpless wretchedness of childhood, the arduousness of relationship, and the inevitability of death. Tristram recognizes more clearly than Gibbon the defensive function of his writing, which like Toby's hobbyhorse and Walter's helps to compensate for his experience and has its masturbatory aspects. "I will answer for it the book shall make its way in the world, much better than its master has done before it—Oh Tristram! Tristram! can this but be once brought about—the credit, which will attend thee as an author, shall counterbalance the many evils which have befallen thee as a man" (p. 337). Through writing he transcends his impotence; just as Gibbon uses his high reputation as historian to counteract his conviction of personal awkwardness and insufficiency.

The formal dynamism of Gibbon's memoirs depends on their evolution. Reading the autobiographies as sequence rather than composite, one participates vicariously in the drama of their growth, a succession of literary changes reflecting a psychic action of development. On the one hand the historian's assertion of his destiny and his vocation implicit and unchanged from his earliest years; on

the other, his demonstration of how gradually and with what manifest difficulty his techniques for setting down personal history evolved. Tristram too opposes his static sense of self to his protean forms of recording. And the two historians share, although Tristram is more highly conscious of his own perception, a sense of writing as a struggle to control experience. Writing thus both epitomizes a central psychic conflict and exemplifies the possibility of resolving it. The tension of Gibbon's evolving form and of Tristram's ungraspable one defines the authors' natures.

The difference between Gibbon's and Tristram's ways of telling a story depends largely on the difference of their views about the meaning of their pain. Perhaps it can be argued that comedy distinguishes itself from tragedy entirely by its point of view. In fantasy, though not in fact, even death and madness can become subjects for humor. The stature of the hero, the possibilities for his reconciliation, and the significance of events: all depend on how a pattern is seen. To battle windmills may be ludicrous or splendid; to disown the daughter who loves you exemplifies man's tragic blindness or his ridiculous propensity for making mistakes. One defies the nature of things: how magnificent and how ominous! One stamps his foot at the universe: how grotesque!

Gibbon's view of himself, comic though it ultimately is, partakes of his tragic vision of human destiny as a whole and is heavily qualified by irony. Men and empires alike are created to fall. The historian, aware of this fact and aware also of the universal yearning to survive, perceives both the absurdity and the tragedy of the resultant inevitable conflict—the conflict that Tristram and Shakespeare also perceive between wish, a structural principle of the mind, and fact, the principle of external reality. Asserting the dignity of the universal, he succeeds finally in subsuming private pain to general truth, accepting pain as the necessary ground of life.

Dignity evades Tristram. Although he recaptures some details of his begetting and his birth, he like Gibbon recognizes these as formative experiences beyond memory or control. His childhood, solitary rather than communal, feels as unpleasantly powerless as Gibbon's. His brother, who competes with him for parental attention, dies, leaving him, like Gibbon, sole focus of his father's fantasies but never helped, cared for, or educated enough. Seeing his family's career shaped like his own, he yet refuses to understand reduplicated patterns of

unhappiness as inherent in the nature of things. His destiny, he claims, belongs to him alone. His father's fate and his uncle's are likewise unique. He deprecates whereas Gibbon exalts, the self. His self-deprecation and his refusal to dignify establish his authenticity as a self-perceived comic hero.

Gibbon, writing of himself in a comic genre, yet sees himself often in tragic terms. Tristram, writing a mock-autobiography permeated by awareness of death, denies the tragic.¹⁵ Both, in opposed modes, use their enveloping imaginations to evoke the same tensions of self-depiction; both create meaning through tension.

Every literary product involves three crucial aspects beyond the writer: the document itself, the reality to which it refers, and the audience that apprehends it. Tristram's references to the writing of the historical document suggest, as we shall see, his difficulty in keeping under control the infinite possibilities of story, the temptations of digression. The primary reality to which the document refers is his self; we have already encountered some of his difficulties in coming to terms with that perplexing being. The audience seems, by comparison, to offer tempting possibilities for Tristram to exert the mastery unachievable elsewhere.

David Thomson argues that Sterne's consciousness of the reader defines the form of his novel. "His 'plan' is not to create a literary shape, but to implant his work in human curiosity, amusement, protest and surprise. He had such an intimate feel for these recesses that he may be said to have invented the reader." He also bullies the reader, trying to control him through alternate poses of aggression and intimacy. Tristram appears to believe that his reader probably resembles him, but given his unpredictability, the idea is much less reassuring than Gibbon's faith in the universal availability of rational response. Yet even his declarations of common interests and natures have a cutting edge, for his faith in the reader is tinged with a mockery that, although it partakes of self-ridicule, finally communicates a categorical sense of superiority.

Tristram's friendly addresses to his readers, concentrating on their possession of the imagination that he urges them to use while reading, sometimes intimate his dependence on their participation. He yearns for the reader who will simply yield his imagination (e.g., p. 182). But such readers may not exist. And even the reader willing to cooperate

with Tristram may lack capacity. His bliss at the imagined prospect of gifted readers (e.g., pp. 194-5) emphasizes his lack of satisfaction with the readers he believes himself to have. At present, despite his declarations that all mortals resemble one another, he feels all too conscious of the disparity between his powers and his readers, and that consciousness is, of course, made bitter by the fact that readers function also as judges, the reader Tristram professes to love often turning into the critic he fears and detests. As he develops his fantasy of a world richly endowed with wit and judgment, he fancies that universal wit would produce universal conflict, everyone displaying his energies by attacking his neighbor. But universal judgment would make all right again: "though we should abominate each other, ten times worse than so many devils or devilesses, we should nevertheless, my dear creatures, be all courtesy and kindness . . . " (p. 195). He thus alludes to his own use of wit and judgment: wit justifying his contempt for his fellow man, his reader; judgment concealing that contempt beneath the disguise of courtesy. Contempt and its disguise are both exemplified in the phrase "my dear creatures," suggesting the affection one offers to a dog.

The difficulty of knowing how readers will respond, how the relationship between them and the author should be understood exists, of course, for every writer. Incorporating the subject into Tristram Shandy and implying that it vies in perplexity with the problems of identity and of narration Sterne defines for his century and even for ours the technical and emotional difficulties of novel-writing. The novelist, in fact, shares those difficulties with the autobiographer, although almost no early autobiographer confessed concern over audience reaction (Colley Cibber being a striking exception to this generalization) except through pervasive self-justifications against the charge of vanity. Tristram achieves much of its fascination from its careful elucidation (behind the facade of carelessness) of such dilemmas as that of the writer's relation to his hypothetical reader. That reader embodies the author's wishes (for admiration, reward, and love) and his fears (of disapproval, rejection, and love lost). He cannot be dealt with in theoretical terms, and Tristram fully demonstrates that point. But he also illustrates, through his triumphant achievement, the possibility of compelling the reader's attention by doing things his own way.

When readers emerge as critics, Tristram treats them with exagger-

ated courtesy ("Gentlemen, I kiss your hands,—I protest no company could give me half the pleasure"; p. 84). Although he claims to respect the critics' power, he realizes his own more fully. Critics may slash his jerkin as they wish, he will treat them as Uncle Toby treated the fly, observing that "the world is surely wide enough to hold both thee and me" (p. 162). The fly analogy underlines Tristram's contempt for those presumptuous enough to criticize him. Those who try to label Tristram's failings only display, from his point of view, their intellectual and emotional inadequacy.

Sometimes Tristram browbeats his readers openly, accusing them of inattentiveness, ignorance, and dirty minds, urging them to go back and reread the previous chapter, reminding them of his power over them. He simultaneously mocks the reader and declares his own superiority

No wonder I itch so much as I do, to get at these amours—They are the choicest morsel of my whole story! and when I do get at 'em—assure yourselves, good folks,—(nor do I value whose squeamish stomach takes offence at it) I shall not be at all nice in the choice of my words;—and that's the thing I have to declare.—I shall never get all through in five minutes, that I fear—and the thing I hope is, that your worships and reverences are not offended—if you are, depend upon't I'll give you something, my good gentry, next year to be offended at . . .

And now that you have just got to the end of these four volumes—the thing I have to ask is, how do you feel your heads? my own akes dismally—as for your healths, I know, they are much better—True Shandeism, think what you will against it, opens the heart and lungs . . . (pp. 337-8)

Tristram's self-absorption and total involvement in his literary task emerge as distinctly as his impatience with those who refuse to respond as he would have them. As he contemplates the likelihood that others will be offended by his inventiveness, he reverts to the rhetoric of a child ("I'll give you something . . . to be offended at") and to a childish insistence that he's doing something good ("True Shandeism . . . opens the heart") although it may be mistakenly thought bad. He resents the possibilities for error inherent in the very fact of readers. Like a child, he reiterates that nothing is his fault; like a child he blusters about his omnipotence: "But courage! gentle reader! . . . 'tis enough to have thee in my power" (p. 486). The childishness of his responses, particularly his aggressive ones, helps to guarantee his

authenticity, his status as "natural man." "I wish she may ever remain a child of nature," Sterne remarked of his daughter, when she objected to having her hair "frizled"—"I hate children of art." Tristram presents himself consistently as a child of nature, opposed to disguise and artifice, on sufficiently intimate terms with his readers that he can afford to insult them.

But what, exactly, does Tristram's spontaneity amount to? The "small hero" uses it as excuse, pretext, justification for his outrageousness, and his verbal maneuvers contain clear evidence of deliberation. He addresses his readers as "your worships and reverences" just before declaring his intent to offend them next year; he shifts rhythmically from high rhetorical dignity to colloquial freedom and back again several times in a paragraph; he parades the logic of his mental processes ("the thing I have to declare . . . the thing I hope . . . the thing I have to ask") while enveloping the reader in a chaos of loosely related concerns. All these systematic violations of expectation reflect premeditation. Tristram's game of artlessness imperfectly obscures his compelling need to dominate his readers and his frustration at their inevitable reluctance to submit their minds entirely to his. Whatever the benefits of "true Shandeism," this indefinable state of feeling and of being is only available to a true Shandy: to Tristram, his father, and his uncle, defending themselves against their misery by the structures of their fantasy. If they could impose those structures completely on others, their enlarged defenses would guard them more securely. But others elude Tristram in their roles as readers or critics, just as they elude Toby in their roles as interested onlookers: Widow Wadman, professing her interest in military strategy, has her own purposes in mind. She exemplifies the difficulties Walter and Toby and Tristram find in other people: separate and unknowable selves with unknowable, or unbearable, private purposes.

Tristram cannot exert force adequately in his life or in his book. History, the book itself, seems manifestly impossible, given the historian's conflicting needs for order and for chaos. The lives to which the book refers are incomprehensible even to those who live them. And finally the readers, whom Tristram wishes to entertain, persuade, and enthrall, remain unknown quantities; the author cannot infer their submissiveness. "The theme of human ineffectuality," as Martin Price comments, "runs through all the main characters . . . [Walter's and Toby's and Yorick's] disabilities of temperament are as crippling as

Tristram's physical misadventure, and we see the two becoming one in the temperament of Tristram as author—unable to sustain connected narrative, fantastic and whimsical, emotionally undisciplined, as much the victim as the author of his book"18—and, one might add, of his world.

The distinction between narrator and character, this discussion will already have suggested, is difficult to maintain, since Tristram repeatedly becomes the focus of his own attention specifically in his role as writer. Moreover, the problems he faces as writer duplicate those which he and others confront elsewhere in their lives. For instance, there are the difficulties of language as an instrument of communication that serves equally the purpose of obfuscation. "Language is . . . a more or less elaborate mask of false modesty, a prime example though an example only—of the disguises with which human beings deceive themselves and try to deceive each other."19 The pleasure of using words derives partly from the fact that they lack essential meaning and, therefore, can be manipulated arbitrarily for personal purposes. On the other hand, language constantly generates new significances. Words supply the gratification of play, but also the substance of work. The paradoxes of language define the novel's characters. reveal the necessities and the structures of their defenses, and link the difficulties of living with those of creating narrative.

"The unsteady uses of words," Tristram remarks early in the novel, "have perplexed the clearest and most exalted understanding" (p. 86). This general observation precedes the more emphatic and particular one about Uncle Toby: "By heaven! his life was put in jeopardy by words" (p. 87). Toby's inability to find the right words for things endangers him, but he discovers how to move from words to the things they represent. Frustrated in his attempts to explain to visitors the intricacies of scarp and counterscarp, half-moon and ravelin, he turns not to definition but to enactment. The dramatization of history absorbs him to the point that the initial purpose of communication disappears; bloodless battles occupy his life and Trim's.

Tristram, on the other hand, presents himself through words. Allusions, illustrations, and metaphors provide his materials for self-display and self-protection. The writer guards against his critics with an impenetrable screen of language. Words, the orthodox instruments of communication, often prevent interchange from taking place. Alter-

nately, the writer may choose to substitute blankness: the empty page on which a reader can enumerate his own mistress's charms, the black one that mourns Yorick's death, the dashes and asterisks that invite speculation. If the asterisks are as readable as the English language (e.g., when the maid invites Tristram to piss out the window, without a word written down), Tristram's point becomes more emphatic: words, unnecessary at best, only limit possibilities, darken hypotheses (p. 200), and interfere with the illusion of communication between one mind and another. Toby and Walter communicate with extreme difficulty, despite all their verbiage. Mr. and Mrs. Shandy communicate hardly at all, the wife's language of assent conflicting with the husband's determination to find opposition. Uncle Toby remarks that Mrs. Shandy may not choose to let a man come so near her * * * * . All conceivable ways of completing the sentence will evoke distinct response; incomplete, it remains provocative, potential—the state of being for which Tristram himself always yearns.

Metaphors, with their special possibilities for ambiguity, might seem to offer the solution to Tristram's linguistic problems. His father adores them, declaring that "the highest stretch of improvement a single word is capable of, is a high metaphor" (p. 405). His metaphor of national distemper, caused by the movement of men and money toward the metropolis, enables him to ignore his wife's immediate needs. Ramifying, it leads him ever farther from the particular situation, insuring his blinkered vision of possibilities and protecting him from the real. Nor need language be metaphoric to fulfill this important function. Considering the nature of the ideal curse, Walter does not contemplate unduly the reasons for a need to curse. Reading over all that has been said about dress or circumcision, he can avoid confronting the painful implications of his son's accident. His regard for auxiliary verbs exemplifies his interest in the manipulation of language for its own sake and his tendency to separate words from the reality to which they allegedly refer. You can talk about a white bear endlessly, he points out, without ever seeing one; the joy of the enterprise would vanish if the possibilities diminished to what one knows of a literal bear. The "offspring of propositions" (p. 409) likely to result from linguistic manipulation proves far more controllable than the human offspring produced by sexual activity. Much earlier in the book, Tristram, commenting on his father's propensity to theoretical extravagance, has observed, "It is the nature of an hypothesis, when once a

man has conceived it, that it assimilates every thing to itself as proper nourishment; and, from the first moment of your begetting it, it generally grows the stronger by every thing you see, hear, read, or understand" (p. 151). The apparent manageability of language, which can create structures capable of drawing everything into themselves, makes it a tempting resource. Yet the metaphors of procreation, like Gibbon's, suggest how much displaced energy Walter's theorizing involves. And the very words through which Tristram declares the fulfilling, natural development of linguistic structures undercut themselves, since the inevitable growth of hypotheses has its monstrous aspect, apparently unrecognized by the speaker.

Tristram is more skeptical than his father about words, but he knows that "mere words" (p. 624) embody great power, if not knowledge, as his tedious story about the abbess of Andouillet testifies. Two nuns, in this tale, reduce words to sounds. Two syllables spoken by one person constitute sin; the same syllables divided between two people remain sinless because meaningless. All meaning is arbitrary. Reflecting on his disastrous christening, Tristram reports a theological controversy about how to obviate its effects. If the officiating clergyman had said "Gomine" instead of "Nomine," by the change of letter destroying meaning, that mistaken letter would nullify the baptism. Language's power derives from meanings assigned by faith. The force of words, *Tristram Shandy* indicates repeatedly, comes from the relack of essential connection with reality. Language is the historian's only tool for preserving truth, but in its very nature it increases his distance from truth.

Language, like most other things, depends on imagination. Definition can maintain no power against usage. Whiskers mean—who ever said otherwise?—hair on a man's chin. Cough a few times at the mention of whiskers, smile, touch your eye, blush: "Twas plain to the whole court the word was ruined: . . . the word in course became indecent, and (after a few efforts) absolutely unfit for use. The best word, in the best language of the best world, must have suffered under such combinations" (p. 317). Noses, the narrator reminds us, have endured a similar fate. Tristram claims to fear the corrupted imaginations of his readers, realizing that his own attempts to impose meaning can never resist meanings imagined by others. He inhabits a world like that of *Through the Looking-Glass*, where weirdly dangerous words elude all control. It is better, from some points of view, to talk to a

mule than a man. Tristram always enjoys such conversation as an exercise of imagination, unrestricted by any discipline of responsiveness and supporting the indulgence of private emotion.

For Tristram, as for his father, language supplies material for play. "What . . . could be more splendidly sincere," George Santayana inquires, "than the impulse to play in real life, to rise on the rising wave of every feeling and let it burst, if it will, into the foam of exaggeration?"20 Tristram appears to "play" in precisely this sense, rising with his feelings and bursting into exaggeration, his discourse with the mule one of his many games. He claims to exemplify the sincerity of spontaneity and the genius of the unconstrained man, unlike his professedly rational father. Yet the romantic vision of spontaneity and direct expressiveness that Santayana offers only calls attention to the strain in the Shandys' kind of play. "Splendidly sincere"? The contradictory perspectives on language that the novel supplies in fact emphasize the incongruity and the willfulness of adult play whose purpose is to protect. Since language itself consists of artifice, the only conceivable sincerity lies in silence: play derives part of its value from its opposition to sincerity. Language betrays. By playing with it Tristram declares not his authenticity but his precarious power, shared by all writers: to control temporarily what ultimately evades human mastery.

As a writer striving to tell the story of himself and his family, Tristram faces the problem of narration and recognizes its metaphysical implications. Behind the question of how one relates a history lies the guestion of where the material for that history comes from. Does fate determine the course of events? Or do the participants? Or is the historian himself responsible for the sequence he reports? Jean-Jacques Mayoux suggests the ambiguity of Tristram's position about the sources of happening and of meaning. "I, or Tristram, is at first a series of necessities, pre-and post-natal, which make nose, name, the asthma that you have—this 'asthma' from which you will die and which you got from skating against the wind in Flanders. Between what is done without you and what you have done without thinking about it or at least without wanting to do it, it seems that all is determined. But you are the subject, you are the unforeseeable content and form of each moment of your existence, the series of your discoveries and finally your microcosm, the total image of a world. 'I' is the par-

ticular form that one gives to all one perceives, all that one feels, all that one thinks."²¹

The critic seems to say that Tristram's sense of self and his knowledge of the self's surprises guards him against the implications of his subjective awareness of powerlessness and his objective perception of the powerlessness of others. In fact Tristram as author protects Tristram as character. By linguistic manipulation he asserts his superiority to fate, implying that the acts of will involved in his operations with narrative themselves attest his freedom. He defines himself as character not grandly (like Walter Shandy, who sees himself as victim of heaven's artillery) but deprecatingly, as "sport of small accidents" (p. 166). But he also uses a pose of arrogance: as historian, he triumphs over fate by recording its operations. This view leaves him vulnerable to the recognition that fate governs the writing of history (p. 207); yet his tone proclaims his power as writer, despite his frequent admissions that he finds himself composing unexpected sequences and unable to keep up with his life. By writing he escapes the guandaries that trap Toby and Walter. His endless history creates for him the vital illusion of autonomy. To record—to form chaos into order, even a parody of the high order of formal history—is the archetypical novelistic function.

As a historian Tristram usurps some functions of fate; he feels himself in the position of stage manager or director for a cast of characters existing at his disposal. The metaphor expresses both his power—to shift his characters about, bring the curtain down at will—and its limitations: he has not written the play he directs. It is all very well to see the world as a stage, but the metaphor can backfire: to comprehend men and women as merely players underlines their lack of freedom and their incapacity even to understand their own roles. The reader may separate himself from the helpless instrumentality of the Shandy family as characters; thus Tristram invites him "to look down upon the stage, and see [Walter Shandy] baffled and overthrown in all his little systems and wishes" (p. 55). But to look down and pity creates further illusion; the reader may thus forget his own participation in the divine comedy, or tragedy, or farce that incorporates Walter.

The large references to the world as a stage, organized by a mysterious Planner in the background (p. 236), belong to Tristram's struggle to maintain some distance from his grotesque family by his superior perception of their (and his own) helplessness within the great design

and to separate himself from his readers by his greater willingness to acknowledge the implications of common humanity. (For the reader, Tristram knows, the Shandy family are merely characters; for Tristram, author and subject, they function both as characters and as defining realities.) Because such allusions hint that Shandean triviality partakes in some large plan, they have a paradoxical (and temporary) dignifying effect. But Tristram's shifts of feeling lead him also to theatrical metaphors that emphasize his own arbitrary power—not over what happens in the world but over the communication of happening. He can convert all events to artifice, thereby displaying at least in limited ways his manipulative skill and his triumphant casualness.

Gibbon's belief in the logic of events comforts him but Tristram glimpses the possibility that destiny may manipulate happenings as arbitrarily as he does himself. If he insists that the reader acknowledge how he, Tristram, makes things happen, he also recurrently recognizes that he makes them happen only on the page. Such power, in some states of mind, means a lot; it means much to Gibbon, content as historian. But Tristram, unable to satisfy himself with any single role, shifting from recorder to manipulator of events, finds in the concept of fatality one more reminder that his attempts to control recalcitrant reality, even as autobiographer, like his father's and uncle's end in failure.

In Tristram's conception his record too comprises a history. He discusses in detail precisely the problems implied by Gibbon's obsessive reshaping of his life story. How can a writer form his record of events to convey his sense of who he is? How can he discover the connections between who he is and what has happened to him? What are the parameters of private history?

The historian, Tristram maintains, need only "represent the matter of fact, and render it credible to the reader" (p. 321), which is not so simple a task as it may sound, given the need also to understand the impossibility, and the falsity, of straight lines.

When a man sits down to write a history,—tho' it be but the history of Jack Hickathrift or Tom Thumb, he knows no more than his heels what lets and confounded hinderances he is to meet with in his way,—or what a dance he may be led, by one excursion or another, before all is over. Could a historiographer drive on his history, as a muleteer drives on his mule,—straight forward;—for instance, from Rome all the way to Loretto, without ever once turning his head

aside either to the right hand or to the left, he might venture to foretell you to an hour when he should get to his journey's end;—but the thing is, morally speaking, impossible: For, if he is a man of the least spirit, he will have fifty deviations from a straight line to make with this or that party as he goes along, which he can no ways avoid. (pp. 36-7)

The problems of writing history, Tristram suggests and demonstrates, duplicate those of life. Historians like other mortals discover their own passivity, led one way or another by excursions not consciously chosen. The sentences in which Tristram describes the problem also exemplify it, their eccentric punctuation, their vaguenesses, their distracting metaphors and allusions embodying the difficulties of straightforward narrative. And the final hint that the "man of spirit" encounters particular obstacles points to Tristram's emotional ambiguity about this matter as about all others. In a bit of doggerel, Sterne confessed, with comparable ambiguity, to the incorrigible deviousness of his own mind:

For to this day, when with much pain, I try to think strait on, and clever, I sidle out again, and strike Into the beautiful oblique.

That is not form'd, like the designing
Of the peristaltick motion;
Vermicular; twisting and twining;
Going to work
Just like a bottle-skrew upon a cork.²²

Unlike Gibbon, with his need to discover the straight line beneath the apparent confusions of personal history, Sterne, in his own voice as well as Tristram's, insists on the inaccuracy—while longing for the ease—of the direct. And he implies through his metaphors of peristalsis and corkscrew his belief in the necessity and value of the indirect, the "beautiful oblique." Not even a cabbage planter, Tristram points out, can hope to maintain his furrows if a girl passes by (p. 539). His imagination, interfering with his straightforward intent, thus demonstrates the power of fancy to dominate reality. But reality can also interfere with fancy: Corporal Trim can never tell the story of the King of Bohemia with his seven castles, mainly because of other people. Tristram claims to tell only a fraction of his story, and when he diagrams the tale as he has told it he discovers a series of fantastic

shapes, approaching, he claims, the straight line but not really approaching very near. Straight lines may represent a theoretical ideal for history, but formal elaboration conveys more meaning, however obscure its precise significance.

In his excursions on this subject, too, Tristram describes universal obstacles for writers of narrative: the falsity of any conceivable form, the compulsion to avoid misleading order, the necessity to find a way of proceeding, even knowing the wrongness of all ways. His struggles with time—the effort to render time as a psychic component of experience, to make the time of narrative correspond to that of real happening, and to suggest the felt overlappings of time present and past—epitomize his futile endeavor to make history bear some real equivalence to fact. Selected truths, he knows, are in some sense false; straight lines are false—but so are crooked ones; experience must always be more complex than its records. Gibbon confronted some of these facts without defining them; all serious tellers of stories must confront them. Most simply accept at last the necessary inadequacy of narrative; what else, after all, can they do? Tristram himself does nothing more—except to comment on what he is doing.

Not only the proper form but the sources of history constitute a problem for the would-be historian. The self, subject and origin of personal records, generates the solipsism that endangers Tristram in his writing as in his life. Perhaps the words on which he relies have only private meanings. He knows that the shape of his story, personal to the point of idiosyncrasy, may prove incomprehensible to others; he can only conclude, toward the very end of his narrative, that the world must "let people tell their stories their own way" (p. 623), at whatever cost of incoherence and confusion-even if chapter XVIII unaccountably follows Chapter XXV. In Volume IV, where he chooses to omit Chapter XXIV altogether, Tristram rationalizes his procedure: "For my own part, I am but just set up in the business, so know little about it—but, in my opinion, to write a book is for all the world like humming a song—be but in tune with yourself, madam, 'tis no matter how high or low you take it" (p. 315). To be in tune with yourself may or may not imply self-knowledge; it certainly implies a standard of integrity that honors personality as the principle of art.

But such a standard only diminishes the feasibility of satisfactory history, since personality remains elusive even to its possessor. In a crucial passage of Book IX, Tristram half-mockingly describes a pro-

cess of self-investigation initially focused on the difficulty of writing an adequate digression. He does not know, he explains, how to invoke the proper creative powers. Fancy? Wit? Pleasantry? None will come the faster for calling. He resolves the problem by dressing himself elegantly—an infallible remedy, since "the soul and body are joint-sharers in every thing they get: A man cannot dress but his ideas get cloath'd at the same time; and if he dresses like a gentleman, every one of them stands presented to his imagination, genteelized along with him—so that he has nothing to do, but take his pen, and write like himself" (pp. 614-617).

The view of men as beings "cloathed with bodies, and governed by our imaginations" (p. 361) implies the immense difficulty of the historian's situation, historians being merely human. Men so clothed, so governed, live with incessant self-contradiction. At best they may achieve some temporary congruence, dressing their bodies in the hope of giving their ideas acceptable form, creating for themselves a style. A man can write only by adopting a style, though he recognizes its necessary falseness. Tristram as historian seeks the form that will express his self, the content that will constitute authentic history. He seeks, like Gibbon, a way of telling the truth, only to find truth as difficult to discover as to tell—partly because the self describing merges with the self described, both evading dependable perception.

All roads, in investigating *Tristram Shandy*, lead back to the protagonist's selfhood, finally identical in fictive author and fictive subject. Tristram calls attention to the intimate relation in his narrative between self and story, demanding, in an arbitrary shift of scene, that the reader leave behind the people and situations that have come to interest him in favor of something new; he concludes, "Let us leave, if possible, *myself*:—But 'tis impossible,—I must go along with you to the end of the work" (p. 442). Although he may temporarily ignore himself as the subject of the narrative, concentrating on other men's stories, he inevitably remains the subject, if only because his consciousness creates and records. There is no way for him not to report his "life and opinions": whatever he sets down constitutes a report.

Tristram, to whom the shifting nature of reality becomes increasingly apparent, believes finally in the integrity if not the knowability of his shifting self. Although he writes with awareness of his contemporaries' debates about identity, he affirms, even while questioning,

identity's reality. "Every man's wit," Walter Shandy maintains, "must come from every man's own soul,—and no other body's" (p. 147). He finds this proposition as difficult to prove and to use as his other dicta, yet it contains a truth—not merely a truism—that the entire novel supports. For a man to discover the wit that belongs uniquely to him, learning to tell his story in his own way, comprises a major achievement, with moral as well as psychological and aesthetic significance.

Yorick's sermon, early in the novel (pp. 125-40), provides moral underpinning for the novel's action, although it may appear to be only one more digression.²³ The sermon's nominal concern with conscience enlarges into a discussion of the difficulty, and the absolute moral necessity, of self-knowledge. A man must surely know, the preacher begins, the true state of his conscience: "If a man thinks at all, he cannot well be a stranger to the true state of this account;—he must be privy to his own thoughts and desires;—he must remember his past pursuits, and know certainly the true springs and motives which, in general, have governed the actions of his life . . . In other matters we may be deceived by false appearances . . . But here the mind has all the evidence and facts within herself; -is conscious of the web she has wove; -knows its texture and fineness, and the exact share which every passion has had in working upon the several designs which virtue or vice has plann'd before her" (pp. 125-6). The reader's self-awareness may suggest that self-examination will not necessarily prove so simple. At any rate, the preacher's language stresses the undependability of memory, the difficulty of any certain knowledge, the ease with which one can be deceived, and the intricacy of the web woven within the mind. Far from relying only on such implication, Sterne next details at impressive length some specific obstacles to self-knowledge: habits of sin, excessive self-love that biases the judgment, "little interests below" that "rise up and perplex the faculties of our upper regions," and the distortions of "favour and affection," of wit, of self-interest, of passion (p. 127). After several instances of how men turn their consciences to their own advantage, he observes, "If any man . . . thinks it impossible for a man to be such a bubble to himself,—I must refer him a moment to his own reflections, and will then venture to trust my appeal with his own heart" (p. 131). The sermon then argues that religion must buttress morality and morality religion, since man needs both internal and external principles of right to keep him from stray-

ing. "Conscience is not a law" (p. 140); God and reason make the law, but conscience—as opposed to passion—enables man to keep it.

Sterne's implied description of the human mind suggests the inevitability of internal conflict, passion warring with reason, conscience with impulse, the mind always striving to justify its base desires. Appealing directly and indirectly to the reader's sense of self, Sterne through Yorick's normative utterance claims more openly than he can through eccentric Tristram the universal applicability of this description of the psyche. One must never trust what presents itself as reason or conscience, because passion can subvert both. Higher and lower impulses battle continually. Where one can accept external sanctions, like those of Christianity, he finds help, but the sanctions themselves can mislead—the Inquisition being, Sterne points out, a "Christian" institution. Nonetheless, Christianity aids the divided man toward moral security.

But where can he find psychological security? Such extension of the questions implied by Yorick's sermon seems everywhere implicit in *Tristram Shandy*, where men bubble themselves, suffer the distortions of self-interest and passion, and reveal their inadequate self-awareness even while congratulating themselves on their virtue. Not only to be good but to be happy, one must find the proper balance of reason and passion, somehow untangling the web the mind weaves. Only thus can he discover right ways of thinking as well as of acting and modes of understanding that lead to goodness, happiness . . . and to the writing of books.

Tristram Shandy parodies two genres as well as imitates an action. As a novel that is not quite a novel and a travesty of autobiography, it raises profound questions about the nature and meaning of form.

As a novel, *Tristram* denies what it affirms and affirms what it denies. Explicitly declaring the falsity of form, the illusoriness of meaning, and the precariousness of language, it simultaneously demonstrates the necessities of form and meaning and the necessities of language as the instrument for achieving both. Although it provides no plot and no moral, it offers a unified and unifying action in the multifarious efforts of its characters to achieve control, and that action has moral import. Its determined trivialization of large concerns like destiny and death reverses the customary technique of eighteenth-

century novels, but partly for ends similar to theirs. Domesticating the grand, like declaring the importance of the small (a maidservant's encounter in the summerhouse in *Pamela* or Tom Jones's meal at an inn), suggests the paramount significance of individual human experience and of what the individual makes of his experience. *Tristram Shandy* as anti-novel demonstrates the vitality of the novel and indicates some directions the genre would later pursue.

Its relation to genuine autobiography involves yet more perplexing problems. In the first place, Tristram Shandy shares with Laurence Sterne much, both of experience and character—a point susceptible of endless documentation. Critics, indeed, have found themselves confused about which was which. When Sterne's scholarly biographer wishes to report the novelist's first trip to Paris, he quotes, without apology or qualification, from Tristram Shandy, as if the novel provided dependable testimony of the author's experience.²⁴ Sterne's letters frequently sound as though they had been written by Tristram; the values they articulate and the language they use echo or foretell the novel. Thus a characteristic letter refers to "me inconsiderate Soul that I am, who never yet knew what it was to speak or write one premeditated word."25 Again, Sterne affirms his intention to "write as long as I live, 'tis, in fact, my hobby-horse." One feels tempted to use such statements as evidence about Tristram, and, conversely, to use Tristram's to illuminate Sterne.

But no matter how close the identification between author and character, *Tristram Shandy* is known to be a fiction—unlike Gibbon's memoirs, which despite their obvious authorial manipulation of events are read with the expectation that they record fact. The contrasts of tone, style, form, and psychological and philosophic orientation between the two documents are vast. Does the difference in their genres really matter? It can be argued that all fiction (and poetry and philosophy and painting) ultimately constitutes autobiography, the artist inventing, whatever the purported aim of his creation, only a series of metaphors for the self.²⁷ Conversely, one can maintain that all autobiography is fiction, the imposition of form and the discovery of meaning automatically converting life into its imitation.²⁸

Sterne writes in a letter, "These strokes in the Dark, with the many Kicks, Cuffs & Bastinadoes I openly get on all sides of me, are beginning to make me sick of this foolish humour of mine of sallying forth into this wide & wicked world to redress wrongs, &c. of w^{ch} I shall

repent as sorely as ever Sancha Panca did of his in following his evil genius of a Don Quixote thro thick & thin."29 Tristram complains of how the critics have slashed his jerkin: "pell mell, helter skelter, ding dong, cut and thrust, back stroke and fore stroke, side way and long way, have they been trimming it for me . . . You Messrs. the monthly Reviewers!—how could you cut and slash my jerkin as you did? how did you know, but you would cut my lining too?" (p. 162). We recognize a single sensibility. Tristram's conviction of persecution resembles his creator's, as does his use of physical analogues for psychic suffering, and of course Tristram's complaint literally refers to the same events as Sterne's. But, invited by the fact of fiction to bring a different perspective to bear on Tristram from that we apply to a living man, we judge the fictional figure by his fictional context. Depicting a group of people conspicuously lacking in serious self-knowledge, the novel Tristram inhabits suggests appropriate standards for judging its characters. We understand Tristram's inadequacies as he understands his father's and his uncle's; we feel that we perceive more than the characters can.

If a true autobiographer fails in self-knowledge, we may deduce his failure from our own knowledge of real people in the real world; we may judge him and his book morally inadequate; we may conclude that the book is better than the man and the writer's personal insufficiencies transcended through his art. Our responses to a fictional autobiographer have extra dimensions. We do not judge Tristram as we judge our acquaintances nor can we yield entirely to his assessment of himself. Responding to him first as a fictional creation, we admire the vitality with which he has been imagined. Evaluating him as an actor in his own drama, we see through two sets of spectacles: Tristram's and Sterne's. Tristram's announced purpose of relating his life and opinions forms his desperate attempts to tell a story. His desperation justifies him to himself; he invites sympathy for his frustration in life and in literary endeavor, and, converting disaster to comedy, he invites admiration for his exuberant play with his own frustration. We, the readers, respond as we are invited to with sympathy and admiration; similarly, reading Gibbon on Gibbon, we feel the admiration we are requested to feel. But Sterne's purposes do not altogether coincide with Tristram's. The novelist claims an intent to "redress wrongs" of the "wide & wicked world," an intent of wider scope than any Tristram offers. 30 His characters and their histories exist to reinforce his

point; he shapes his novel more purposefully than Tristram could claim to shape anything. Admiring and loving Tristram's exuberance, we are also led, by Sterne's ways of placing him, to recognize his limitations more specifically than he can. The novel's other characters help: Uncle Toby and Walter Shandy, revealing how a man protects himself against the real by clinging to his hobbyhorse, clarify the madness Tristram shares. If Sterne, by his own confession, shares it too, he yet has an imagination large enough to contain his characters. The fact that Tristram inhabits a fiction demands that we look at him in a special way; the complexity of reading such fictions derives partly from the tension between the character's way of seeing and the author's implied vision. Tristram values his own comic mask and claims it as essential truth. Sterne allows the possibility that the mask is partly false, defending Tristram from awareness of his own intense hostility (toward the reader, toward women, toward his father, toward all who survive when he must die) and from full recognition of his self-limitation.

We may surmise, finally, that the hostility and the self-limitation belong to Sterne as well as to Tristram—returning, thus, to an identification of author with character. But the circuit that precedes the return makes a difference. Even if Sterne is only talking about himself after all, his deliberate creation of a fiction has released the energies of indirection. His letters, exuberant though they too are, cannot achieve the complexities of Tristram Shandy. Fictional worlds illuminate the real world; fictional characters acquire meaning partly because they tell us something about real people. The unimaginable confusions of Tristram's existence bear recognizable relation to the confusions of our own. Fiction brings us round again to fact, with our perceptions heightened; it testifies to the writer's existence but also to possibilities beyond the subjective.

But autobiography too declares more than selfhood; the effective autobiography, like the effective novel, gives the reader more than he would expect. Gibbon and Sterne alike, I have argued, rely on formal literary tensions for effect. The ultimate manifestation of that tension involves manipulation of the reader's expectation. The various composite versions of Gibbon's autobiography, although they contain the revelations of the historian's personal pain, do not discuss the struggle of the memoir's making. The separate documents of his autobiography's evolution, on the other hand, insist on the laborious process

through which a man discovers the meaning of the story he has to tell. Gibbon's six memoirs, dramatizing the extent to which an author must always create what he records, thus refute the assumption that autobiographies simply record what exists.

To play with his reader's expectations is part of Sterne's literary program, not an accident of interrupted composition. The author constantly calls attention to the tension between what the reader expects and what he is given. Gibbon shows himself discovering the meaning of his story; Sterne shows a storyteller unable to comprehend the meaning of his. With all the freedom to invent, the novelist, claiming to imitate life, insists that life offers no coherent pattern to imitate. Gibbon denies his reader the traditional satisfaction of believing in the autobiographer's plain sincerity; Sterne refuses him the luxury of recognizing the satisfying order of fiction. Both reveal unexpected and rather alarming flexibilities of genre.

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Dynamics of Fear: Fanny Burney

As novelist and as writer about herself, Fanny Burney takes a position in every respect opposed to Laurence Sterne. Committed to propriety as he to its opposite, apparently unaware of the formal possibilities or implications of her conventional plots, feeling that the most important question about novels concerned their moral influence, she reminds the reader that Tristram Shandy's conviction of the impossibilities of art does not represent the only conceivable viewpoint. The moral and psychological organization of her fiction and her diaries insists on the order of life itself. Keeping an intermittent record of herself for more than seventy years, she reveals not the chaos of experience but the reiteration of pattern. The rational structure of her prose helps her to assert the significant structure of her life.

A woman's vision? It seems important to say so. Tristram Shandy is organized to reveal the pervasiveness of male fear, demonstrating in form and in substance how the terror of impotence spreads through every endeavor. The entire mass of Fanny Burney's writing forms itself as centrally in relation to female fear—not of the absence of power but of failure of goodness and consequent loss of love. Tristram's fears reduce his life to disorder; Miss Burney's (and her heroines') have ordering force, defending against chaotic possibility.

Unique in her century in having left to posterity both a group of novels and the rich private record of voluminous letters and diaries, Miss Burney also provides through her published work a basis for

Fanny Burney

investigating the relationship between avowedly autobiographical and purportedly fictional accounts of experience. Previous critics have perceived this as a rather simple issue in her writing. Thus Ernest Baker writes: "Fanny Burney's importance in the history of the novel is . . . that she came so near to what may be called a direct transcript of life . . . There is only, as it were, a narrow and vanishing margin between literature and life. Scores of pages in her diaries may be put side by side with pages from her novels to illustrate this." Edwine Montague and Louis L. Martz comment about Evelina: "People who enjoy the Diary enjoy finding Fanny Burney in the novel too; and so the book becomes a kind of appendix to the Diary." But neither novels nor diaries in fact offer anything like a "direct transcript." Both demonstrate the shaping of experience by a special sensibility, the artistry of pattern almost as manifest in letters and journals as in fiction. The pattern of Fanny Burney's life as she perceives and interprets it resembles the structures that shape her fictions, both converting psychological defense into literary tactics.

The two volumes of Fanny Burney's early diary, the six volumes first edited by her niece Charlotte Barrett, and the four volumes that have thus far emerged under Joyce Hemlow's editorship comprise an enormous mass of disparate material.3 They record public as well as private events: Miss Burney lived at Court for five years as Second Keeper of the Robes to Queen Charlotte; her subsequent marriage to a French emigré involved her at least peripherally in post-Revolution French politics. They demonstrate the literary and personal virtues with which their author has always been credited: her sharp ear for speech rhythms, her eye for social detail, her sensitivity to manners as an index of moral quality, her devotion to her family, and her extreme propriety. The interpretative structure that forms her account of her life's happenings depends upon strategies of concealment. The idea of virtue provided Fanny Burney—as it has many women—a first line of defense. Goodness has always been a source of female force, a guard against enemies without and within. Miss Burney, hiding behind her impeccable morality, protects her inner life.

Two episodes reported at different times of her life exemplify Fanny Burney's characteristic moral stance. Writing of her beloved husband's death, which took place in 1819 (she was sixty-seven years old), she dwells in retrospect on her inner conflict over whether she would invite the priest to return after a single visit to the dying man's

bedside. (D'Arblay, bred a Catholic, had preserved only a nominal allegiance to his church during his English residence. His wife, motivated by a sense of fitness, called a priest to administer the last rites.) She summarizes the dimensions of her psychic struggle: "The fear of doing wrong has been always the leading principle of my internal guidance."4 (In this instance, she adds, she finds herself "overpowered" by her inability to decide what was right and consequently unable to resolve on any course of action at all.) More than thirty years before, while she was still at Court, she had talked with the Reverend Charles de Guiffardière (always referred to in her journal as "Mr. Turbulent") about good conduct. He inquires whether she has ever done something she repents. Sometimes, she replies, but not often, "for it is not very often that I have done anything." What has saved her from misbehavior? Mr. Turbulent suggests prejudice, education, and accident. Miss Burney agrees, but adds fear. "I run no risks that I can see —I run—but it is always away from all danger that I perceive." Surely, Mr. Turbulent exclaims, such is not the "rule of right." Once more his interlocutor agrees, concluding the discussion, rather smugly, "I must be content that it is certainly not the rule of wrong" (Jan. 1788; III, 392).

Both these encounters, in addition to their psychological interest, suggest the literary possibilities of Miss Burney's principle of self-interpretation, an essentially dramatic view of her experience because it involves imagining goodness as precariously won and preserved and constantly to be defended, rather than as an achieved state of being. The active consciousness of danger that Fanny Burney reports emphasizes the potential drama within her quiet life, despite the fact that, as she confesses, she actually does little. Indeed, her refrainings themselves partake of her drama.

Reading the mass of the journals, one gradually realizes the energy of the decorous woman's verbal self-presentation, structured by her determination to be perceived as good, and her fear of negative judgment. The action of Fanny Burney's vast collections of journals and letters, like that of most women's writing in her century, derives from her attempt to defend—not to discover, define, or assert—the self. Both her choices and her ways of describing them testify to her productive and self-protective solution to unescapable problems of women's existence. That solution provides psychic space for her imagina-

Fanny Burney

tive life, thus making her literary career possible, and also shapes the operations of her imagination.

The relation between Fanny Burney's loudly proclaimed concern with virtue and her impulse to write was an early theme of her diaries. Virtue and writing, it seemed in her youth, made utterly opposed demands. At the age of fifteen, she consigned to a bonfire all her literary production to date. Almost fifty years later, she explained why. "So early was I impressed myself with ideas that fastened degradation to this class of composition [fiction], that at the age of adolescence, I struggled against the propensity which, even in childhood, even from the moment I could hold a pen, had impelled me into its toils; and on my fifteenth birth-day, I made so resolute a conquest over an inclination at which I blushed, and that I had always kept secret, that I committed to the flames whatever, up to that moment, I had committed to paper." 5 She sounds as though she is reporting a struggle against sexual sin ("propensity," "its toils," "an inclination at which I blushed," "secret") and the language of battle in which she records her suppression echoes the vocabulary in which her fiction relates her heroines' conflicts between reason and passion ("struggled against," "so resolute a conquest"). Writing fiction seemed to her, at the beginning, a fatal self-indulgence and writing fact, only slightly less menacing. Her friend Miss Young warns her that keeping a journal "is the most dangerous employment young persons can have—that it makes them often record things which ought not to be recorded, but instantly forgot."6 A few pages earlier (I, 14), the diarist has inadvertently exposed two other hazards of her literary occupation: keeping a diary encourages a hunger for fresh experience, and it fosters undue reflectiveness about the experience one has. Miss Burney feels apologetic about her literary activity; she spends the morning on needlework, thus proving herself a good little woman, in order to justify an afternoon of reading and writing. But although she has burned her youthful novel, she continues her journalizing: a necessity of her psychic life.

In a letter to her "Daddy" Crisp, one of the older men who played important roles in her life partly as guardians of morality, Fanny, granting the "general superiority" of men to women, concludes that women's weakness stems from defects of head rather than heart (1774; I, 272). Women, therefore, must trust their emotions: hence, presumably, Fanny Burney's own adherence to fear as a sufficient guide to

conduct. Yet they must also recognize the danger of their feelings. "Talking of happiness and misery, sensibility and a total want of feeling, my mama [i.e., her stepmother] said, turning to me, 'Here's a girl will never be happy! Never while she lives!—for she possesses perhaps as feeling a heart as ever girl had!" "7 To write a novel, Fanny believes as a girl, is to venture into dangerous realms of feeling and fantasy. To write a journal, on the other hand, may provide a way to deal with feelings as well as to express them. In the Early Diary, written for "nobody" (this strategy itself a youthful instance of the writer's defensive self-deprecation), we see the author struggling with moral and emotional dilemmas, using language to construct her defenses. The later journals, composed for various members of her family, show the process at a more advanced stage: writing now a means of consolidating and proclaiming already established defense systems. By the end of the Early Diary, Fanny Burney has rejected her first suitor, declaring her intent to live single. No further suitor presented himself, as far as we are told, until the man she accepted. She had defined clear channels for her emotional life.

Fear provided partial solutions for the crucial problem of a woman's relations with others. Twenty-one-year old Fanny mentally questions the conduct of Miss Bowdler, who "lives exactly as she pleases"; she concludes her account, "I can by no means approve so great a contempt of public opinion" (*Early Diary*, I, 221). Two years earlier, Fanny had encountered another young woman, a Miss Allen, who seemed to her possibly "too sincere: she pays too little regard to the world." The observer cannot decide what to think of such a phenomenon. She disapproves of the woman's ready disdain for "harmless folly," but she recognizes how "infinitely tiresome" such folly can seem and applauds the honesty of openly acknowledging the fact (I, 128).

These two sets of observations sketch the issues of social relations as Fanny Burney understood them. Suffering from the impingement of conventional pressures on individual lives, she yearned for freedom. Yet convention, she understood, guarded feelings. The individual who boldly expressed her personal preferences (like Miss Bowdler's for men) or distastes (like Miss Allen's intolerance for folly) might hurt or mislead others. Despite Miss Burney's half-articulated desire to control her own destiny, she could not finally approve "contempt for public opinion." Manners and morals—as her four novels were to tes-

Fanny Burney

tify—reflected one another, in her conviction; the minutiae of socially acceptable conduct provided orthodox means for expressing consideration and concern for others. Fear of offending supplied a more potent principle of action than distaste for being offended.

As Fanny Burney discovered more and more emphatically the uses of fear as a principle of guidance in her life, she found also the way to tell her own story and came to understand the nature of the story she was constructing. "The act of journalizing," a theorist of autobiography writes, "intensifies the conflict in any autobiographer between life and pattern, movement and stasis, identification and definition, world and self."8 The observation applies hardly at all to Miss Burney as journalizer. Writing down her experience, she seems, on the contrary, to resolve potential conflicts between life and pattern and world and self. Discovering the structures of her life, she finds out how to feel about the world. As a result she contradicts also, essentially if not technically, the common generalization that, however highly wrought its individual entries, a "diary or journal as a complete work will never reflect the conscious shaping of a whole life for one informing purpose."9 One can speculate about how conscious the diarist's structuring could have been, but the sense of an informing purpose shaping her existence in the living and in the recording becomes increasingly strong. That purpose—to defend the freedom of the self by asserting fear of wrongdoing and commitment to virtue—involved familial, social, and literary relations, dictated action and restraint, and resolved as well as created conflict.

Often, particularly in Miss Burney's adolescence, the desire for freedom appeared to clash with the need to avoid offending. The conflict between the two dominates her *Early Diaries*.

O! how I hate this vile custom which obliges us to make slaves of ourselves!—to sell the most precious property we boast, our time;—and to sacrifice it to every prattling impertinent who chooses to demand it!—Yet those who shall pretend to defy this irksome confinement of our happiness, must stand accused of incivility,—breach of manners—love of originality,—and . . . what not. But, nevertheless . . . they who will nobly dare to be above submitting to chains their reason disapproves, them shall I always honour—if that will be of any service to them! For why should we not be permitted to be masters of our time?—Why may we not venture to love, and to dislike—and why, if we do, may we not give to those we love the richest jewel we own, our time? (1769; I, 49)

Miss Burney's sequences of reflection, in those early years, repeatedly duplicate the structure of this passage. The strong impulse to reject custom's slavery wavers in the face of anticipated charges of incivility. When the impulse returns to dominance, it has changed form: the author no longer imagines defying convention herself, only honoring those brave enough to do so, with an edge of self-contempt for her own ineffectuality. She can conclude her consideration only in unanswerable questions that express her resentment of the course of conformity she has chosen. Similarly, we find her meditating on love (I, 9-10), confessing that she wishes "truly, really, and greatly . . . to be *in love*" and committed to a feeling devoid of rational justification, self-sufficient and satisfying. But soon she condemns such a longing as "foolish and ill-judged!" explaining that she does not really know what she says, she cannot mean it. Feeling leads in opposite directions.

When Mr. Barlow proposes to Fanny, that point becomes painfully apparent. She has long associated marriage with lack of freedom. The prospect of her own marriage reduces her to panic. Manifestly admirable though Thomas Barlow is, her heart tells her that she cannot unite herself with him. Her revered father and her "Daddy" Crisp argue his case; her deep desire always to comply with their wishes wars with her disinclination to marry. She thinks about "the duty of a wife": how hard it must be, "practised without high esteem!" Her reluctance, it seems, is sexual. But she continues, "And I am too spoilt by such men as my father and Mr. Crisp to content myself with a character merely inoffensive" (II, 51). She prefers a father to a husband. Her father, opposing male reason to female emotion, urges serious consideration of Barlow's suit. Fanny, realizing that reason offers her no support, creates a lavish display of emotion, unable to eat, constantly weeping, feeling more misery than ever before "except when a child, upon the loss of my own beloved mother, and ever revered and most dear grandmother!" (II, 69). The prospect of marriage threatens another terrible loss: that of her father and her established dependencies. Unable to face it, she opposes her father's professed wishes, retains her single state, and immediately (twenty-three years old now) begins thinking that no one will ever love her.

In this conflict as in the other internal struggles recorded in the diary of the pre-Evelina years, one feels an adolescent uncertainty of identity but little uncertainty of action. Miss Burney possesses already a strong impulse to reject: to push away impropriety and to forestall

Fanny Burney

impingement. The force of public opinion has for her the status of a concrete reality with high potential for personal damage. By avoiding impropriety, she can avoid notice and consequently threat. She wants also to preserve the securities of her protected role as daughter. The issues of her life are already defined. How can a woman evade attention, yet assert her self? How can she protect that self? How can she avoid wrongdoing without resigning herself to total passivity? What can she say without dangerous exposure?

Writing Evelina in secrecy and publishing it anonymously, she allowed herself some self-exposing "saying." Her resultant sense of danger and fear dominates her journal and published letters for years after the book's publication. "All that I can say for myself is," she summarizes, "that I have always feared discovery, always sought concealment, and always known that no success should counter-balance the publishing my name" (Diary and Letters, I, 166). She has supported this statement in advance with abundant instances of a terror of discovery that seems, like her early guilt about writing, to bear a distinctly sexual aspect. When Mrs. Thrale accuses her of "an over-delicacy that may make you unhappy all your life," she explains that she had thought herself "as safe" with the publisher Lowndes as when her manuscript lay in her own bureau drawer. To be "known as a scribbler" threatens her impregnability (I, 97). She "trembles" and worries about her possible "downfall" as a writer (I, 126-7). "I would a thousand times rather forfeit my character as a writer," she explains, "than risk ridicule or censure as a female" (I, 162). At the age of sixty-two, looking back over a successful career, she remarks that "never yet had the moment arrived in which to be marked had not been embarrassing and disconcerting to me, even when most flattering" (VI, 112).

To be marked, discovered, known as a writer, and, therefore, perhaps not a proper female, perhaps a woman unforgivably addicted to self-display: this idea focused Fanny Burney's terror of doing wrong. To make oneself known as a writer invites people to look; to offer one's fantasies for the perusal of others invites violation. For a woman to be looked at or talked of means, at best, loss of dignity, at worst, loss of reputation. Lured into discussion of "learning in woman," Miss Burney confesses her belief that "it has no recommendation of sufficient value to compensate its evil excitement of envy and satire" (IV, 222). When her half sister, Sarah Burney, visits her after her mother's death, Fanny acknowledges her virtues and skills but com-

plains at length about the fact that the young woman (twenty-five years old) wishes her accomplishments recognized. "She has many excellent qualities . . . but she is good enough to make me lament that she is not modest enough to be yet better."¹¹

Loss of modesty amounts to loss of virtue; only by strict decorum can a woman protect herself. From 1786 to 1791, her journal and letters make clear, Miss Burney committed herself absolutely to propriety in her service to Queen Charlotte. Her court experience, as she reports it, emphasizes the degree to which her life was assuming what seems in retrospect the symmetrical development of a carefully worked-out drama. First had come the questioning adolescence, in which social fear triumphed over daring impulse without ever quite extinguishing it; then followed a social pattern paralleled by that of Miss Burney's literary life, in which the writing of a second novel (to be published in secret) succeeded the destruction of the first, which she had felt to be entirely impermissible. Finally came the young adult years in which Fanny Burney struggled with the sense of exposure created by successful authorship. She wrote a comedy but withdrew it from public view at her father's suggestion of possible impropriety. She labored over a second publishable novel of unimpeachable morality, explaining, to the point of tedium, her impeccable purposes, soliciting and accepting frequent advice from all her mentors, as if to lessen the potential burden of notoriety and the conceivable imputation of seeking it. But no amount of self-guarding or protestation could resolve her guilt at self-display. Acceptance of the court position represented an attempt to find solution at the opposite extreme. Sinking herself in a role, giving up writing for publication, governing herself entirely by external expectation, she tried by total self-subordination to eliminate all conflict.12

She never fancied the court position would provide personal pleasure. In accepting it, she wished above all to please her father, although she realized that her new commitment would involve relinquishing indulgence of her vital private affections. Compliance is the theme of her time at court. She comes to love the Queen, and from the start she adores Mrs. Delany, the old lady who introduced her to the royal family and whom she continues to see in her new position. Subordinating herself to such women, she believes herself thus to escape all danger of wrongdoing. But despite her devotion and her eagerness to serve, to please her father, the Queen, and Mrs. Delany, to be good

Fanny Burney

and avoid evil—despite these forces urging her toward contentment, she feels bitter and unending abhorrence of her lot. She suffers from the capricious tyranny of Mrs. Schwellenberg, her immediate superior, to whom the Queen feels so deeply attached that Fanny cannot complain to her. She suffers from deprivation of real human fellowship, from the boredom of repeated ritual, and from the intense physical strain of her position.

To her sister, Mrs. Phillips, she writes, in August 1786, confessing her misery and outlining her proposed solution to it: "If to you alone I show myself in these dark colours, can you blame the plan that I have intentionally been forming—namely, to wean myself from myself—to lessen all my affections—to curb all my wishes—to deaden all my sensations?" (III, 9). To wean, to lessen, to curb, to deaden: a program of deprivation and reduction. A few months later, in her journal, she puts it in more positive terms.

Now, therefore, I took shame to myself, and Resolved to be happy. And my success has shown me how far less chimerical than it appears is such a resolution.

To be patient under . . . disappointments . . . to relinquish, without repining, frequent intercourse with those I love;—to settle myself in my monastery, without one idea of ever quitting it;—to study for the approbation of my lady abbess, and make it a principal source of content, as well as spring of action;—and to associate more cheerily with my surrounding nuns and monks;—these were the articles which were to support my resolution. (16 Jan. 1787; III, 161-2)

Despite the talk of happiness, patience, and cheeriness, she still advocates for herself suppression, submission, and resignation. She knows her absolute dependence on those around her. Struggling to convert it into a fact of positive meaning, she demands of herself something almost equivalent to religious conversion—her metaphor of the monastery suggesting her recognition of exactly this point.

The terms of the conflict between the need for self-assertion and the desire for self-concealment through conformity become more vividly defined during the record of the court years. The conflict itself, in fact, was probably more intense than at any other time of Fanny Burney's life because now her solution could not readily resolve the internal oppositions. Before and after her service to the Queen, Miss Burney used her fears and proprieties as means of guarding her inner life, her

writing life. At Court, on the other hand, she did not write to any purpose, although she began several tragedies in an evident effort to express and contain her inner turmoil. As the imbalance increased between the demands of the world and the needs of the self, the solution was in danger of becoming the problem. Previously the young writer had met both demands simultaneously, strategies of self-concealment providing means of self-assertion. Now the strategy no longer worked. Because the journal has already established its clear vision of the personal possibilites implicit in the life of subordination, it can also sharply convey the experience of something going wrong, possibilities closing off. But it conveys, further, the consequent growth of new certainties.

During these years at Court, with their vivid experience of suppression, Fanny Burney appears to have reflected on the essential experience of women. Her own life—like the lives of her fictional heroines confronted her with severely limited alternatives. What could she do if she left the Queen's service? She could only live with her father, doomed to be his burden unless another man took her off his hands. She could, of course, once more write for publication, but the idea of achieving independence through writing did not yet appear to occur to her. What did occur to her, although perhaps not quite consciously, was that other women in different ways duplicated her fate. She sees around her painful results of arranged marriages and subordinated female lives. In her conversations with "Mr. Turbulent," we learn of her attitudes about women. The Reverend de Guiffardière figures largely in Miss Burney's account of her court years. Apparently happily married, he nevertheless indulges in extravagant flirtation with Miss Burney, his purpose unclear. Deliberately provocative, he challenges her cherished evasions. Thus, when Miss Burney declares her unwillingness to countenance "error" in other women, Mr. Turbulent accuses her of hypocrisy. "This brought me forth. I love not to be attacked for making professions beyond my practice; and I assured him, very seriously, that I had not one voluntary acquaintance, nor one with whom I kept up the smallest intercourse of my own seeking or wilful concurrence, that had any stain in their characters that had ever reached my ears" (III, 116). The dialogues between Mr. Turbulent and Miss Burney dramatize the tensions of "bringing forth" such a woman. She withdraws; he pursues. She shows herself; he triumphs. What she says makes no difference to him, only whether she is willing

Fanny Burney

to say anything at all. Although she prides herself on not engaging in debate, he forces her to participate. Finally she makes the fact of his forcing the source of her victory.

"And pray, Mr. Turbulent, solve me, then, this difficulty: what choice has a poor female with whom she may converse? Must she not, in company as in dancing, take up with those who choose to take up with her?"

He was staggered by this question, and while he wavered how to answer it, I pursued my little advantage—

"No man, Mr. Turbulent, has any cause to be flattered that a woman talks with him, while it is only in reply; for though he may come, go, address or neglect, and do as he will,—she, let her think and wish what she may, must only follow as he leads." (19 Feb., 1787; III, 215)

In dancing, in company, in life, a woman "must only follow." Given the social demand for such subservience, compliance becomes meaningless; behind her expert cooperation, the woman thinks and wishes as she will. True, she cannot act upon her thoughts and wishes. Equally, she cannot be compelled to expose them. Mr. Turbulent is guite naturally "staggered." No matter what he drives Miss Burney to say, she can claim finally to have said it for his sake, not her own. Her thoughts and wishes remain her own-not to be "brought forth," never shown. Beginning to identify her tactics and her need for them as consequences of her sex, she gains force in her modest self-assertions, now able to claim the power of her privacy without justifying it by literary productivity. Such journal sequences as the account of the conversation with Mr. Turbulent have more profound literary merits than their authentic renditions of speech. They reveal a rich imagining of the conventionally disguised self. Miss Burney convinces the reader. just as she convinces Mr. Turbulent, that much lies beneath her compliance. Without revealing her own depths, she evokes their mysterious existence. Her life of emotional deprivation gradually gives her the survivor's strength. Unhappy, she learns to maintain herself; her diaries evoke the drama of her survival and her strengthening.

Miss Burney's elaborate fears, with the avoidances they generate, create for her in her maturity a rather distinct identity, although one which would require formulation in largely negative terms. She identifies herself as a woman in hiding, the product of a feminine discipline of fear, but this identity does not altogether satisfy her. Her youthful

concern with freedom has not vanished. Although she reaps psychic benefits from her flawless conformity, she also pays large costs. Mrs. Schwellenberg insists that she keep the window down on her side of the carriage, to provide air. A sharp wind seriously inflames her eyes. Her father, seeing the consequences of obedience to such authority, orders her to insist that the glass remain raised on subsequent expeditions. "I was truly glad of this permission to rebel, and it has given me an internal hardiness in all similar assaults, that has at least relieved my mind from the terror of giving mortal offence where most I owe implicit obedience, should provocation overpower my capacity of forbearance" (27 Nov., 1787; III, 337). Permission to rebel! Yearning for freedom, Fanny Burney requires that it be given her. She pleads with her father to allow her to abandon court life, which has not only damaged her health but forced her to live "like an orphan—like one who had no natural ties, and must make her way as she could by those that were factitious" (1790; IV, 392). Claiming her entitlement to parental nurturance, her right to a woman's life of feelings, she returns to the original safety of her father's house.

This choice, however, seems not to have been so regressive as it may appear. In some ways it indeed involves a return to the status and the feelings of adolescence. Fanny begins writing again—"merely scribbling what will not be repressed"—thus providing "a delight to my dear Father inexpressibly great."¹³ He hardly cares what she writes; neither, apparently, does she. She makes no attempt to publish anything, still fully convinced of the danger of exposure. At the age of forty she writes, "the panics I have felt upon entering to any strange company, or large party even of intimates, has [sic], at times, been a suffering unspeakably, almost incredibly severe to me."¹⁴ Fear continues to provide the principle not only of her conduct but of her very being.

Such a woman, it seems evident, could hardly hope to marry, to make a positive commitment that would separate her from her beloved father. Yet marry she did, uniting herself with a man of different culture and religion, a man capable of providing no economic security, and most startling of all, one whom her father thought an inappropriate match. Her father did not attend her wedding. The psychic process that made it possible involved the rationalization of old patterns into new forms. As feeling urged her in unfamiliar directions, she discovered how the fear of wrongdoing could justify satisfying her

Fanny Burney

desires. M. D'Arblay's position as persecuted victim of political injustice made it seem wrong to cause him further unhappiness by refusing to gratify him. Moreover, the Frenchman, it turned out, could assume a position in Miss Burney's life morally comparable to that of Mrs. Delany and Queen Charlotte. If they had functioned for her as substitute grandmother and mother (she suggests these terms herself), M. D'Arblay could take the moral stance of father—that posture characteristic of all Fanny Burney's novelistic heroes, beginning with Evelina's Lord Orville. In early April 1793, Fanny writes to her sister: "His nobleness of character—his sweetness of disposition—his Honour, Truth, integrity—with so much of softness, delicacy, & tender humanity—except my beloved Father & Mr. Lock, I have never seen such a man in this world, though I have drawn such in my Imagination." The man of her dreams, in short, must be a moral paragon. She has no doubt of her suitor's power to make her happy; she only questions her own reciprocal capacity.15 The next month, he rebukes her for failing to write her sister frequently enough. "I own I had an odd feel at the sort of authority that might seem implied in the reproof. But this noble Creature will spare no one & no thing that he holds wrong. I vindicated myself . . . He heard my justification with a look of serious attention that made me internally smile & look forward—for it said, 'I MUST ALWAYS FULLY understand that you do RIGHT.—' 'Tis well I have no intention to do otherwise!—Oh my Susan! if it should, indeed, be my lot to fall into the hands of one so scrupulous in integrity, how thankfully shall I hail my Fate!"16 Her rhapsodic tone, inspired by his rigorous demands on her, sounds perfectly genuine, as does her formulation of marriage as a commitment requiring only passive acceptance. Because M. D'Arblay assumes the position of moral mentor, she can avoid wrongdoing by marrying him, for she is both helping a needy man (her pension from the Queen supported them both) and submitting to the guidance of one whom she considers her moral superior. Her union with him marks the climax of her story. Reporting it, she emphasizes the degree to which it confirms her identity, while enlarging her sense of possibility.

"Can you conceive any thing equal to my surprise," one of her sisters wrote to another, "at hearing our vestal sister had ventured on that stormy sea of matrimony." Fanny explains that she married in search of happiness, which for her must derive from "Domestic comfort & social affection." Moreover, "M. d'Arblay has a taste for litera-

ture, & a passion for reading & writing as marked as my own; this is a simpathy to rob retirement of all superfluous leisure, & ensure to us both occupation constantly edifying or entertaining. He has seen so much of life, & has suffered so severely from its disappointments, that retreat, with a chosen Companion, is become his final desire." Thus she fantasizes an ideal situation (an ideal, incidentally, which she very nearly achieved): retreat from the world and final commitment to the life of avoidance with a husband unable to find employment in England; a life of the affections as well, that existence of feeling and emotional security for which she had yearned; pseudo-parental permission to indulge her passion for reading and writing at the side of a man who shared and condoned it.

Mme. D'Arblay knows the general astonishment at her marriage and professes that her own amazement exceeds that of "all my Friends united."19 From the new safety of matrimony she asserts a distinct and positive sense of self. Despite, or perhaps because of, her long training and eager participation in the rituals of female compliance, she has developed a "specialness" of character and taste that any conceivable husband must conform to rather than hope to change. Only with such a man would the hazard of marriage diminish, its promise expand, and the likelihood of happiness seem greater than that in a state of such autonomy as a single woman could hope to achieve. In fact autonomy, for Fanny Burney, felt less desirable than sympathy. Liberty of feeling and expression would be infinitely less dangerous if someone shared her feelings and approved her expression. Long accustomed to following external dictates, she could best discover her own will through another. Thus, writing to Mrs. Waddington about her pregnancy, she reveals her physical terror of childbirth and comments, "My Partner, however, who daily encreases the debt I owe him of my life's happiness, rejoices—& I must be a wretch of ingratitude & insensibility to regret whatever he can wish."20 Still formulating her responsibilities in terms of what she must not do, she attributes the wish for parenthood to her husband alone and gains moral strength for her ordeal by interpreting it as something done for the sake of another.

Through the "Social Simpathy" she found with D'Arblay, the writer once more could write for the public, her sense of the potential indecency of such display counteracted by her conviction that her writing, too, served the interests of others, helping to support her husband and son. "I had previously determined," she observes, "when I changed

my state, to set aside all my innate & original abhorrences, & regard & use as resources MYSELF, what had always been considered as such by others."²¹ Others had long valued the products of her fantasy. Now she could value them herself, as the source of economic security, and she expresses openly her desire to drive the best possible bargain for her work. No longer wrongdoing to be avoided and less vividly an inlet for danger, the writing of novels had become virtuous. It provided a way of articulating her own good principles and of exorcising her dangerous impulses, and provided also means of supporting her family.

The mature identity asserted in the journals depends on a rich acceptance of roles. Mme. D'Arblay conveys herself as wife, mother, and writer. The three roles comfortably interchange and merge, the first two creating a screen for the third. Secure in her understanding of her writing as means to a noble end, she need worry no longer about why she feels compelled to write. Her fears of the world are held at bay by the solidity of her domestic position. She writes charmingly and perceptively of her son's development and expresses with increasing ease and freedom her opinions about the vexed affairs of her extended family, rich in disastrous marriages, unexpected elopements, unmentionable adulteries, all of which Fanny contemplates serenely from her domestic retreat. She survives twelve years of post-revolutionary France with aplomb, occupying herself with her last novel, intended to support her son at Cambridge University. Hostile criticism seems less terrifying than it had earlier appeared. Income matters more than praise or blame.

Yet Fanny Burney never outgrew her woman's dependence on the approval of those she loved. She had been right in her premarital assessment of her husband. His sympathy with her wishes and purposes was almost total. But when, in 1800—she was forty-eight years old—her father disapproved an attempt to produce her comedy, "Love and Fashion," she reveals the continued potency of early conflict. Withdrawing the play, she yet movingly begs her father to allow her the liberty he claims for himself. "Leap the pales of your paddock," she urges him to tell her—"let us pursue our career; and, while you frisk from novel to comedy, I, quitting Music and Prose, will try a race with Poetry and the Stars." (Dr. Burney was writing a long poem about astronomy.) Immediately, guilt ensues: "I am sure my dear father will not infer, from this appeal, I mean to parallel our

work. No one more truly measures her own inferiority, which, with respect to yours, has always been my pride. I only mean to show, that if my muse loves a little variety, she has a hereditary claim to try it" (V, 461). The same emotional ambivalence (here manifest even in sentence structure: is she comparing her inferiority to his inferiority?) controlled much of her life: on the one hand, the longing to "leap the pales," on the other, the inability to do so without parental permission. Her tone indicates resentment of enforced inferiority although she asserts her pride in the inferiority that has constituted a woman's (or a girl's) security. The devious appeal to parental emotion, with the reference to "hereditary claim," possibly recalls to the reader if not the writer that earlier deviousness by which Miss Burney reminded her father that he had caused her to live "like an orphan" at Court. Playing on her father's guilt and revealing her own, she suggests how she has both used and been controlled by fears that originate in the child's dependent condition.

It may appear that I have been telling the story of Fanny Burney's life. In fact I have been summarizing her story of her life as it emerges through the evolving record of the letters and diaries. Only by the diarist's interpretation do we learn that the important aspect of publishing a novel is that people look at you and that her husband's moral impeccability makes her marriage possible. The story of her life, as the journals and letters tell it, dramatizes the freedoms and the restrictions of fear. Its narrative strength derives from its singleness of interpretation. The principles of self-concealment that appear to have controlled Fanny Burney's life control her telling of that life (and are reinforced by that telling), giving to her story, despite the fact that it is composed of disparate small units, integrity of purpose and coherence of form. The unmastered conflict that muddles Mrs. Pilkington's and Mrs. Charke's literary intent, the self-pity and self-importance that mar the proportions of Mrs. Thrale's story here yield to literary and moral clarity. Although such clarity implies the embracing of limitation, it is a principle of power. At least as consciously as her predecessors, Fanny Burney writes of herself specifically as a woman. Her grasp on a woman's resources, however, extends to their literary possibilities.

Virginia Woolf, reflecting on her own keeping of a diary, wrote:

There looms ahead of me the shadow of some kind of form which a diary might attain to. I might in the course of time learn what it is that one can make of this loose, drifting material of life; finding

another use for it than the use I put it to, so much more consciously and scrupulously, in fiction . . . I should like it to resemble some deep old desk, or capacious hold-all, in which one flings a mass of odds and ends without looking them through. I should like to come back, after a year or two, and find that the collection had sorted itself and refined itself and coalesced, as such deposits so mysteriously do, into a mould, transparent enough to reflect the light of our life, and yet steady, tranquil compounds with the aloofness of a work of art.²²

The mysterious process of "sorting" and "coalescing," the tranquillity of a work of art—these descriptions apply also to Fanny Burney's journals, a miscellaneous repository in which dynamism and unity alike derive from the implications of commitment to fear of wrongdoing as an operative principle and as the action of the writer's life and work. Of course, to understand the journals in this way involves ignoring many of their details in an effort to perceive the underlying principle of coherence. But that principle, I would argue (as Virginia Woolf presumably would too), gives to the utterances of diary and letters their fundamental literary strength.

If the collection of Fanny Burney's journals and letters creates the effect of autobiography, a coherent narrative implying an imaginative grasp of experience, her four novels also have aspects of psychic autobiography. One can readily perceive in them versions of the journals' central theme: the discipline and the liberation of a woman's fears of disapproval and of being found wanting—fear, in fact, of the other people who comprise society. But novels, with their capacity to express wish and fantasy as well as reality, allow Fanny Burney to enlarge her communication of her own nature. Her fiction illustrates complex feminine identities of indirection.

Ian Watt, noting that women wrote most novels in the eighteenth century, hints also—in terms more tactful than mine—that most of those novels were bad. In Jane Austen, he suggests, we first encounter an unmistakable example of the fact "that the feminine sensibility was in some ways better equipped to reveal the intricacies of personal relationships and was therefore at a real advantage in the realm of the novel."²³ He does not explain why earlier female writers had proved unable to exploit this advantage. Indeed, the fact—like many facts about literary quality—is profoundly inexplicable. One can describe the aspects of Fanny Burney's novels that make them more moving

and more meaningful than Jane Barker's, and it is possible to demonstrate how Jane Austen excels Fanny Burney. Why is another matter; why reduces one to vaguenesses like talent and genius.

To define the strengths and weaknesses of Fanny Burney's fictional achievement, however, may lead at least to speculation about the reasons for her superiority to her female contemporaries. Her strengths are more far-reaching than has been generally recognized. Evelina has been praised as though it consisted only of a collection of skillful character sketches.24 Joyce Hemlow has demonstrated its affinities to the "courtesy book," as an effort to outline a scheme of acceptable womanly conduct. 25 It has been admired ever since its own time for the accuracy of its social detail and conversation. But it also manifests a high level of psychological insight closely related to the self-knowledge that emerges from even the youthful diaries. Fanny Burney may write better fiction than other women of her era partly because she has come to terms more fully than they with the realities of the female condition. She is therefore "equipped to reveal the intricacies of personal relationships" as they actually exist in the world and is not blinded by wishful fantasy or by anger, although both manifest themselves in her work.

Self-discovery of a woman in hiding constitutes the subject of the novels, as of the journals. Fanny Burney's heroines hide specifically because they are women, driven to concealments in order to maintain their goodness. They do not, except in brief moments, openly resent their fates. Yet the tension suggested by a formulation that asserts the simultaneity of discovery and hiding pervades Miss Burney's fiction. She constructs elaborate happenings to articulate conflict, locate happiness, and apportion blame. Her transformations of life in fiction, while insisting on the essential order of experience, also hint their author's awareness of the psychic costs of such affirmation. Anxiety dominates the Burney novels, despite their happy endings. However minute its pretexts—and often they seem trivial indeed—its weight is real, deeply experienced by the central characters and, to a surprising extent, shared even by readers who can readily dismiss its nominal causes. In fact, the causes lie deep; the heroines suffer profound conflicts.

Evelina, of the four heroines, has the fewest and most trivial real problems. Like Cecilia and Juliet in *The Wanderer* she is in effect an orphan (her father, though alive, has refused to acknowledge her), but

she has a benevolent guardian and devoted friends. A summary of the novel's plot will suggest, though, how profoundly it involves itself with fundamental questions of identity. Evelina is the unacknowledged daughter of an English baronet secretly married to a young woman, half French, who died in childbirth, leaving her infant to the guardianship of a benevolent clergyman until the child's father is willing to admit his marriage as well as his paternity. At the narrative's opening, Evelina, after seventeen years of rural seclusion, goes to visit a friend who soon takes her to London. There she encounters, by chance, her vulgar and disagreeable French grandmother, Mme. Duval, who insists that she associate with equally vulgar English relatives. Evelina, however, feels drawn to the aristocracy. She is sexually attracted to Lord Orville, extravagantly courted by Sir Clement Willoughby. Much of the action concerns her efforts to identify herself with the upper class—her manners are already upper class manners—and to evade her kinship with the bourgeoisie. Finally she claims acknowledgment by her true father, only to face absolute rejection as an impostor, since he believes another young woman to be his daughter. A nurse's confession reveals an earlier baby-switching trick, and the novel ends with Evelina in happy possession of, in effect, three fathers: her paternalistic new husband, Lord Orville; her virtuous guardian, Mr. Villars; and her genuine father, Sir John Belmont. All three confirm her identity of true aristocracy and virtue.

The difficulties the novel nominally concerns itself with, according to its writer's direct assertion, derive mainly from Evelina's social inexperience. Nothing happens except "little incidents," but virtue, feeling, and understanding finally receive their just reward, the heroine's "conspicuous beauty" providing the means to this appropriate end.26 More obviously than stories such as Jane Barker's tale of a merman and his paramour, this tale represents a familiar female fantasy: a potent vision of virtue recognized and rewarded despite its incidental errors—specifically, in this instance, Fanny Burney's own kind of virtue. But the novel has a level of realism lacking in many other fictions by female writers. It concerns itself with a young woman's entrance into a genuinely imagined social world, dominated, like Fanny Burney's own, by forms and manners, and very real in its pressures, cruelties, and arbitrary benignities. "The right line of conduct," Evelina's guardian, Mr. Villars, tells her, "is the same for both sexes" (p. 217). But Mr. Villars lives quite out of the world. Right

though he is in theory, and confirmed in his rightness by the wish fulfillment of the ending, he does not understand the practical problems of a woman's following the right line of conduct. Evelina has to come to terms with the disparity between his ideals (which are also hers) and the way life actually takes place in the world, but she also must avoid relinquishing, or even modifying, the standards that attest her virtue. Like Tom Jones, she must learn prudence.²⁷ But prudence for her, as for Fanny Burney, constitutes mainly avoidance, and she too is perpetually, and increasingly, dominated by fear of wrongdoing.

Direct comments in the novel about the world emphasize its danger, its superficiality and hypocrisy, and its sinister power. The world threatens individual identity. Mr. Villars, living in retirement, fears its effects on Evelina. He also recognizes the world's inescapable power. Only the frivolous wholeheartedly accept worldly values, but no one escapes them. The choices for women consist mainly of options to refuse or to accept rather than possibilities to act. Evelina acts meaningfully and independently once, when—in an improbable and overwritten scene—she snatches the pistols from a suicidal young man. She then faints. "In a moment, strength and courage seemed lent me as by inspiration: I started, and rushing precipitately into the room, just caught his arm, and then, overcome by my own fears, I fell down at his side, breathless and senseless" (p. 182). Even when the woman possesses and displays strength and courage, she understands (or explains) them as given to her from outside, and her own powerful fears counteract her impulse toward action, reducing her to the passivity more characteristic of the female state and more unarguably blameless. Women aspire to the negative condition of blamelessness. Evelina is constantly beset by fears of being thought bold, or rude, or unwomanly. She fears acting. She writes to Mr. Villars, "Unable as I am to act for myself, or to judge what conduct I ought to pursue, how grateful do I feel myself, that I have such a guide and director to counsel and instruct me as yourself!" (p. 160). And, much later (p. 306), she appeals in similar terms to her lover, Lord Orville. The proper line of conduct is not the same for both sexes. Men guide and instruct; women are guided and instructed. Evelina makes quite explicit her desire (which she shares with her creator) to find a lover or husband to fill the same role as father or guardian. She assumes the utter propriety of remaining as much as possible a child: ignorant, innocent, fearful, and irresponsible.

Proving her sagacity, her lover values her for precisely these qualities. Like Evelina's guardian, whom in many respects he resembles, he believes the world is opposed to rationality and values the woman who knows nothing of it. Shortly before he proposes, he summarizes Evelina's character for a group of his fashionable friends, explaining the occasional "strange" elements in her behavior as effects "of inexperience, timidity, and a retiring education," praising her as "informed, sensible, and intelligent," and glorifying "her modest worth, and fearful excellence" (p. 347). Fearfulness has become an index of goodness. Lord Orville recognizes the positive qualities of Evelina's mind, but he praises more the elements of her personality that encourage her to hold back from experience. Strikingly often in all Fanny Burney's novels, the terms of praise applied to women—artless, blameless—emphasize the negative: the refrainings induced by fear.

But Evelina also contains one minor woman character who does not refrain: the redoubtable Mrs. Selwyn. "She is extremely clever; her understanding, indeed, may be called masculine; but, unfortunately, her manners deserve the same epithet; for, in studying to acquire the knowledge of the other sex, she has lost all the softness of her own" (p. 268). No one likes Mrs. Selwyn, and since a woman's fate in the world depends largely on the degree to which she is liked, this fact alone presumably urges negative judgment of a female who feels entitled on the basis of her strong mind to act aggressively in company. She alone, for instance, feels free to remark devastatingly (and accurately) on masculine idiocy in the presence of its perpetrators. Evelina observes that this habit makes enemies; she does not comment on the accuracy of Mrs. Selwyn's judgment. Fanny Burney, disclaiming responsibility for Mrs. Selwyn through her heroine's disapproval, yet allows her to remain a provocative image of female intelligence and force. The novelist thus suggests that she is aware, although she has not yet fully acknowledged it, that Evelina's choices, proper as they are, do not exhaust the tempting possibilities for intelligent women.

Evelina chooses dependency and fear, a choice no less significant for being thrust upon her. It amounts to the declaration of the identity that achieves her social and economic security. The identity she cares about most is given her from without by husband and father. The problem in achieving her woman's identity differs from its male equivalent, from Tom Jones's search for his identity, for example. Her education in society teaches her not to relinquish but to use her innocence

and her fears.²⁸ The discovery of prudence enables her to form new dependency relations. No better solution for women is fully realized in the novel. Yet that disturbing figure, Mrs. Selwyn, who expresses female hostility toward the male without suffering any penalty beyond general dislike, whose mind and money make her sufficiently powerful to resist or endure dislike, suggests an alternative to the dominant fantasy of the woman rewarded for innocence by the dream of scorning the world's judgment while forcing its notice.

But the dominant dream of female withdrawal that preserves individual integrity, protects private feeling, and attracts the perfect lover suggests more clearly than any utterance in her diary the young author's longings and hopes. *Evelina*, like the letters and journals, concentrates on a woman's attempt to preserve and defend herself with the few obvious resources at her disposal. The success of that attempt reaffirms Fanny Burney's personal decisions.

Novels—at least eighteenth-century novels—differ from autobiographies and journals partly in their detailed attention to characters other than the protagonist. Women novelists on the whole had trouble dealing with this aspect of their craft; rarely did they succeed in evoking more than the single female character at the center of their narratives. (In some instances, of course, not even the heroine, paragon rather than recognizable person, was convincingly evoked.) Fanny Burney, on the other hand, seemed to find multiple characterization a vital expressive resource. Through the people she makes Evelina encounter she manages to convey considerable, and rather complicated, hostility. Lord Orville and Mr. Villars, both exemplary males, actually engage little of her attention: they remain wooden presences. But the large cast of distasteful aristocrats, the equally unattractive petty bourgeoisie, sadistic Captain Mirvan, and vulgar but vigorous Mme. Duval—these figures come splendidly to life. Their satiric portrayal enables the writer to express and to justify her vivid antagonisms. Mrs. Selwyn provides a direct mouthpiece for aggressive impulses, but Miss Burney also conveys aggression through her derogatory character sketches and through her repeated invention of actions expressing extreme hostility: Captain Mirvan's plot to make Mme. Duval think herself beset by highwaymen, the race of two ancient women arranged by the aristocrats, the scene in which Sir Clement is bitten by a monkey.

As autobiography, in other words, this novel reveals more than the

diaries. Allowing Miss Burney to articulate repressed aspects of her personality, it reminds us of the degree to which her constant professions of fear and her insistent withdrawals represent not true timidity but a socially acceptable device of self-protection. The writing and publishing of novels—a public act—also involves self-protection; no one holds the author personally responsible for Captain Mirvan's sadism or Mrs. Selwyn's ferocious commentary. Through imagining such sadism and such commentary, she permits herself the impermissible. She both declares the high value of her own mode of dealing with the world and compensates for the restrictions of her propriety.

After Evelina came Cecilia, insistently moral, carefully controlled, much too long, and containing some disturbing implications. The power of wealth gives its heroine initial security; her experience teaches her insecurity. Altogether a more sinister fable than Evelina, despite its insistent morality, Cecilia acknowledges more openly the high psychic cost of female compliance. The permeating sense of anxiety here derives largely from the increasingly explicit recognition of the difficulties and inherent limitations of women's social position. Cecilia has wealth, intelligence, beauty, adequate social status, and the nominal freedom to do whatever she wants. In fact, as she discovers, she possesses all the concomitants, but no real freedom and no power. She must use her energies for self-suppression. "Her passions were under the control of her reason, and she suffered not her affections to triumph over her principles."29 She must learn to give up, yielding her money as sign and symbol of larger relinquishments. Never does she question—any more than Evelina questions—the necessity to be good. Like Evelina, she is rewarded by marriage. But the diminishment she undergoes in order to achieve it and the torments she endures along the way suggest a dark view of women's fate.

The heroine of *Camilla* suffers yet greater diminishment. Like Evelina, Camilla is inexperienced, powerless, and poor; like Evelina, she learns that she must preserve inexperience, use powerlessness, and emphasize her dependency. Unlike Evelina, she perceives some alternatives to this procedure before discovering their impossibility.

Because of her lack of knowledge of the world, Camilla cannot deal with sophisticated values. Her fiancé Edgar feels that she should not try: she should stay out of the world rather than endeavor to confront it. Knowledge for a woman, from his point of view, constitutes a

moral equivalent of rape. Men encourage women to remain ignorant, foolish, and cowardly. They are captivated by the sight of a beautiful woman agitated by a bull: "What lovely timidity!—What bewitching softness!—What feminine, what beautiful delicacy!—How sweet in terror."30 How sweet in terror! To please a man, a woman, preserving and using her fears and her reluctances, must withdraw. Edgar sees clearly that any "public distinction"—i.e., any social self-assertion will threaten his plans for Camilla, spoiling "her for private life" (III, 278). The explicit moral of Camilla's experience—the moral she herself accepts—supports Edgar's view. The ideal woman will be neither too beautiful nor too rich; she will be properly humble. Fearful, sweet, ignorant, and utterly dependent, she acknowledges the superior wisdom of the male to whose guidance she eagerly submits. The lessons Camilla learns elaborate the implications of Cecilia's learning and Evelina's. She discovers that apparent sources of power disintegrate in a woman's grasp, that her fears offer more dependable guides than her ambitions, and that only through dependency can she find female success. The world she inhabits contains more multitudinous causes for terror even than Cecilia's: prison, illness, death, betrayal, and poverty. The anxiety, which in Evelina issued most often in the heroine's repeated experience of confusion, now has far more serious correlatives.

The balance struck in *Evelina* between acceptance of female self-concealment as a useful strategy and resentment against the world that makes hiding necessary for women becomes with each successive novel more precarious. Yet Fanny Burney's personal life was increasingly happy; her letters state explicitly that marriage brought her unprecedented contentment. *Camilla*, composed in the joyful period after the birth of her son, expresses a jaundiced view of the world. Personal happiness, one may speculate, weakened Miss Burney's commitment to her own discipline of social fear. More and more in the novels she came out of hiding.

None of these first three novels directly protests women's lot, although each more vividly than its predecessor implies the author's awareness that women's fears acknowledge the intolerable dilemmas of their social position. Yet the ideal marriages that conclude the stories suggest that by willing acceptance of fear and restriction women can achieve happiness. Unhappy marriages also exist in these novels,

but their moral causes are carefully specified. The heroines have only to avoid the weaknesses that produce them. Fanny Burney glorifies a fugitive and cloistered virtue as uniquely appropriate for women. Still, the strong women of whom she and her heroines disapprove and the trains of disaster that pursue young women aspiring to even mild independence, hint at some resentment of the social necessities apparently so fully accepted.

In 1792 Mary Wollstonecraft published A Vindication of the Rights of Women. Some time before 1800, Fanny Burney began writing her last novel, The Wanderer: or, Female Difficulties, published in 1814. There is no evidence that she read Mary Wollstonecraft. Yet The Wanderer articulates female protest in terms vividly analogous to the social critic's, although nominally only to refute such protest. Mary Wollstonecraft's attack on the existing system of female education and on the assumptions that governed women's conduct focuses on issues already implicit in Fanny Burney's first three novels. Infuriated that a woman should be made to consider her proper function that of pleasing men, Mary Wollstonecraft inveighs particularly against the encouragement of female passivity: "listless inactivity and stupid acquiescence."31 She remarks that women are "kept in ignorance under the specious name of innocence" (p. 23), a comment precisely applicable to Camilla's "education." Men expect of women, she points out, only negative virtues, if any: "patience, docility, good humour, and flexibility—virtues incompatible with any vigorous exertion of intellect" (p. 64). "Kind instructors!" she inquires passionately, "what were we created for? To remain, it may be said, innocent; they mean in a state of childhood. We might as well never have been born" (p. 68).

Concerned with possibilities of social action, Mary Wollstonecraft interests herself in the question of collective female identity: how women can understand themselves as women. Fanny Burney, as a novelist, involves herself rather in the development of individuals, but *The Wanderer* implies some relation between collective and individual possibility through the striking character of Elinor Joddrell, a young and attractive woman of good family who under the influence of revolutionary ideas from France has developed a rather remarkable vision of her own resources and rights. She claims "the Right of woman, if endowed with senses, to make use of them," moving to eloquent questions about larger privileges." "Must even her heart be circumscribed by boundaries as narrow as her sphere of action in life? Must she be

taught to subdue all its native emotions? To hide them as sin, and to deny them as shame?... Must every thing that she does be prescribed by rule?... Must nothing that is spontaneous, generous, intuitive, spring from her soul to her lips?" (I, 405).

These questions, which describe with only slight exaggeration the emotional program followed by Fanny Burney herself, justify Elinor from her own point of view in boldly declaring her love for a man who has indicated no romantic interest in her, claiming her individual right to violate social expectation, and enlarging for herself alone the narrow boundaries of permitted emotional expression. The novel's action makes a fool of her. The man she loves does not reciprocate her feelings. She threatens and attempts suicide repeatedly in increasingly melodramatic fashion but never quite achieves it. She strikes grand attitudes and makes grand speeches, finally to disappear from the scene and reform in quiet obscurity. Juliet, the novel's heroine, concurs in her lover's judgment that Elinor needs to be brought to her senses.

Elinor, like Mrs. Selwyn, exists to be refuted, and like Mrs. Selwyn she survives refutation. However foolish her actions and her extravagant emotional displays, she raises issues that cannot readily be laid to rest. She articulates a point never explicitly acknowledged in Miss Burney's previous books (a point implicit also in the novels by other women treated in an earlier chapter): a woman's individual sense of identity depends necessarily on her generic identity. Men (Mary Wollstonecraft duly noted this fact) have more varied possibilities for action and feeling within the context of their social definition. Woman's nature has been so specifically defined that it largely excludes idiosyncrasy. A girl's individualistic impulses must hide themselves; Elinor must learn on a personal level the inevitable failure of revolutionary hope.

Although Elinor's message rings more powerfully than may be intended, it does not speak unambiguously for the author. Yet, more systematically than *Cecilia* or *Camilla*, *The Wanderer* expresses conscious resentment of the female condition. The "female difficulties" alluded to in the subtitle impede the heroine's attempt to achieve economic and personal independence. Juliet, like Cecilia, is an orphan; like Evelina she suffers from her parents' secret marriage and the resultant mystery about her birth and status; like all the Burney heroines, she falls in love early but faces countless external obstacles to love's

fulfillment. Unlike any of her predecessors, though, she must depend on her own resources for emotional and economic survival. An exile from France, where she has been educated, penniless as a result of an accident, forbidden to reveal her origins, background, or even her name, she must make her own way in England. She herself understands her problem, in its particular ramifications, as peculiar to her sex and as illustrating the limitations of social definitions of the female state. "How insufficient, she exclaimed, is a FEMALE to herself! How utterly dependant upon situation—connexions—circumstance!" (II, 197). An ideal of self-sufficiency dominates Juliet throughout the events that demonstrate its impossibility. She finds female experience to involve utter dependency, endless difficulty, and constant negative judgment from without of all attempts at self-assertion. Like Mary Wollstonecraft, she discovers how women's education forestalls their significant accomplishment: women do not learn to do anything. When Juliet laments to Elinor the severe difficulties of a female trying to make her way in the world, Elinor insists that she need only forget that she is "a dawdling woman" and remember that she is an "active human being," and her difficulties will vanish (III, 36). But Elinor has never faced and cannot even recognize the external difficulties that confront Juliet. Juliet is right, as Mary Wollstonecraft is right. But what use is such rightness?

The most interesting aspect of *The Wanderer* is the degree to which Juliet has internalized the social expectations that nullify her continuing struggle. She wins limited social recognition by demonstrating her mastery of the ladylike accomplishments of harp-playing and singing, and her competence in "the useful and appropriate female accomplishment of needle-work" (I, 163). Forced against her will to appear in private theatricals, she thus acquires a further opportunity to display the range of her talents and skills. Perhaps more significantly, the play enables her to demonstrate "those fears of self-deficiency . . . which . . . often, in sensitive minds, rob them of the powers of exertion" (I, 199). In its first scene, she shows herself a totally incompetent actress because of her fears; later she rouses herself to triumph (I, 204). Impossible not to think of Miss Burney with her consistent social display of her fears, but one may be surprised, in the particular novelistic context, to find fear glorified as an index of sensitivity. Juliet brings herself to give harp lessons in order to earn a living, but when her ambiguous status and background make her lose pupils, she is unwilling to

use her talents in a public musical performance—partly because Harleigh hints that to participate in such an undertaking might obviate the possibility of honorable marriage. Although financial necessity drives the heroine to determine upon performance at last, on the actual occasion she faints before she has to play. She then takes a job as companion to an irascible and tyrannical older woman, effectively dramatizing her social condition of dependency.

Increasingly Juliet finds herself relying—always limited, of course, by considerations of propriety—on financial, emotional, and physical help from men. Money embarrasses her, as it did her creator.³³ She needs it nonetheless, and she needs the self-esteem of winning it by her own efforts, but almost equally she needs the quite opposed self-esteem derived from never even appearing to do wrong. Like Fanny Burney, Juliet comes to recognize that to act as little as possible, if it does not ensure doing right, at least prevents wrong. Her situation forces her to act; her femininity urges her toward passivity.

Elinor points out how inconsistently men—hence, the world—judge women. They declare women unable to act as meaningfully as men because of their natural limitations, although men have in fact barred women from action by controlling their education. On the other hand, while estimating woman below themselves, they also elevate her above, requiring "from her, in defiance of their examples!—in defiance of their lures!—angelical perfection" (III, 42). Juliet, who attempts—largely unsuccessfully—to defy the prohibition of meaningful action, entirely accepts this other impossible standard with its goal of "angelical perfection." For her virtue rather than her action, she wins reward: the man of her choice.

Before the reward, though, apparently hopeless entanglements develop. Juliet, it turns out, is married already. Her commitment to passive virtue has led her to self-sacrifice for the sake of her guardian, when his life is threatened by revolutionaries. One of these wretches demands Juliet, for the sake of her fortune, promising her guardian's life as her price. She marries him; then before consummation she escapes to England, but when he claims her she must acknowledge his right. In this crisis, her passivity markedly increases. Harleigh begs her not to let "your too delicate fears of doing wrong by others, urge you to inflict wrong, irreparable wrong, upon youself!" (V, 163), but, like her creator, Juliet is dominated by terror of public wrongdoing. She is rescued from her nominal husband, in one instance, by a male

friend who commands her "to attend her own nearest relations"; otherwise she would not attempt to evade her fate, controlled as she is "by an overwhelming dread that to resist might possibly be wrong" (V, 326). She can turn only to piety, by which she denies or in fantasy avoids "all present and actual evil," concentrating instead on "an enthusiastic foretaste of the joys of futurity" (V, 208). Her conflicts, multitudinous and irreconcilable, reduce her to total immobility. Her existence becomes one loud plea for help. When her lover describes her as "wholly independent; mistress of her heart, mistress of herself—", she protests: "No, Mr. Harleigh, no! I am not so independent! . . . Had I an hundred hearts,—ten thousand times you must have conquered them all!" (V, 364-5). Her triumph derives from her relinquishment of all claim to self-sufficiency.

On the novel's final pages, the author summarizes Juliet as "a female Robinson Crusoe, . . . reduced either to sink, through inanition, to nonentity, or to be rescued from famine and death by such resources as she could find, independently, in herself" (V, 394-5). But only in brief intervals has her survival depended on herself. Elinor seems right about the limited possibilities for women in existent social conditions, although wrong in her hope of enlarging them. Much earlier, Harleigh has complained of the "dangerous singularity" in Elinor's character (I, 376). In the end, he urges Juliet not to worry about the other young woman, who "has a noble, though, perhaps, a masculine spirit." (Applied to Elinor, as to Mrs. Selwyn, masculine is a harsh designation.) She will come to see the error of her ways, he continues, returning "to the habits of society and common life, as one awakening from a dream in which she has acted some strange and improbable part" (V, 370-71). Juliet, too, is recovering from her dream of independence. Fanny Burney's imagining of a female Robinson Crusoe is an imagining of despair. For Juliet as a heroine must struggle not only with the obstacles supplied by a hostile physical and social environment but with those created by her own standard of femininiy; no psychic or religious conversion can rescue her. Femininity wins; all else is only a dream. Juliet and Elinor in different ways illustrate a female fantasy of self-realization and self-definition through action rather than avoidance. Testing that fantasy, Juliet discovers its frailty. The fear of doing wrong finally controls her, teaching her her helplessness.

"There is no doubt but that *The Wanderer* is Fanny Burney's poorest novel," Michael Adelstein writes. 34 Virtually all critics have con-

curred, from the time of first publication to the present. Its elaborate plot, didactically disposed characters, and old-fashioned rhetoric compose a moralistic artifice rather than a realized fiction; it seems an imitation of theory, not of life. Yet its relation to life as Fanny Burney knew it lies deeper than one might suppose. What Joyce Hemlow perceives as a schematic arrangement of virtuous and morally defective characters may be seen also as Fanny Burney's most detailed rendition of the female strategy of virtue, its costs, and its rewards. 35 That strategy involves manipulation rather than simple acceptance of weakness. To use goodness as a stance toward the world (the tactic adopted by the character Juliet as well as by her creator) embodies some claim of strength: Juliet achieves moral superiority if not economic success. But it is an underdog's device, understood explicitly as such by the character who employs it. Goodness amounts to Juliet's only viable resource; her obsessive fear of wrongdoing implies her terror of losing her single weapon for battling the world. And her resentment of being so handicapped in life's struggle expresses itself in her repeated recognition that women know nothing and can do nothing to help themselves. They must allow themselves to be helped and must invite infantilization; they must avoid so much that finally they virtually avoid life itself. Given the detailed realizations along the way of what the female plight means, the happy ending of The Wanderer and the novel's artifices of plot and character seem to comprise a bitter mockery, so inadequate are artifices of plot to solve the problems here richly exposed. Fanny Burney was unable to integrate her deep perceptions of the female condition into a believable fiction—perhaps her habits of fear and avoidance made her fear and avoid the implications of her insight. But The Wanderer too contains its autobiographical revelations. Less careful than the journals, the novel reveals that the longing for freedom, confessed in moments of despair at the restrictions of Court life, extended farther than Fanny Burney directly acknowledged, vividly reflecting her awareness that fear of wrongdoing as a principle of action itself exemplifies the severe restrictiveness of female possibility.

No one now reads Fanny Burney's novels, except for *Evelina*, where comedy and youthful exuberance qualify the pervasive anxiety and one can even smile at the anxiety, for its causes are, by and large, so trivial. Yet the later novels, creaky of plot and increasingly impenetra-

ble in rhetoric, seriously explore the possibilities for women to assert individual identities. More clearly than Fanny Burney's letters and diaries, the novels betray her anger at the female condition, although she also acknowledges the possibility of happiness within that condition. Imagining female defiance, she imagines also its futility in those heroines dominated, like herself, by fears of doing wrong. The atmosphere of anxiety she vividly evokes suggests what conflicts attend a woman's search for identity. The Burney female characters face endless struggle between what they want to have (independence, specific husbands, friends, pleasure, work) and what they want to be (angelically perfect): between the impulses to action and to avoidance. However important or negligible the specific images of this conflict, it stands behind the action and the characterization of all the novels.

The record of the journals, extending chronologically far beyond the writer's marriage, makes it clear that her commitment to D'Arblay, fulfilling as it was, did not mark the happy ending to her experience as it did for all her fictional heroines. Marriage resolved or simplified conflicts, granting Fanny Burney permission to act (through writing) while yet remaining conspicuously good; it thus provided energy. It also generated new dramas: classic Oedipal struggles, symbolic dilemmas about where and how to live, and conflicts of interest between Fanny's old family and her new—dramas that the journals expose more freely than they had revealed the problems of the author's youth, although in fact the problems remain in many respects essentially the same. The plot of the diaries thus necessarily differs from that of the novels, which never explore post-marital experience.

Yet the fictional inventions uncover the inner realities of the writer's mature as well as her youthful life. Indeed, comparison of Fanny Burney's personal record with her novels suggests the possibility that fiction may more vividly than autobiography delineate the shape of an author's private drama. The external events of Miss Burney's life, as reported in her diaries, supply small excitements, minor clashes, and tiny resolutions. The events of her novels increasingly emphasize important happenings—in *The Wanderer*, political as well as personal happening. Her heroines must cope with grotesque misunderstandings, malicious enemies, and bitter strokes of fate. They suffer more than they can comprehend—more perhaps even than their author comprehends. They express both their creator's wishes and her con-

viction that such wishes must be punished: the real essence of the inner drama that is more palely reflected in the relatively trivial events she chooses to record in diary and letters.

Fiction is fantasy. Both the strength and the weakness of Fanny Burney's novels derives from this fact. The books betray their author's longing for more grandiose experience than her powerful sense of decorum would allow her even to know she wanted. All except Cecilia, that fable of the poor little rich girl, rely on the deeply satisfying fairytale structure in which the hero (in these cases the heroine) with no apparent assets survives a series of demanding tests, winning by the power of goodness, triumphing over those seemingly more advantaged, and finally achieving the royal marriage that symbolizes lasting good fortune. But Fanny Burney betrays conflicting fantasies, which lessen her fiction's energy: on the one hand the dream of self-assertion and success in the face of all obstacles, on the other the fearful fantasy of nemesis for female admission of hostility and female attempts at self-determination. However she heightens happenings to melodramatic impossibility, ignoring logic and straining rhetoric to insist on the importance of her tale, her stories work against themselves. In her direct accounts of herself, with her sense of morality firmly in control, the conflict between the impulse to freedom and the commitment to propriety—its resolution in action always predictable and its emotional dynamics often compelling—shapes a persuasive narrative. But the world of fiction holds forth the possibilities of greater freedom, possibilities that Fanny Burney could not adequately handle, although they enabled her to reveal herself.

Fiction is form, and form is fiction. The forms that tempted Miss Burney, in life and in literature, were moral structures that assured her that virtue found its reward. Around her she could see evidence to the contrary, particularly in female fates. Her stepsister Maria and her beloved sister Susanna both married brutes and suffered dire consequences. Susanna died after some years of Irish exile necessitated by her husband's arbitrary decisions. Marriage in real life constituted punishment as often as reward. The structures of fiction, as structures of moral order, made sense of experience. They could be imposed also on records of life. Fanny Burney's narrative of herself, in diary and letters, interpreting all conflict as moral conflict and every choice as an effort to determine the good, rationalizes her relatively quiet life as a struggle for virtue and her happy marriage as virtue's reward. It thus

creates shape out of a life's random sequence of events—but a shape, significantly, of conflict.

Fiction is public communication. Fanny Burney's consciousness of this fact expresses itself, characteristically, most often in statements of what she has left out of her novels in order to avoid contaminating young minds. Thus, she boasts that Camilla contains no politics because "they were not a feminine subject for discussion" and "it would be a better office to general Readers to carry them wide of all politics, to their domestic fire sides."36 As usual, she is avoiding wrong. But public communication has a positive as well as a negative aspect. In the youthful diaries, writing for "nobody," Fanny expressed a deprecating sense of self; all her letters and diaries insist upon her modesty. The more impersonal expression of fiction enabled her to enlarge her self-image by splitting herself into infinitely virtuous heroines and ingeniously aggressive minor characters, by dramatizing her sense of virtue through those heroines who suffer endlessly in their efforts toward the right, and by expressing ideas that she could not allow herself to endorse through such figures as Mrs. Selwyn and Elinor Joddrell. Only in rare moments of the private record—as when she complains that Mrs. Thrale showers her with too many gifts—does Fanny Burney betray her hostility. The open record of fiction provided greater protection: she could simultaneously convey both anger and her disapproval of anger. Much more successfully than her female contemporaries, she found ways to manipulate and use her own psychic experience, not simply to avoid it through wishful fantasy or ethical didacticism.

Fiction, finally, may constitute autobiography. Through Fanny Burney's novels, through their flaws and their positive achievements, she conveys her private self more emphatically, more explicitly, than she does in the diaries. Not needing to exercise reductive moral control over every character, she can use her fantasies to communicate her feelings and her conflicts, the interior drama that her decorous life largely concealed. She quotes Mme. de Genlis: "The life of every Woman is a Romance!" The remark, implying an interpretation of actual experience in terms of literary categories, suggests a useful way to read the diaries and letters—perceiving the extent to which, even in her personal record, it is Fanny Burney's fictions that reveal herself. Writing novels, she allows herself to convey the impermissible sides of her nature and to enlarge the permissible. Writing journals, she con-

fines herself largely to the surfaces of her life; yet she uncovers the depths by the unchanging form of her self-interpretation, by her wistful, persistent fantasy of flawless virtue, and by her insistence on shaping her account of all that happens to her in terms of the struggle for virtue. She tells the story of an uneventful life as a romance rich in drama.

Fanny Burney's novels and her journals alike reveal the dynamics of fear in a woman's experience. They also reveal some ways in which the imagination deals with emotion, demonstrating how useful are the disguises of fiction in clarifying the truths of personality and how much the forms and perceptions of fiction become necessary material for the autobiographer.

7

The Sense of Audience: Samuel Richardson, Colley Cibber

oes the act of writing about the self have intrinsic meaning? None of the writers encountered so far seriously considers the question, in fictional or factual context. Hume, by denying his vanity, asserts a specific absence of motivation for his autobiography without ever seriously investigating the meaning of his enterprise. Gibbon, offering similar disclaimers, fails to confront the significance of his obsessive reworking of his life's material or of the fundamental desire to depict the self, despite his full awareness that style creates an image of character and his lengthy construction of an autobiographical palimpsest. Fictional Tristram, suffering entrapment in his self, clinging to words as salvation, does not associate self and words as problems. Robinson Crusoe, William Cowper, aware as they are of the purposes of their narrations, neglect to contemplate the perplexing fact of narration. Writers claim their wish to make money or to achieve reconciliation or to reform or educate their readers; seldom do they think in print of their literary activity in its meaning for themselves if, indeed, they think about it as a phenomenon at all. Evelina, that prolific letter-writer, is oddly unaware of her logorrhea.

Her forebear Pamela, on the other hand, recognizes her own writing as an important fact, and other characters in the novel she inhabits also accord it intrinsic significance. The official first heroine of the English novel has an incorrigible urge to write herself down. Critics have frequently noted the advantages and disadvantages of the episto-

lary convention as Richardson employs it. It creates an illusion of immediacy—"something that may pass for the spontaneous transcription of the subjective reactions of the protagonists to the events as they occur." It allows us to perceive events through the consciousness of the person they happen to, thus encountering incident and response simultaneously. On the other hand, it generates manifest narrative artifice, prolixity, and rhetorical implausibility. Pamela sounds sometimes so much like a philosopher (or perhaps a cultivated London printer) that even her devoted apologist B. L. Reid grants, "Her rhetoric is superb, but in terms of character it is also absurd."2 Brian W. Downs complains about the fact that "the characters consistently view the situations in which they or their friends find themselves, not so much as personal experience, as 'copy' in the journalistic sense of the word."3 And many commentators have joked about the improbability or perversity, or both, of Pamela's determined writing on the very day of her marriage.

Only recently have critics begun to consider the possible value of Pamela's obsessional turning of life into "copy" for the total plan of the novel and for the character herself. Thus A. M. Kearney points out the double purpose of Pamela's writing "in the moral scheme of the novel: first it brings Pamela herself to public recognition, and secondly it propagates her thoughts as influence." He adds that Pamela's role is defined as "that of the novelist himself: by bringing literary ability and sufficient reflection to bear upon the crude stuff of personal experience, he shapes it as didactic art" (p. 37). Even more provocative is Robert Folkenflik's observation: "Pamela's problem is to create an interior space through the private consciousness constituted by her writings."5 If these statements are true, Pamela's writing supplies evidence both of her private self-awareness and of her capacity for public moral utterance. It resembles in those respects the work of real autobiographers, necessarily concerned with public statement, more than of real letter-writers, usually composing for an audience of one. (Pamela literally writes at first only for her parents; gradually her readership expands, initially without her knowledge, later with her full awareness.) As the public function of the heroine's letters evolves, so does her sense of self. She uses the letters not only to assert her identity—and preserve her "interior space," to repeat Folkenflik's perhaps too Freudian phrase—but to enlarge it, through a process of communication and dramatization that may exemplify universal as-

Samuel Richardson, Colley Cibber

pects of writing about the self. And she uses them, quite consciously, to tell a story, the awareness of plot and possibility belonging explicitly to her as well as to her creator.

An accident of timing caused Pamela to reach publication in the same year (1740) that saw the appearance of Colley Cibber's Apology for his life. Taking advantage of that coincidence, Fielding mockingly claimed to perceive a significant connection of approach between the two books: both shared an "affectation" that, he explains in his preface to Joseph Andrews, "proceeds from one of these two Causes, Vanity, or Hypocrisy: for as Vanity puts us on affecting false Characters, in order to purchase Applause; so Hypocrisy sets us on an Endeavour to avoid Censure by concealing our Vices under an Appearance of their opposite Virtues."6 Vanity is Cibber's sin; hypocrisy, Pamela's. To unite those vices under a common label helps Fielding to define his satiric target; it also calls attention to a universal problem of autobiography and the fiction that imitates it. Fielding is enraged by the high artifice of self-presentation, noticeable alike in novel and memoir—an artifice the more conspicuous for the ostentatious claims of sincerity and truthfulness that Cibber and Pamela make. The necessary artifice of writing about the self derives partly from the discrepancy between the importance that the writer assigns to his self and his awareness that the world at large is unlikely to share his assessment. To deal with this discrepancy demands a complicated set of poses: one must not appear to claim too much, yet the autobiographical enterprise in its essence amounts to an insistent demand for attention. Apology of one sort or another is built in to the undertaking. Cibber and Pamela, real autobiographer and created character, share consciousness of the complex power of story and of the omnipresence of audience. Conveying that consciousness, they remind the reader of autobiography's intrinsic unnaturalness: to tell stories of the self automatically commits the teller to the vice of affectation. But—as Fielding failed to see—it also provides the means by which affectation transcends itself, artifice leading to profound sincerities.

An atmosphere of unceasing activity marks novel and autobiography; the activity of both accounts is partly, and importantly, that of writing itself. Both call attention to writing as pleasure, as control, and as significant action. Cibber admits directly that the act itself is so gratifying that he could go on forever; he makes no mention of possible rewriting. The convention of *Pamela* also dictates the impossibil-

ity of rewriting: we take journals and letters by definition to be at least relatively artless forms. (The artfulness of such imitations of artlessness is of course another matter.) And by the time of the heroine's wedding we readily assume that she too would happily continue endlessly. Autobiography and novel alike suggest the creation of a life through writing about it, the writing itself literally affecting the course of action in *Pamela* and making psychological sense out of action past in the *Apology*. In both works we can study writing as performance and as process and writing as revelatory affectation.

Pamela reveals herself most conspicuously by her language. Richardson prefaced to the second edition of his novel excerpts from various laudatory letters, one of which mingles with its praise some minor suggestions for improving Pamela's literary style. Specifically, the letter-writer objects to the character's use of naughty as an epithet for her master, claiming its inappropriate mildness. Another unnamed critic, refuting such suggestions, vehemently endorses naughty. Alternative adjectives, he points out, "wou'd have carried Marks of her Rage, not Affliction—whereas naughty contains, in One single significant Petulance, twenty thousand inexpressible Delicacies!—It insinuates, at once, all the beautiful Struggle, between her Contempt of his Purpose, and tender Regard for his Person; her Gratitude to Himself and his Family; her Recollection of his superior Condition.—There is in the elegant Choice of this half-kind, half-peevish, Word, a neverenough to be prais'd speaking Picture of the Conflict betwixt her Disdain, and her Reverence!"7 The overwrought discriminations of this critique, recalling Pamela's own mental habits, emphasize how carefully selected at least some of Pamela's vocabulary may be. In a report to her parents she moralizes, "O how can wicked Men seem so steady and untouch'd, with such black Hearts, while poor Innocents stand like Malefactors before them!" (I, 34). The next paragraph relates a specific interview with her master: "Good Heaven, said I to myself, give me Courage to stand before this naughty Master! O soften him, or harden me!" Choosing the childish epithet naughty, she thus deliberately rejects a more forceful language of denunciation ("wicked," "black Hearts") also available to her. When she stands before Squire B., needing to feel "hardened," she reverts to relatively exculpatory diction that suggests her wish to see the evil he represents as relatively venial. Her vocabulary indeed hints interior conflict—if not between

Samuel Richardson, Colley Cibber

"Disdain" and "Reverence," certainly between desire and fear. Despite the fact that Pamela writes usually for and to her parents, in effect for her superego, she reveals also the force of the id and the nature of its necessary disguises. Elizabeth Hardwick points out that the use of letters in fiction "modifies the inner life of the characters as we know them. A letter is not a dialogue or even an omniscient exposition. It is a fabric of surfaces, a mask, a form as well suited to affectations as to the affections." Affectation, this comment suggests, is implicit in the very form Richardson has chosen, which reveals Pamela's masking as well as, through subtleties of diction, the reality beneath. The recourse to letters thus makes affectation a subject of Richardson's novel as well as of Fielding's parody.

Pamela shows herself conscious of linguistic values not only in her disputes about such terms as honour or saucebox but in her attitude about the fact of her writing, which becomes increasingly important as a component of her story. Words supply a defensive resource in speech and in writing: "When you forget what belongs to Decency in your Actions, and when Words are all that are left me, to shew my Resentment of such Actions, I will not promise to forbear the strongest Expressions, that my distressed Mind shall suggest to me" (I, 289). Her running narrative of her experience, most of which she cannot find means to send her parents during her stay in Lincolnshire, defends her against her life's psychic inroads. Her master will not allow himself to become her lover (as opposed to her would-be seducer) until he has seen what she has written. He demands that she yield him more and more of her prose, and while refusing to yield her body she does in fact give up, in successive batches, all of that manipulated version of self, her story. This symbolic capitulation is important partly because it involves direct communication of feelings. Her story, "not deceitful," containing no falsehood, achieves its "sincerity" (I, 314) by its consistent interpretation of fact through feeling.

All stories have generic as well as particular aspects, belonging to established types or patterns, although the events they relate possess unique specificity. Mr. B.'s initial sense of story is entirely generic. Seeing his sexual overtures to a servant girl as belonging to a pattern so familiar as to be virtually devoid of meaning, he finds Pamela's resistance puzzling as well as angering. She wants her story to conform to a different genre: Young Girl Makes Good rather than Seduction and Betrayal. Mr. B. gradually develops a bemused sense of him-

self as only a character in Pamela's fiction. "I long to see the Particulars of your Plot, and your Disappointment, where your Papers leave off. For you have so beautiful a Manner, that it is partly that, and partly my Love for you, that has made me desirous of reading all you write; tho' a great deal of it is against myself: for which you must expect to suffer a little. And as I have furnish'd you with a Subject, I have a Title to see the Fruits of your Pen.-Besides, said he, there is such a pretty Air of Romance, as you relate them, in your Plots, and my Plots, that I shall be better directed in what manner to wind up the Catastrophe of the pretty Novel" (I, 316-17). Although he claims decisive power over the "Catastrophe," Pamela as author has ultimate control. Mr. B.'s sense of weakness permeates his speech. Reduced to demand the manuscript on the basis of his having provided the subject, he reveals his conviction that only by seeing all Pamela writes can he hope to win any dominance over her. Her plots and his plots belong to the real world, but by recording them she has made them effectively fictional. The writer has power of interpretation, of selection, and consequently of creating meaning and order; by comparison Squire B.'s claim of control sounds like pure bluster.

"My Story, surely, would furnish out a surprising Novel, if it was to be well told," Pamela observes (II, 5). Lady Davers, on the verge of reconciliation with Pamela, begs to see her "rare . . . uncommon Story" (II, 299). The story's "uncommonness" depends on its happy ending: had Pamela become Mr. B.'s mistress, her tale would hardly have been rare. In a sense her pride as author protects her virtue. Certainly she manipulates events with a steady awareness of their dramatic potential. Although she relapses into unconsciousness at every moment of crisis, her consciousness remains sharp in less desperate situations. She uses imagination and memory alike as resources. Memory recorded, the operations of imagination set down—these create story, Pamela's self and her salvation.

In an episode of presumably inadvertent comedy, Pamela, discussing with her lover her prospective occupations, assures him that her "scribbling," after marriage, will be entirely dedicated to the household accounts (II, 31). In effect she promises voluntarily to relinquish the mysterious power her writing has won. By writing she has declared her identity, insisted on her own version of her story and on its significance and won her way into the upper class. And by writing after her marriage—of course she lied in promising to give it up—she

Samuel Richardson, Colley Cibber

continues to assert her moral dominance of her husband and her mideighteenth-century version of the Restoration grace, wit. "I cannot live without a Pen in my Hand," she confesses—the occasion being her infant's smallpox, which provokes her to two poetic effusions (IV, 238). When, in one of the few real crises of *Pamela* II, her husband appears to have taken a mistress, Pamela uses every opportunity to write about the problem. After she and Mr. B. work out their difficulties, he asks to see how she has recorded them. Her narrative, he explains, "shall be a standing Lesson to me for my future Instruction; as it will be a fresh Demonstration of your Excellence, which every Hour I more and more admire" (IV, 200). Her "Excellence," intellectual and imaginative as well as moral, must be attested by her prose. She needs pen in hand to affirm and indeed to manufacture the capacity that enables her not only to defend herself but to maintain and enlarge her value for her audience.

Like Pamela, Colley Cibber, famous actor and theatrical manager, apparently felt compelled to write. Like Pamela he reflected about what his writing meant; more explicitly than Pamela he recognized an identity between story and self. Pamela, with a social role severely limiting her freedom of action, achieved greater freedom in her written reflections on her experiences. Cibber, an actor, played many roles but suffered from the resultant sense of falsity. More obsessively than Pamela, therefore, he claims the truth of his self-presentation as its justification. "There is something inwardly inciting" him to self-revelation, he confesses.

A Man who has pass'd above Forty Years of his Life upon a Theatre, where has never appear'd to be Himself, may have naturally excited the Curiosity of his Spectators to know what he really was, when in no body's Shape but his own . . . It was doubtless, from a supposition that this sort of Curiosity wou'd compensate their Labours, that so many hasty Writers have been encourag'd to publish the Lives of the late Mrs. Oldfield, Mr. Wilks, and Mr. Booth, in less time after their Deaths than one could suppose it cost to transcribe them. Now, Sir, when my time comes, lest they shou'd think it worth while to handle my Memory with the same Freedom, I am willing to prevent its being so oddly besmear'd . . . by taking upon me to give the Publick This, as true a Picture of my self as natural Vanity will permit me to draw.9

He wishes to render himself in order to keep control of the depiction,

to forestall the efforts of others to tell his story, and to gratify the curiosity of his spectators. The story on the printed page represents one more potential way of appealing to an audience. But it differs from dramatic self-representation specifically in its truth and in its manifestly defensive function. Like Pamela, Cibber feels the need to guard himself against the misapprehensions of others by his proclaimed truth.

But the notion of truth in autobiography, as we have seen, is highly problematic. Cibber did not, as far as anyone has ascertained, invent the facts he reported of himself. On the other hand, he contrived judicious omissions. As his twentieth-century biographer puts it, he "never referred to the things of which he—it is to be hoped—felt ashamed": 10 neither to his passion for gambling, for instance, nor to the episode in which he was briefly dismissed from the management of Drury Lane, but also, more perplexingly, he does not refer to his receiving the laureateship and hardly at all to his wife and children. Yet he claims specifically the truth of total inclusiveness, boasting his commitment to "shewing myself in all my Lights" (p. 20), insisting, against the evidence, that he conceals "no Truth, that is against me" (p. 172).

The truth he in fact achieves in his narrative is, as it must be, a truth of story, dependent partly on his conscious interpretation of his own experience and partly on deeper molding forces. Pamela perceives her commitment to virtue as motivating all her actions; Cibber understands himself as inevitably driven by vanity, his "ruling passion." Like Pamela, he reveals that an apparently simple "Principle of action" becomes remarkably impenetrable when examined in detail.

On human actions reason tho' you can,
It may be reason, but it is not man:
His Principle of action once explore,
That instant 'tis his Principle no more.
Like following life thro' creatures you dissect,
You lose it in the moment you detect.

(Pope, Epistle to Cobham, 11. 35-40)

At first vanity seems, from Cibber's point of view, to constitute his chief point of vulnerability. He confesses that the impulse to write autobiography derives from "the same Vanity which makes even homely People employ Painters to preserve a flattering Record of their Persons" (p. 4). The analogy suggests the book's central paradox: on

Samuel Richardson, Colley Cibber

the one hand, commitment to truth justifies the enterprise; on the other, vanity, its motivating force, demands "a flattering Record." This, too, is a paradox implicit in all autobiography, although Cibber does not note the fact. He recognizes, though, that vanity permeates all levels of his own psychic experience, accounting alike for pretension and humility. He directly contradicts any claim of literal truthfulness by admitting that he sets down only what he wants others to know of him (p. 25). What he wants them to know, though, includes what he smiles at in himself. His self-enjoyment and comic self-awareness, which rarely appear elsewhere in eighteenth-century autobiography, involve a kind of self-acceptance that appears to generate emotional freedom.

By the end of the narrative we have been led to entertain the possibility that vanity represents strength rather than weakness. Gradually the writer argues that his own ruling passion in fact constitutes "the universal Passion of Mankind" (p. 192). He differs from other men, then, primarily in his admirable willingness to admit it. That willingness, itself an aspect of the governing passion, defines his virtue—at least in his own mind. Viciously condemning those "monstrous Medlies" of singing and dancing and other forms of entertainment "that have so long infected the Stage" (p. 423), he blandly admits that he himself encouraged such medleys-against his conscience-from necessity, because he "had not Virtue enough to starve, by opposing a Multitude, that would have been too hard for me" (p. 424). But his readers should not criticize such expediency. How does his motivation differ from that of Henri IV of France in changing religion? The king "has always been allow'd a great Man: And what I want of his Grandeur, you see by the Inference, Nature has amply supply'd to me, in Vanity, a Pleasure which neither the Pertness of Wit, or the Gravity of Wisdom, will ever persuade me to part with. And why is there not as much Honesty in owning, as in concealing it? For though to hide it, may be Wisdom, to be without it is impossible; and where is the Merit of keeping a Secret, which every Body is let into? To say we have no Vanity then, is shewing a great deal of it; as to say we have a great deal, cannot be shewing so much: And tho', there may be Art, in a Man's accusing himself, even then it will be more pardonable than Self-commendation" (p. 424). The argument has become oddly circular: Cibber, reiterating his confession of vanity, has manipulated his terms to declare the vanity of acknowledging vanity less than that of

denying it; he leaves the reader to ponder the further gigantic vanity of that assertion. The autobiographer has also admitted the personal pleasure of his "vice"—a pleasure so great that he cannot be persuaded to relinquish it. From pleasure, it converts itself to virtue—precisely the reverse of the common female equation that opposes pleasure to virtue. Cibber's vanity of self-justification epitomizes his masculine freedom to redefine virtue by the self's demands instead of hiding behind societal sanctions. One acts virtuously, Cibber concludes (p. 425), in order to win the praise that gratifies vanity; vanity thus becomes the force behind all human goodness.

Unlike Boswell, the only other married man among the famous eighteenth-century autobiographers, Cibber hardly refers to his wife. He reports his marriage in these words: "One might think that the Madness of breaking, from the Advice, and Care of Parents, to turn Player, could not easily be exceeded: But what think you, Sir, of— Matrimony? which, before I was Two-and-twenty, I actually committed, when I had but Twenty Pounds a Year, which my Father had assur'd to me, and Twenty Shillings a Week from my Theatrical Labours, to maintain, as I then thought, the happiest young Couple, that ever took a Leap in the Dark!" (p. 150). The account, denying the emotions commonly associated with matrimony for the sake of a selfmocking pose, reminds one anew of the possible gaps between story and reality. Forming his narrative for an imagined audience ("what think you, Sir?"), Cibber describes marriage with reference to economic facts, hints (through the verb committed) his view of it as crime or misdemeanor, suggests by the qualifier "as I then thought" the possibility that it was a mistake, but treats it entirely as one exploit (or "Madness") among his many, never acknowledging that it involves a relationship. He mentions his wife once again, in a sentence that Pope quotes without comment as a footnote to The Dunciad: "my Muse, and my Spouse were equally prolifick; . . . the one was seldom the Mother of a Child, but in the same Year the other made me the Father of a Play: I think we had a Dozen of each Sort between us; of both which kinds, some died in their Infancy, and near an equal Number of each were alive, when I quitted the Theatre" (p. 217). Indeed, the statement comments upon itself. It also constitutes Cibber's only reference to his children, those undependable productions. 11 The Apology contains no accounts of friendship: only of business alliances. Cibber's ironies deny human fellowship.

Samuel Richardson, Colley Cibber

Extreme vanity of course implies extreme isolation. Only his self seems real to Cibber; others comment on, applaud, or reflect it. Relationships embarrass him. His omission of marriage, fatherhood, or friendship as subject matter may suggest the high cost of his ruling passion and qualify his effort to claim it as a wellspring of virtue.

Or it may suggest the high cost of commitment to story, with its simplifying principles of unity and coherence. Steven Marcus, writing about Freud's case histories, stresses the analyst's concern with his patients' inability "to tell a coherent story of their lives." Freud in fact implies, Marcus argues, "that a coherent story is in some manner connected with mental health . . . and this in turn implies assumptions of the broadest and deepest kind about both the nature of coherence and the form and structure of human life. On this reading, human life is, ideally, a connected and coherent story, with all the details in proper place, and with everything (or as close to everything as is practically possible) accounted for, in its proper causal or other sequence. And inversely illness amounts, at least in part, to suffering from an incoherent story or an inadequate narrative account of oneself" (p. 92).

Colley Cibber lived in many respects an incoherent life: that fact emerges clearly from his narrative of himself. Trying to create from it "a connected and coherent story, with all the details in proper place," he demonstrates that although his life may not be such a story, he can yet tell this kind of story about it, denying the disorder of actuality. For Cibber as for Freud, turning life into story provides a means to "account for" everything. And the ordering principle he discovered for his narrative is in effect—paradoxically—the principle of incoherence. Everything about him can be explained, he insists, by his immersion in his own "follies" or "giddiness" or "inconsistency." The persistence of his eccentricities marks him as "all of a piece." "The Part I have acted in real Life, shall be all of a piece . . . I will not go out of my Character, by straining to be wiser than I can be, or by being more affectedly pensive than I need be; . . . I can no more put off my Follies, than my Skin" (p. 17). What, exactly, do these follies comprise? We never find out. Cibber does not describe himself in any detail as a foolish man or attempt to define his eccentricities; he simply concedes indeed, boasts—the ridiculous conduct of which he has been accused. The world, recognizing his folly, recognizes him, and his craving for notice, as he makes increasingly clear, allows few discriminations.

So he offers reflections on the Glorious Revolution, exposing his

"Political Notions," declaring that he does not care "how wise, or weak they may have shewn me," since even if he has gone far beyond his depth, "I still flatter my self, that I have kept a simple, honest Head above Water" (p. 57). "Simple indeed!" we imagine Pope remarking; Cibber will not object. Nor does he mind being a blockhead: "A Blockhead is not always an unhappy Fellow," and those who claim wisdom are probably no wiser than he (p. 238). Accused of plagiarism, he in effect grants the truth of the accusation, then justifies his procedure as bringing together for the enjoyment of the public the best parts of forgotten works (pp. 274-5). He describes himself as a trimmer, successfully supporting both his partners in contradictory positions, then applauds his own dexterity in thus treading a tightrope (p. 362). He gives an account of his gratuitous intervention in his partner's affairs, which he sums up as revealing his "insolent interposing honesty" (p. 374). An infinite impulse toward self-justification drives his narrative.

Cibber's trivializing tone about his own plagiarism, expediency, and deceitfulness duplicates the emotional atmosphere of his references to his marriage and to his wife's childbearing. Reducing all his actions to evidence of the folly that he insistently glorifies, he achieves his eccentric narrative unity at the cost of emotional variety and depth. The logic and consistency of his story appear to testify to psychic sickness rather than health, as the need to account for everything takes precedence over the need to respond richly or to remember authentic response. But the problem, from a literary point of view, is not Cibber's putative psychic stability but how his characteristic defense mechanism of trivialization generates the special, powerful effect of his autobiography. Even Dr. Johnson, contemptuous of Cibber as conversationalist and as poet but granting him competence as a playwright ("but that was his trade"), considered the *Apology* "very well done, to be sure," an example of the validity of Pope's couplet,

Each might his several province well command, Would all but stoop to what they understand.¹⁴

Yet the sense in which Cibber may be said to "understand" his life is surely very limited. And it was also Johnson who commented, "The value of every story depends on its being true. A story is a picture either of an individual or of human nature in general. If it be false, it is a picture of nothing." 15 It is probably false of Cibber to imply that he

Samuel Richardson, Colley Cibber

values his plays and his children at the same level or that his marriage was only a youthful exploit; to claim pride in his plagiarism must be far from the whole truth; his narrative omissions are effectively falsifications. His story, full of poses, nonetheless creates an overwhelming effect of authenticity.

Partly this effect derives from that unusual self-awareness as a writer that provided the starting point of our discussion, the selfconsciousness Cibber shares with Pamela but elaborates even more than she. Relating his experience as actor, playwright, and manager, he also repeatedly calls attention to the wonder of his current role as man writing. He understands his book as a process, revealing his nature as well as some of his problems. At stake in her writing, for Pamela, is her position in the world; her writing may make things happen by affecting others' opinions. For Cibber, the question of position depends solely on how he is perceived: position and reputation are, in effect, identical, and he believes himself to control both through his narrative, though the narrative also repeatedly eludes his control—or so he claims. "I find," he reports ruefully, "that Persons, perhaps of colder Imaginations, are allowed to write better than myself. Whenever I speak of anything that highly delights me, I find it very difficult to keep my Words within the Bounds of Common Sense: Even when I write too, the same Failing will sometimes get the better of me" (p. 44). Since nothing delights him more highly than himself, the dangers of self-depiction are manifest, and the reader inevitably feels the precariousness of all "Bounds" when Cibber allows himself full expressiveness. The author particularly regrets the boundaries of factuality. Beginning to apologize for his "familiar Stile of talking"—he has been comparing the affairs of the theater with those of the Court—he gradually becomes indignant that anyone should object to it, since it embodies his only means of transforming restrictive facts. He feels "tied down . . . to the Veracity of an Historian, whose Facts cannot be supposed, like those in a Romance, to be in the Choice of the Author, to make them more marvellous, by Invention" (p. 462). In an unusually eloquent sequence, he digresses from his narrative to insist on the importance of unified action to the aspiring playwright (p. 284). But he would resent imposition of any corresponding principle on his own prose. A few pages later, he admits (as he has admitted several times before) his own tendency toward digression. If the reader too has time

on his hands, he concludes, he might as well read digressions as anything else. On the other hand—"as I have no Objection to Method, when it is not troublesome, I return to my Subject" (p. 287).

One thinks uneasily of the Hack-persona of Swift's Tale of a Tub, for whom digression exemplifies the instability of all commitments and the impossibility of linguistic control. But in fact digression embodies Cibber's ultimate commitment: to the eccentricity of his "follies," the center of his self-image. The unity essential to the dramatist cannot supply for this autobiographer a literary resource; "Bounds" threaten the very selfhood that his *Apology* triumphantly asserts. The book's organization, or apparent lack of organization, enables Cibber to enlarge the limits of the personal. Much of his book concerns its author only insofar as he is the narrator of events. Sometimes the Apology provides a history of Colley Cibber; often it digresses into a theatrical history of his time. Cibber reports the careers, stage mannerisms, and personalities of actors and actresses connected with him by professional association or merely by the fact that he has seen them act; he reports in excruciating detail the intricate history of Drury Lane and the other theaters.

One may, of course, understand this technique as epitomizing the random operation of Cibber's vanity. As he openly confesses, a writer may receive narcissistic gratification simply from being allowed to hold forth without interruption. Only the opportunity for self-expression, not the subject, matters. In fact, though, Cibber's accounts of other people provide quite specific opportunities for the expression of vanity. His autobiography provides possibilities of self-display analogous to those he finds in stage acting, but it also supplies counterparts to the resources of the theatrical manager—the profession at which, his own account suggests, he feels most unambiguously successful. But the management of the Drury Lane theater involves less power than Cibber's management, in the Apology, of the theatrical history of his time. Here he can display his magnanimity, his excellent memory, and his critical acumen. He can determine what other people will think about his world, and about actors now dead. Knowing more than the reader is likely to know from direct experience, he can choose how to exercise his special power of showing the past. Awareness of power and deep satisfaction in the awareness appear everywhere in Cibber's history. If he reports the financial situation of actors in the late seventeenth century, he immediately compares it with the im-

Samuel Richardson, Colley Cibber

proved present arrangement brought about by his own managerial efforts (p. 81). He thus declares his mastery of events, his right to judge the past, and his authority as historian and critic. Telling his readers about Mrs. Oldfield's theatrical career, he stresses the impact of his opinion on her (p. 248); he wants his readers to believe in the almost magical force of his judgments, which have had their impact in the theatrical world and whose power he now tries to extend. His vanity displays itself most emphatically in his attempt to incorporate the history of the stage into the story of himself.

Vanity creates its own order, subordinating everything to the self, valuing everything by the self, and automatically justifying all literary inclusions, in any arrangement, in relation to the individual sensibility. The absorbing action of Dulness in the revised *Dunciad*, where Pope has replaced Theobald with Cibber as hero, is precisely reflected in the *Apology*:

None want a place, for all their Centre found,
Hung to the Goddess, and coher'd around . . .
The gath'ring number, as it moves along,
Involves a vast involuntary throng,
Who gently drawn, and struggling less and less,
Roll in her Vortex, and her pow'r confess.

(The Dunciad, IV, 77-78, 81-84)

Cibber's vortex of vanity, his *Apology* demonstrates, also drew to itself conglomerate material. He shows by his narrative procedure how vanity, converting itself to solipsism, generates literary energy. He does not himself make any connection between his "ruling passion" and his way of writing, though he links his vanity with the fact of his writing. But his digressions, his inclusions and omissions, all reflect the operations of the enormous vanity that exposes as well as creates Cibber's emotional shallowness, his reductiveness, and his dishonesties and that drives and controls his narrative by a single principle: the insistence on absorbing all experience into the self. Gibbon wishes to be a great historian; Boswell, to be a great man; Cibber wishes only to incorporate as much as possible, thus substantiating his self-esteem.

The Apology amounts to a great act of incorporation, of self-aggrandizement, and finally of self-creation. Colley Cibber emerges as a man not because of what he feels, or does, or is, but because of what he tells. His self-awareness as writer calls attention to the importance

of his telling and of the mental operations that produce it: operations of memory and of imagination. "Since, at my time of Day, our best Possessions are but Ease, and Quiet, I must be content, if I will have Sallies of Pleasure, to take up with those only, that are to be found in Imagination . . . Let the Grave, and Great contemn, or yawn at these low Conceits [comparisons of himself with Brutus], but let me be happy, in the Enjoyment of them! To this Hour my Memory runs o'er that pleasing Prospect of Life past, with little less Delight, than when I was first, in the real Possession of it" (p. 366). The operations of the self-enlarging imagination are here set consciously before the "goodnatur'd Reader" Cibber fantasizes; if that reader can accept grandiose metaphors as authentic representations of emotion, he can participate in the writer's imaginative pleasure. The limitations of history yield to the fanciful expansions of story.

That story, asserting the teller's importance, in fact creates the importance it declares—a statement that might be applied with equal accuracy to Pamela. Pamela makes herself a heroine by presenting herself as one; Cibber, his perception dependent on his assertion, maintains the significance of his self-pleasing memory, his self-expanding imagination, his self-indulgent digressiveness, and his self-important versions of history, imposing his ego until the reader takes him seriously, if only for the massiveness of his self-assertion. Vanity thus supplies, after all, a force to integrate the apparent disparities of an ostensibly artless narrative.

Pamela's vanity, less freely self-acknowledged, becomes a matter for comment in the continuation of Richardson's original novel, where in a long set piece Mr. B. offers his wife a point by point physical comparison between Pamela and the titled lady with whom Mr. B. has been flirting. Pamela, on the whole, appears to come out ahead in her husband's evaluation of female beauty. When he digresses from eyebrows and foreheads to events, she feels displeased. "I will own to you, Madam," she confesses to her correspondent, "that my Vanity, in this Comparison, was too much soothed, not to wish to hear how it was carried on." Her husband seizes on this evidence of moral weakness, but Pamela converts her vanity into evidence of her virtue by a rapid process of redefinition. "All is owing, Sir, to the Pride I take in your Opinion. I care not how indifferent I appear in the Eyes of all the World besides" (IV, 225). In fact, Pamela's obsession with how she

appears in the eyes of the world has dominated the preceding narrative. For her almost as literally as for Cibber, life consists largely of a series of performances before an audience, although for her the stakes are higher. In a long sequence of scenes Pamela enacts her virtue. When, in an early communication to her parents, she foresees that Mr. B. "may be ashamed of his Part; I not of mine" (I, 17), we already understand that the two antagonists not only "take part" in a single action but that they, in effect, "take parts" in a drama structured according to rules tacitly understood by both participants. In the vivid confrontation between Pamela and Lady Davers, the aristocrat proclaims, "I'll Warrant, my little Dear has topp'd her Part, and paraded it like any real Wife; and so mimicks still the Condition!" (II, 204). By this time Pamela has played her part so expertly that she has justified her elevation in social status; the ability to play out an elaborate drama of "honour" shows her to be a native aristocrat.

Pamela's awareness of audience has not escaped the notice of critics. Morris Golden, who has investigated it most fully, links it with the "frequent examples of the peculiar need for an audience by most characters in most actions" in the novel. 16 He adds that "Pamela most consciously acts her role before an audience which is at times conscious of its own role" (p. 160), and cites several examples of the carefully staged scenes characteristic of *Pamela*. Richardson himself obviously knew what he was doing; theatrical allusions run through his novels. George Sherburn has remarked that his "characters speak as much the language of the stage as they do that of real life."17 An "applauding multitude" attends Harriet Byron's wedding in Sir Charles Grandison. 18 And in Pamela II, Mr. B., after stage-managing a display of parental and grandparental fondness for his infant, turns to an admiring witness to inquire, "Do you often, my dear Miss Darnford, see Scenes wrought up by the Poets to this moving Height?—Here we behold and admire that noble Simplicity, in which Nature always triumphs over her Hand-maid Art!" (IV, 132). But neither Richardson nor any of his commentators has spelled out the serious implications of such pervasive theatricality. Behind Pamela's consciousness of her effect on others, which has made many critics see her as hypocritical or self-serving, lies a well-developed and well-founded sense of the power of external judgment. Beyond other judgments, of course, looms that of God, whose "All-seeing Eye" allows nothing to be hid from it (I, 161). Mortal eyes, almost equally alert, on the whole per-

ceive different aspects of reality. *Pamela* testifies the power of public opinion. The heroine knows that her chastity represents a viable resource only inasmuch as its value is externally affirmed (although, of course, it remains a virtue even in private). She demands such affirmation: not only must Mr. B. avoid violating her virtue; he must acknowledge its importance. The demand epitomizes her self-respect—not, as Fielding would have it, her hypocrisy.

The novel's central struggle focuses on manipulation of language, involving the different import of words for various users and hearers of them. If Pamela can win her pursuer over to her version of what key terms mean, she will have won her battle for self-preservation and self-advancement. She triumphs largely by quarreling. The various members of the visible audience—Mrs. Jervis, Mrs. Jewkes, the neighbors in Lincolnshire, Lady Davers—testify their alignment by their vocabularies. Pamela perceives (and seems to perceive rightly) a world devoid of neutrality. Everyone is watching, and everyone is either on her side or against her. Playing the humble and virtuous though aristocratically gifted maiden for all she is worth, Pamela relies heavily on a language of value that she shares with her aristocratic tormentors. Its key term is honor. The action of Pamela derives from the characters' efforts to preserve or to enlarge individual honor, and their disputes about what the word means are central to the drama. Mr. B. and Pamela share an almost obsessive concern with honor, a term embodying different realities for each. Lady Davers cares about family honor; Pamela's parents, about personal honor. Even the horrific Mrs. Jewkes, like the dreadful Swiss Colbrand, has a good-Nazi notion of honorable, hence unquestioning, service to a master. The happy ending demonstrates how everyone can retain his or her individual sense of honor without loss, Mr. B.'s yielding to Pamela's system of values counterbalanced by her movement in his direction. In Pamela II, he ostentatiously relinquishes the idea of honor altogether, converted by his wife to true Christianity (IV, 377). Of course by this time Pamela too has given up talking so much about her honor.

The meanings of honor, according to the O.E.D., include: (1) "High esteem, deferential admiration"; (2) "Glory, fame, credit, good name"; (3) "Nobleness of mind"; (4) "Chastity, purity"; (5) "Dignity, distinction." Meanings 3 and 4 refer to internal qualities; the other three allude to external judgments of quality or worth. Pamela's high regard for her honor ostensibly concerns her chastity and her essential

nobleness, in contrast to Mr. B.'s preoccupation with his dignity and his social role. His honor, it seems at the outset, almost demands the violation of hers.

Terms of moral value, from a master's point of view, have little meaning in relation to social inferiors. When Mrs. Jervis calls Pamela "innocent," Mr. B. mocks her use of such words as innocent and virtuous. "Well, Mrs. Jervis, you abound with your Epithets! but I take her to be an artful young Baggage; and had I a young handsome Butler or Steward, she'd soon make her Market of one of them, if she thought it worth while to snap at him for a Husband" (I, 26). Mr. B. here articulates precisely the view of Pamela held by Fielding and many later critics: that her apparent innocence serves as a tactic for the "artful young Baggage" to "make her Market" of the most economically advantageous candidate for husband to come her way. Of course, the reader who continues to see Pamela's artfulness as more significant than her virtue will perceive the irony of Mr. B.'s statement. Understanding so clearly exactly what he has to deal with, he yet falls into the trap he sees her preparing for some handsome butler or steward, crucially mistaken in underestimating Pamela's ambition. But one may alternatively believe his mistake more fundamental—as he himself comes to think, learning to value Pamela's innocence—and admire Richardson's fictional daring in spelling out so explicitly the precise view he then refutes. It can be argued that Pamela's artfulness is, in fact, an integral part of her virtue.

Quarrelsome Pamela takes Mr. B.'s language more seriously than he takes it himself. He soon finds her an "Equivocator" (I, 29), partly because she insists on calling attention to what he has said rather than dealing directly with what he means. When he forgets himself so far as to utter the word damn, she complains to her parents, concluding "that when a Person will do wicked Things, it is no Wonder he will speak wicked Words" (I, 43). The asserted connection between words and deeds works entirely to Pamela's advantage. Persisting in maintaining it, she proclaims that her virtue in action makes her a better user of language than her pursuer. "Alack-a-day! what a World we live in! for it is grown more a Wonder, that the Men are resisted, than that the Women comply. This, I suppose, makes me such a Sauce-box, and Bold-face, and a Creature; and all because I won't be a Sauce-box and Bold-face indeed" (I, 90). Her concept of honor, she is the first to point out, differs significantly from her master's, and the difference

derives partly from her awareness of the intimate connection between vocabulary and action.

In a dialogue with Mrs. Jewkes, Pamela broaches the subject of honor. "Why, said she, what can you doubt, when my Master himself assures you of his Honour? . . . But, said I, what do you call Honour? —Why, said she, what does he call Honour, think you?—Ruin! Shame! Disgrace! said I, I fear.— Pho, pho! said she; if you have any Doubt about it, he can best explain his own Meaning" (I, 163). Mrs. Jewkes, who concerns herself with actions rather than words, believes that Pamela's regard for language reflects her aversion to reality. But Pamela continues to see language as her vital resource: if she can expose the discrepancy between B.'s words and his actions, she believes, she can defeat him.

Mr. B. does not lack weapons in the battle of language. One of his aggressive letters charges Pamela with having thrown herself upon Mr. Williams. "As therefore you would place no Confidence in me," he concludes, "my Honour owes you nothing" (I, 223). He here claims the significance of his own notion of honor as derived from the respect and admiration of others. Pamela attempts repeatedly to trap him in the paradox that he demands her wickedness to support his honor. Now he invokes another paradox to defeat her; by failing to respect him she denies his honor and thus obviates any obligation it might place upon him. She tries to refute his argument by repeating her own: "But, it seems, His Honour owes me nothing! So he tells me in his Letter. And Why? Because I am willing to keep mine" (I, 245). But she recognizes the social sanctions that support his view. Her alertness to the possibilities of language, however, enables her to use even his social advantage to her own ends. Acknowledging that his honor must forbid any alliance with her, she resorts to an extravagant rhetoric of humility to insist on the necessary distance between them—precisely the distance that her master is attempting to breach. "Your Honour, well I know, would not let you stoop to so mean and so unworthy a Slave, as the poor *Pamela*: All I desire is, to be permitted to return to my native Meanness, unviolated" (I, 261). If he wants respect he shall have it with a vengeance. Pamela reiterates references to his honor to the point of extreme tedium. She withdraws from her earlier claims of her own: "My Honesty (I am poor and lowly, and am not intitled to call it *Honour*) was in Danger" (I, 298). Her "lowliness," as she uses it, becomes a defensive resource, no index of weakness. She demands,

explicitly and implicitly, that Mr. B. contemplate what his honor really means. When he discovers how to reconcile his notion of honor as appearance with hers of honor as virtue, he can marry her. Pamela explains to her parents that all her previous doubts derived from her worry about his honor (II, 8). Mr. B., on the other hand, begins boasting that his honor and "Purity" equal Pamela's (II, 128); he soon assumes a comfortable position as her moral instructor. Once reconciled, the two notions of honor readily reinforce one another.

To speak of the conflict between Pamela and Mr. B. as one about language ignores the serious questions of value involved. It may usefully suggest, however, the possibility that those clashes of value are less serious than they at first appear. The autobiographies of the eighteenth century, except for the special case of spiritual autobiographies, conspicuously deny—as I have already argued—the importance of fundamental change in human life. David Hume, Edward Gibbon, Colley Cibber, all use their records of themselves to affirm the necessity of their careers. They see in their childhoods, inasmuch as they consider their childhoods at all, omens of what they are to become; they seek everywhere in their pasts the signs that they have turned into historian or actor or philosopher by destiny rather than accident. The spiritual autobiographer must invoke God to account for change; only by the operations of divine grace does a man radically shift direction. Even a man so eager to change as Boswell, determined to make himself over after some model, demonstrates in the succession of his journals a sad recognition that he is forever trapped in a single self. Much may happen to him, much happens within him, but he was always intended, as his father had always maintained, to be a Scots lawyer. He could not turn into Dr. Johnson or the actor West Digges, however ardently he tried.

The patterns of early novels resemble those of autobiography in nothing so much as in this. But the emphasis on inner stability often implies awareness of the possibility and value of manipulating appearances. Mr. B. and his bride share from the beginning their assumption that the judgment of "the world" matters enormously. Like Cibber, like all humanity, they yearn for applause, but they also have a lively sense of the danger, and the probability, that the world will judge them harshly. When Mr. B. has only begun his pursuit of her, Pamela, writing to her parents, comments, "O how poor and mean must those Actions be, and how little must they make the best of Gentlemen look,

when they offer such things as are unworthy of themselves" (I, 20). Her concern with how her actions and his will make them look persists and ramifies throughout her adventures. In the crucial garden scene where Mr. B., like the hero of the Wife of Bath's tale, puts mastery in Pamela's hands, appealing to her to tell him what he ought to do, she finally responds, "As to my poor Thoughts, of what you ought to do, I must needs say, that, indeed, I think you ought to regard the World's Opinion, and avoid doing anything disgraceful to your Birth and Fortune" (I, 293). Predictably, her awareness of the importance of "the World's Opinion" and of what is owing to his "Birth and Fortune" intensifies Mr. B.'s conviction that she is the woman for him. But Pamela must face another test before she can win him. As the result of a misunderstanding, he sends her back to her parents, where she has intensely wished to go. Then he changes his mind, appealing to her to return voluntarily to him. For the first time she has a real choice of action, not merely of resistance or passivity; she must literally decide her direction, knowing the penalties of deciding wrong. She formulates her dilemma as she has formulated his, in terms of the world's opinion. Considering the alternatives, she thinks it might "look as if I was pre-possess'd, as he calls it, if I don't oblige him; and as if it was a silly Female Piece of Pride to make him follow me to my Father's; and as if I would use him hardly in my Turn, for his having used me ill in his." Always as if: the question is not what an action might mean, but how it would look. If she does "oblige him" and he takes advantage of her, she will be in serious straits. With an uncharacteristic bit of irony, reflecting her genuine desperation, Pamela remarks, "to be sure, the World, the wise World, that never is wrong itself, judges always by Events. And if he should use me ill, then I shall be blamed for trusting him" (II, 14). She must make her decision before the event, assessing the likely denouement by her understanding of her character and her wooer's and the ways that circumstance may affect both. And despite her irony at the wise world's expense, she in fact shares its assumption that the event justifies or condemns an action. If her return had meant her seduction, she would have blamed herself, as earlier she blamed herself for being scared from escape by imaginary bulls.

The way in which the world judges the situation before the denouement depends largely on the "light" people are put in, the "eyes" through which others see them. "The World," Mr. B. explains, "sees not your Excellencies and Perfections; if it did, I should intirely stand

acquitted by the severest Censurers" (II, 27). He worries about how Pamela will endure the social ostracism that would follow her marriage. With a return to her extravagant self-deprecatory rhetoric, Pamela responds, "As to me, considering my lowly Estate, and little Merit, even the Slights and Reflections of the Ladies, will be an Honour to me" (II, 28). Mr. B. has just observed that he can endure any reproach from her except "Doubts of my Honour." Pamela's repetition of the crucial noun in this context has perhaps inadvertent ironic force: any notice, she says, seems honor to her. She now participates fully in her lover's view that honor depends upon external recognition. At any rate, Pamela claims (and not for the last time), she cares only about Mr. B.'s acceptance, not about the world.

References to light, eyes, and sight abound in this novel: a set of allusions hinting at the enormous importance of appearance to all the characters. Robert Alan Donovan has perceptively noted of Pamela that "she is perfectly willing to move either up or down in the social scale, but she insists always on having her status known and recognized."19 But recognition is not readily to be achieved—or, more specifically, recognition by one person does not necessarily imply recognition by society at large. Pamela cannily concerns herself mainly with Mr. B.'s perceptions of her. "I see with different Eyes from other People," he remarks early in the novel, claiming that he finds Pamela less pretty than others think her (I, 58). By the novel's end, after a neighbor has suggested that Pamela "eclipses" them all, "You are very kind, Madam, said he, that you, and all my worthy Neighbours, see with my Eyes" (II, 350). He sees more than he once did. Now the guestion of Pamela's prettiness has receded; he perceives her internal and external qualities as justifying her in the sight of the world, and with some relief he resumes his position at ease in a community of his peers.

Pamela, repeatedly put on display, manifests various emotional responses to this trying situation. On one such occasion, not long before her marriage, Mr. B. tells her that he has invited various guests to dinner, having "promised them a Sight of my beloved Girl" (II, 41). One of the young ladies has begged "it as a Favour, that they may see you just as you are"—meaning, it seems, wearing her country garb. Pamela, agreeing to appear thus, demurs that "your Goodness beholds your poor Servant in a Light greatly beyond her Merit! But it must not be expected, that others, ladies especially, will look upon me with your favourable Eyes" (II, 42). Ladies, she means specifically, are

unlikely to be charmed by the rustic costume she has devised for herself.

When the neighbors actually appear for the anticipated social occasion, "They all so gaz'd at me, that I could not look up; for I think it is one of the Distinctions of Persons of Condition, and well-bred People, to put bashful Bodies out of Countenance" (II, 60). Such socially directed anger rarely manifests itself in Pamela's responses. In an earlier episode, when Mrs. Jewkes ordered her to dress up for a visit from Lady Darnford's daughters, she refused to obey, telling the housekeeper "I would not be made a Shew of" (I, 247). But one who asks as frequently as Pamela "in what Light must I appear to the World?" (I, 283) must acknowledge the world's right to look at her. Although she resents the necessity of concerning herself with society's judgment of her, considering that the idle rich will ignore her condemnation of them, she also accepts the situation as a corollary of class distinctions too binding to be challenged. (Pamela, of course, does challenge the notion of inevitable correlation between class and worth, but not the necessity of maintaining distinctions. Indeed, she repeatedly, and apparently sincerely, reproaches her master for violating them by his sexual overtures.)

In observing that Mr. B. perceives her in a flattering light that his neighbors are unlikely to share, Pamela is not merely thinking about her clothes. She hints that Mr. B. recognizes her inner worth, whereas the ladies will be more likely to judge by external measures. The relation between clothing and true value creates one of the novel's subthemes. Carey McIntosh has made some penetrating observations about the frequent allusions to clothing in Pamela, pointing out the connections between apparel and sexual attractiveness (the descriptions of people dressing and undressing are particularly relevant to this point) and the use of clothing as an indicator of social class.²⁰ The inordinate focus on what people wear and what they own also bears significantly on the whole question of appearance. Costumes define roles. When Mr. B. wants to impress Pamela, he demands that she come look at him in his court apparel (I, 86). When she wants to impress him, she dons her carefully calculated country outfit, which he refers to as a "Disguise" (I, 70), provoking her to the claim that she has "been in Disguise indeed" ever since she has lived in his house (I, 71). She looks out the window in Lincolnshire to see him "charmingly dress'd." "To be sure," she reflects, "he is a handsome fine Gentleman"

—adding hastily, "What Pity his Heart is not as good as his Appearance!" (I, 268). Pamela's most significant claim for herself, which she never makes aloud but allows others to make for her, is that her attractive appearance reflects inner virtue.

When Mr. B. spells out his dishonorable proposals to Pamela, he stresses fine clothes and jewels as a reward for compliance. She rejects his overtures contemptuously: "Fine Cloaths, Sir, become not me; nor have I any Ambition to wear them. I have greater Pride in my Poverty and Meanness, than I should have in Dress and Finery" (I, 259). Her best jewel, she continues predictably, is her virtue. His honor forbids his stooping so low as Pamela (I, 261); as for her, "I am also above making an Exchange of my Honesty for all the Riches of the *Indies*. When I come to be proud and vain of gaudy Apparel, and outside Finery; then (which, I hope, will never be) may I rest my principal Good in such vain Trinkets, and despise for them the more solid Ornaments of a good Fame and a Chastity inviolate!" (I, 262). The unexceptionable rectitude of that position is echoed subsequently by the reformed Mr. B. (II, 98). In fact outward appearance means a great deal to Mr. B. and to his bride and, apparently, to their creator. Pamela's recurrent dilemmas about what to wear involve more than the ambiguities of her social position. In choosing a costume, as in telling a story, she asserts herself. "I won't, I think, change my Garb," Pamela reflects after her voluntary return to her master. "Should I do it, it would look as if I would be nearer on a Level with him: And yet, should I not, it may be thought a Disgrace to him?" (II, 24). Another version of the problem, presented in her observations to Mr. B. on their approaching marriage: "But, as I know, that every Slight to me, if I come to be so happy, will be, in some measure, a Slight to you, I will beg of you, Sir, not to let me go very fine in Dress; but appear only so, as that you may not be asham'd of it, after the Honour I shall have of being call'd by your worthy Name: For well I know, Sir, that nothing so much excites the Envy of my own Sex, as seeing a Person set above them in Appearance, and in Dress" (II, 31). One must not claim by appearance more than one can justify in action. Yet to fail to demand sufficient attention from the world also involves danger. After their marriage, Mr. B. commands Pamela "not to mind, as you once proposed, what other Ladies will say; but to appear as my Wife ought to do. Else it will look as if what you thought of, as a Means to avoid the Envy of others of your Sex, was a wilful Slight in me, which, I hope, I never

shall be guilty of; and I will shew the World, that I value you as I ought, and as if I had marry'd the first Fortune in the Kingdom" (II, 158). Pamela and Mr. B. share the same concern with slights and with what and how they show the world. The characters' complex manipulation of appearances produces the happy ending, with Pamela content to be her master's possession. She "shews the World" something about him, finally, more than about herself; on the next to the last page of the novel she appears "dressed out"—as if without her own volition—"only to be admired" (II, 359). She no longer needs to make her own subtle determinations about proper appearances but allows her importance to be asserted for her by her dress.

Yet, of course, the novel values—as Pamela herself values—some ideal of sincerity: "the strict correspondence of internal state and external action, stated intention and actual intention, appearance and reality . . . an ideal of behavior, complex and coherent, which transcends social status and lends integrity to every individual who practises it." And indeed the heroine's constant public performance is designed precisely to attest her "sincerity": this virtue she claims for her writing and for the self that writing reflects. When most artful, Pamela is often most "sincere," her artifice authoritatively demonstrating her authenticity. "Reality" matters more than "appearance," but only through the successful manipulation of appearances can reality be recognized.

By the novel's ending, everyone admires Pamela: her husband, her husband's illegitimate daughter, his sister, his neighbors, the local parson, the servants: everyone. A fictional character, she has achieved the apotheosis attainable only in fiction, the blissful reception of universal applause that Cibber can only fantasize. To be sure, she has braved temporary disapproval from various quarters but with unwavering proclamations of her own integrity as her motivating force. Her goodness creates her triumph.

Fielding describes Cibber's *Apology* as a work that, dealing "in Male-Virtue, was written by the great Person himself, who lived the Life he hath recorded, and is by many thought to have lived such a Life only in order to write it."²² Affectation implies audience. The meaning of writing about the self, both Cibber and Pamela suggest, involves the presentation of the individual to an audience both imagined and literal—the two by no means necessarily identical. What

audience does the autobiographer imagine? Gibbon, in his series of false starts, seems to be explaining himself to his father; Mrs. Thrale, with one eye on posterity, yet wishes above all to justify herself to her mother; Fanny Burney, defining "nobody" as her reader, asserts for her own benefit the interest of her experience. David Hume, dying, conjures up an imaginary readership of his peers. Tristram, imaginary autobiographer, fancies an audience alternately hostile and sympathetic, representing always a potential challenge to the writer. Colley Cibber, too, speaks repeatedly of his readers, engages in fanciful dialogue with them, and makes of his Apology a drama of relationship between self and audience. Not that his audience is clearly defined: hence its treacherous potential. Heterogeneous, unpredictable, as eager to damn as to praise, it resembles the miscellaneous crowd that might attend a play. The writer, like an actor-he is, after all, an actor—ambivalently recognizes his spectators as a source both of danger and reward.

Writing of his early career, Cibber justifies acting as a profession on various tenuous grounds, concluding with a tribute to the wonder "of Publick Applause, which, when truly merited, is, perhaps, one of the most agreeable Gratifications that venial Vanity can feel" (p. 73). When the young actor wins his first success, as the chaplain in Otway's *The Orphan*, he summarizes, "Here was the first Applause I ever receiv'd, which, you may be sure, made my Heart leap with a higher Joy, than may be necessary to describe" (p. 149). He remembers the exact sound and sequence of an audience's expressed approval (p. 169), and that approval fully compensated, in his mind, for financial insufficiency.

Yet he cannot altogether trust it. "Applause," he points out, "does not always stay for, nor always follow intrinsick Merit; Applause will frequently open, like a young Hound, upon a wrong Scent; and the Majority of Auditors, you know, are generally compos'd of Babblers, that are profuse of their Voices, before there is any thing on foot, that calls for them" (pp. 180-81). In retrospect, Cibber believes his attempting to perfect his powers as a tragedian was a hopeless task, for the public bases its judgment on superficial criteria, valuing a strong voice (which Cibber lacked) more than all the skills of the knowledgeable and thoughtful actor (p. 180). The public, he comes to believe, is interested only in decadence and evil. It prefers to hear of a man's defects rather than his virtues; those who find character assassination "de-

lightful" may "know how to please the World better" than Cibber (p. 407).

By such logic the writer's, and the actor's, failures become indices of success. When he wins applause, approval suggests his true merit; his failure to win it also demonstrates his quality. Self-applause, a resource always at his disposal, remains a powerful defense, declaring his superiority of judgment to those so misguided as to damn and hoot his productions. Self-righteousness often proves as sweet as applause.

An actor, playwright, and theater manager, Cibber depended throughout his career on public esteem for economic security; indeed, for survival. Even apart from the fact that his *Apology* itself represents a transparent bid for esteem (as the title suggests, with its implicit reference to audience), it is clear that the actor cannot salve wounds to his pride simply by announcing their irrelevance. His dependence on others traps him. In the autobiography he attempts to fight his way out of his dilemma without fully acknowledging its existence. His clearest formulations of his fundamental problem emerge through his accounts of the only two childhood episodes that he relates.

Like many other eighteenth-century autobiographers, Cibber apparently considers much of his youthful experience irrelevant to his mature accomplishment. In the light of his destiny as poet laureate, however, he tells of two early poetic efforts, his emphasis focused not on literary impulse but on its public effects. His introduction to the two schoolboy episodes suggests that they will concern themselves with "Passions." "However little worth notice the Life of a School-boy may be supposed to contain, yet, as the Passions of Men and Children have much the same Motives and differ very little in their Effects, unless where the elder Experience may be able to conceal them: As therefore what arises from the Boy, may possibly be a Lesson to the Man, I shall venture to relate a Fact, or two, that happen'd while I was still at School" (pp. 25-26). At the death of Charles II, he explains, his schoolmaster commanded the students to produce a funeral oration. All refused except Cibber, who, "ever giddily forward, and thoughtless of Consequence," produced an effusion about the dead king's "Affability" (p. 27). When the other boys insisted upon their inability, the master understood their reluctance as a mark of modesty rather than idleness but rewarded Cibber's industry by setting him at the head of the form. As a result, "I was so jeer'd, laugh'd at, and hated as a pragmatical Bastard (Schoolboy Language) who had betray'd the whole

Form, that scarce any of 'em wou'd keep me company . . . Notwithstanding which, my Stupidity cou'd take no Warning from their Treatment" (p. 28). Shortly afterwards, at the coronation of the new king, the school petitioned for a holiday, which the master agreed to grant if any of the boys would produce an English ode upon the occasion. Cibber, in half an hour, wrote one, not very good, he confesses; "Yet bad as it was, it serv'd to get the School a Play-day, and to make me not a little vain upon it; which last Effect so disgusted my Play-fellows, that they left me out of the Party I had most a mind to be of, in that Day's Recreation. But their Ingratitude serv'd only to increase my Vanity; for I consider'd them as so many beaten Tits, that had just had the Mortification of seeing my Hack of a *Pegasus* come in before them" (p. 29).

These two stories of social isolation and ostracism hint at a characteristic set of "Passions" in the narrator. He explicitly blames himself for giddiness, forwardness, thoughtlessness, stupidity, and bad writing. On the other hand, there can be no question about his pride in his own skill at setting himself apart from his contemporaries by superior daring and enterprise, if not genius. His Pegasus, hack though it may be, wins the race. To be set apart constitutes, for Cibber as for others, both glory and doom. Placed at the head of the form, he has achieved distinction, but his schoolmates, suddenly become his "audience," jeer and "hate" him, and many years later the autobiographer recollects the exact language of their taunts. The emotional complexity of these episodes and the mixture of tones in which Cibber relates them, imply the entire problem of audience. The performer's passionate desire for approval wars with his hatred of those who withhold it, and his sense of superiority is at odds with a deeper conviction of inferiority. (His schoolfellows mysteriously turn out to exemplify modesty in what he perceives as their laziness, and his success makes him hated. Perhaps he is inherently hateful?) His deep confusion of values stems from his heavy reliance on the opinions of others. The same feelings persist throughout his career, helping the autobiographer to express the hopeless confusions of the performer's lot. One piece of "Stupidity" leads the youth to the next. He has learned that he can write on command, that he can win by writing (however bad) approval from his elders, and that he can survive the disapproval of his peers. Surely he hopes for the miracle that will convert their mockery to enthusiasm, and his entire career seems foreshadowed in its beginnings. Aspiring desperately to reduce the ambiguities of his situation by achieving some lasting applause that both he and the applauders will believe fully deserved, he demonstrates how inevitably ambiguity persists.

The Apology itself, of course, constitutes one more performance, more ambitious than schoolboy oration or ode but like them intended to testify the writer's power and justify his "specialness." "You find by the setting out of my History," he reminds his readers, "that I always intended myself the Heroe of it" (p. 147). He is certainly a comic hero, triumphing over adversity and achieving reconciliation in the end. But Cibber's doubts about his readers interfere with his narrative. If he irritates and confuses the reader by his blurred focus and shifting intent, what more can he expect? His long experience of audiences has generated his skepticism about the fidelity of readers.

Of course he knows of more than one kind of reader. He may hope to appeal to special interests, as when he praises Henry Brett, remarking, "If my taking this Liberty may find Pardon from several of his fair Relations, still living, for whom I profess the utmost Respect, it will give me but little Concern, tho' my critical Readers should think it all Impertinence" (p. 302). But the thought of those generalized critical readers rankles, whatever he tries to do with it. Sometimes, dreading that he may have only a few readers, he comforts himself by recalling his many spectators (p. 349). Sometimes, allowing himself a specific fantasy about the response he may receive, he engages in debate with an imagined reader—a device that Fielding and Sterne would adapt to fictional purposes. "What's all this idle Prate, you may say, to the matter in hand? Why, I say your Question is a little too critical; and if you won't give an Author leave, now and then, to embellish his Work, by a natural Reflexion, you are an ungentle Reader. But I have done with my Digression, and return to our Theatre at Hampton-Court, where I am not sure the Reader, be he ever so nice, will meet with any thing more worth his notice: However, if he happens to read, as I write, for want of something better to do, he will go on . . . " (p. 451). The characteristic mixture of self-doubt and belligerence marks Cibber's constant attempt to ascertain what it is that the reader (the audience, the other) wants. He may fancy that he shares assumptions with his reader: "The very Word, Ode, I know, makes you smile already; and so it does me" (p. 28). The word is a joke because of Cibber's notoriously bad efforts as poet laureate. By participating in the reader's smile, he declares his willingness to mock himself for the sake

of approval, even though, with an immediate return to the aggressive stance, he promptly denies complicity in the attacks on his own performance. He begs the reader to tolerate him, and he hopes that the reader will resemble him. His passion for applause and his uncertainty about how best to win it emerge in almost all his many references and addresses to his readers, which contrast sharply with, for example, the equivalent authorial interpolations of *Tom Jones* with their air of easy mastery.

By Fielding's standards, as articulated in Joseph Andrews, Cibber cares too much what others think of him, while failing to discriminate clearly who those others are. "How artfully doth [Cibber], by insinuating that he escaped being promoted to the highest Stations in Church and State, teach us a Contempt of worldly Grandeur! how strongly doth he inculcate an absolute Submission to our Superiors! Lastly, how completely doth he arm us against so uneasy, so wretched a Passion as the Fear of Shame; how clearly doth he expose the Emptiness and Vanity of that Fantom, Reputation!"23 The complaints focus on Cibber's presentation of his relationships with others and on the attitude toward public opinion implied by his narrative. Fielding rightly perceives the self-justifying streak that makes Cibber interpret all his deeds and experiences to his own advantage, unable to admit failure, error, or serious weakness. Yet the Apology becomes absorbing largely as a result of this psychic limitation and from the book's specific delineation of the penalties and rewards of intense caring about the opinion of others—penalties and rewards dramatized in the autobiography's discursive form as well as its content.

Writing about the self—as opposed to merely thinking—establishes at least a potential relationship to the outside world. Not even the extreme possibility that the writer may comprise the sole audience for his own production obviates the fact that writing is always display, and even in reflexive display, the articulated differs from the unarticulated self.

Display implies both danger and reward: such is a constant theme of Pamela's writing and of Cibber's. Pamela, a performer in her writing, reveals the constant performance of her life. Colley Cibber perceives his autobiography as the counterpart of the professional performance by which he has earned his living. Both reveal the uneasiness that attends the effort at self-justification. Both put their best face,

best foot, best self forward, with some cosmetic effort, some enlarging effect of fantasy, and some smoothing out. The act of writing in itself thus reminds one of the intimate connection between sincerity and artifice in all forms of art.

But such writing as Pamela's and Cibber's, by persistently calling attention to its own status as performance, implicitly invites the reader to consider not only what the performance reveals—its sincerity—but what it attempts to conceal. In *Pamela II*, for example, Pamela's first quarrel with her husband concerns her proposal to nurse her own child, an idea that he violently rejects on many grounds including his "Fondness for her personal Graces" (IV, 13), which he fears will be damaged by suckling. Yet Pamela, yielding to his will only when admonished by her father to do so, invokes nature as her sanction for self-will.

One can readily understand Pamela's position as belonging to the middle-class morality that Richardson through her so vigorously supports. She demonstrates her goodness both by her desire to be a loving mother and by her eventual willingness to submit to her husband's desires. Yet one can also discern a hidden drama here as elsewhere in the novel. "The decision to employ a nurse," a historian writes about eighteenth-century practice, "was as much as anything a sexual triumph for the father."24 Sexual intercourse was prohibited during nursing. The quarrel over Pamela's relation to her infant thus recalls her earlier unwillingness to give herself sexually to Mr. B. Understanding the dynamics of power in man-woman relationships, Pamela endeavors to retain as much control as possible in her marriage by the only means at her disposal; her reputation for and her performance of undeviating virtue. Mr. B., in this instance as in earlier episodes, wins his sexual triumph, but Pamela has once more dramatized her resources for resistance. Lady Davers anticipates that Pamela's letters to her will compose "a kind of Narrative purposely designed to entertain us here" (III, 40) and reports that "Lady Betty says, It is the best Story she has heard" (III, 31). Displaying her virtue through entertaining narrative, winning her audience by her story, Pamela gratifies her vanity and consolidates her power. And the narrative calls attention always to the hidden purposes it serves.

Pamela's narrative allows us to perceive the hidden aggressiveness beneath her apparent passivity; Cibber's reveals the weakness beneath apparent strength. His bluster of self-aggrandizement and his perfor-

mance of success imperfectly conceal the insecurity of his utter dependency and his consequent inability to participate in genuine human interchange. He admits sexual feeling, for example, in relation to the Duchess of Marlborough, whom, as a young man, he once served at table. He confesses that her beauty "struck me into a Regard that had something softer than the most profound Respect in it" (p. 59); then he belligerently justifies himself because he has kept such "impertinent" thoughts secret for fifty years. The rather hostile apology generates in him fresh assertiveness. He begins to speculate on the meaning of the Duchess's undeviating good fortune. The paragraph concludes, "I now return to our Military Affairs" (p. 60).

The sequence exemplifies the special flavor of Cibber's self-revelation. It relates a single personal fact: he served a beautiful woman wine and became infatuated with her beauty. (That fact takes on special importance since the autobiography reports so little intimate relationship with women.) Then it deviates into observations on the Duchess's career, reflections on what that career might signify, and a conclusion implicitly apologizing for digressiveness. But observations, reflections, and apologies—all part of the demonstration of authorial savoir faire, intellectual quality, and sense of entitlement—reveal the person behind them. The insistence of the demonstration and the constant pressure toward self-justification suggest the vulnerability of the man never unaware that someone else will read and judge what he writes.

Both works create partial illusions of formlessness. *Pamela* appears shaped by simple chronology; the exigencies of letter-writing and journal-keeping involve repetition of pious sentiments, retelling of the same events, and, at one point, the awkward intervention of the "editor" to narrate in his own voice happenings not plausibly reportable by Pamela. The leisurely pace and spontaneous air of a story told in her own words by a naïve young girl conceal the novelist's skillful shaping. It comes as something of a shock to realize how consistently the pursuit of honor and the awareness of audience have shaped the sequence. With the atmosphere of random narrative, *Pamela* yet contains nothing extraneous: every detail of vocabulary, of personal response, and of action helps to sustain its psychic argument. The *Apology*, too, achieves unity through frequent digression, free association, and vacillation between the public and private sphere. It asserts the almost inevitable unity of an individual's account of him-

self and of every real story if not every life, with the singleness of passion triumphing over disorder.

And both works, finally, exemplify the same crucial function of writing about the self: to demonstrate to an audience, real or imagined, the integrity and significance of individual identity, and thus to make that identity real. The drama of both lives is one of self-assertion. For male and female character alike, to assert the self in writing helps the writer to resist the psychic inroads of his or her experienced powerlessness in a society that is felt as hostile. Writing creates the vital illusion of power (however qualified) over an audience.

8

Young Men's Fancies: James Boswell, Henry Fielding

he series of texts we have examined imply with increasing emphasis the participation of the act of writing—writing fiction or fact—in the larger actions of living. Tristram, trying to win his battle against death by recording it; the women writers, creating through their fictions defensive fantasies against the restrictions of their experience; Fanny Burney, reinforcing her avoidance of wrong by converting writing itself into an exemplification of virtue; Pamela, affirming her self's significance in endless words; Cibber, displaying himself through language for one more audience: all insist that writing partakes of the drama of individual experience. James Boswell and Henry Fielding, vivid literary figures, investigate as well as embody this phenomenon. In extended journals and artfully contrived third-person novels, they study the place of imagination in psychic life, recognizing imagination's dual role as literary and personal resource. To examine their work enables the critic to enlarge his perception of how selfhood can be conveyed and what the conveying may mean.

The formal principle that unifies Boswell's journals differs sharply from that discernible in Fanny Burney's diaries. The controlling forms that governed Miss Burney's social conduct governed also her recording of it, literature thus becoming an extension of life, freer in some ways yet accepting the same necessities of moral discipline. For Boswell, life often threatened to turn into an extension of literature. Discussing the value of journal-keeping with Dr. Johnson and Lord Trim-

lestown, Boswell elaborates the analogy between a lady's looking at herself in a glass and a man's seeing himself in his journal: "And as a lady adjusts her dress before a mirror, a man adjusts his character by looking at his journal." By studying his journal he discovers and partly controls who he is. The dynamism of Fanny Burney's account of herself derives from the tension between her need for freedom and her dedication to socially defined virtue; Boswell's record achieves its intensity by its commitment to infinite personal possibility.

To appreciate the special phenomenon of Boswell as a diarist, one must turn again to an approach through literary structure. What can be the source of his journals' powerful, consistent inner form? John N. Morris suggests that "the sense of the essential unity of a passage in Boswell's life that we sometimes derive from large sections of the Journals is owing not so much to his loyalty to actual time as to his relentless preoccupation with an idea, a person, or a feeling."² Behind such unity of preoccupation, of course, must lie the unity of personality. To quote David Goldknopf on fiction: "I-narration forces us to acknowledge what third-person narrative would merely encourage us to surmise: the role of the interpretative consciousness in the drama before us." The statement applies as well to literal as to fictional firstperson narration. "Interpretative consciousness" creates the drama it narrates and creates its form. My argument is more extreme than Morris's—an argument for the unity not simply of "large sections" but of volumes, and even of the whole sequence of volumes. And this kind of unity, I would maintain, testifies the presence in Boswell's journals of a coherent "plot," in the sense in which Ronald Crane uses the term.

Crane's famous essay on the plot of *Tom Jones* brilliantly suggests the kind of claim that can be made for plot's importance.

I shall assume that any novel or drama is a composite of three elements, which unite to determine its character and effect—the things that are imitated (or "rendered") in it, the linguistic medium in which they are imitated, and the manner or technique of imitation; and I shall assume further that the things imitated necessarily involve human beings interacting with one another in ways determined by, and in turn affecting, their moral characters and their states of mind (i.e., their reasonings, emotions, and attitudes). If this is granted, we may say that the plot of any novel or drama is the particular temporal synthesis effected by the writer among the elements of action, character, and thought that constitute the matter of his invention . . . A plot, in the enlarged sense here given to

the term, is not merely a particular synthesis of particular materials of character, thought, and action, but such a synthesis endowed necessarily, because it imitates in words a sequence of human activities, with a certain power to affect our opinions and emotions . . . The positive excellence of [a good plot] depends upon the capacity of its peculiar synthesis of character, action, and thought to move our feelings powerfully and pleasurably in a certain definite way . . . It follows, consequently, that the plot, considered formally, of any artistic work is, in relation to the work as a whole, not simply a means—a "framework" or "mere mechanism"—but rather the final end which everything in the work, if that is to be felt as a whole, must be made, directly or indirectly, to serve.4

Crane, writing about fiction, assumes that plot, in his enlarged sense of the term, derives largely from the conscious invention of the author. But journals, as well as novels and plays, imitate or render life in a linguistic medium; the journal-writer employs his special "manner or technique of imitation"; his subject involves the interaction of people and the revelation of moral character and of states of mind—principally, of course, his own. Boswell's journals move us powerfully by their rendition of character, action, and thought. And, despite the fact that life supplies the events they report, they can be judged on the basis of their plot.

This summary obviously implies the organic development of plot from the very substance of life experience. It implies also that the reader's interest in diary and autobiography is essentially identical with his interest in fiction, both equally testifying the compelling power of images of action and of passion. Action or passion claimed as the experience of a real person may move us in particularly intense ways, but once set down on paper it too comprises only an imitation of reality, one not necessarily closer to reality's source than artful, avowed fiction customarily is. Yet the presence of something one can call plot in a diary raises perplexing problems. Unless, like the spiritual autobiographers and their contemporary readers, one accepts the notion of God as the Great Artificer of individual lives, one must conclude that either in the living or in the telling, human beings often create artistic shapes—shapes of coherent psychic meaning—for their life stories, perhaps even living those shapes.

Literature suggests, as life often does too, that one must imagine himself before he can finally be himself. The world does not necessarily allow a person to be all that he can imagine; usually he cannot

permit himself even to try to fulfill his own fantasies, nor does he necessarily possess the capacity to realize them. Yet sequences of imagining—repeated acts of imagination and repeated efforts to reconcile imagination with actuality—remain a vital component of maturity.

Boswell's London Journal has in common with Fielding's novel Tom Jones—written, of course, almost a quarter of a century earlier—its concentration on youth rather than maturity as subject. Formal autobiographies rarely record convincingly the process of maturing. A middle-aged or elderly man or woman, looking back over a lifetime, seeing what he was in the light of what he has become, forgets choices in order to accept necessities. Impossible to conceive, once identity is established, that we might have been fundamentally otherwise. The little boy hopes that he will drive a fire engine and be a hero; the grown man knows that he had to become a pharmacist. The woman who dreams of the life she might have had as concert pianist, the man whose fantasies remind him of beautiful women unsought, unfound—such imaginers also feel that the possibilities they remember never really existed. What they wistfully remember is the sense of possibility that belongs uniquely to youth.

The London Journal and Tom Jones also share, as I have already suggested, their preoccupation with the relation between imagination and living, specifically between the processes of writing and those of experiencing. The Fielding who presents himself as a character in his own fiction calls attention to many implications of the writing down of events and the recording of character. The twenty-two-year-old Boswell who sets down his day by day experience testifies an intricate process of self-creation, specifying the centrality of imagination in the career of a young man not yet professionally committed to imaginative endeavor. Both elucidate more problems than they can solve.

To record a life helps to create it: asserting the comprehensibility of his past identity, the author discovers who he is, and determines who he will be. Boswell wants to be—quite simply—a great man; any attainable greatness will serve. Like the protagonists of *Tom Jones* and *Joseph Andrews*, he needs to discover his place in the world; the process of discovery creates the journal's inner action and its plot. Boswell finds, during the year he reports, a more viable identity than that he possesses at the beginning, but his finding is also a making, of life as well as literature. He has to invent himself. So does Fielding, for different reasons and in a different sense in each successive novel. Wayne

Booth has pointed out how greatly the "implied authors" of Fielding's various works differ from one another. Each serves a special dramatic purpose; each delineates a particular form of the perplexing drama of self-invention.

Almost at the midpoint of the London Journel, Boswell remarks the discrepancy between the image of himself that he had hoped to record and the one actually emerging. "I wished [my journal] to contain a consistent picture of a young fellow eagerly pushing through life. But it serves to humble me, and it presents a strange and curious view of the unaccountable nature of the human mind. I am now well and gay. Let me consider that the hero of a romance or novel must not go uniformly along in bliss, but the story must be chequered with bad fortune. Aeneas met with many disasters in his voyage to Italy, and must not Boswell have his rubs?"6 If the comparisons convey characteristic self-mockery and more covert self-glorification, they also suggest the hidden underpinnings of this journal. Setting down his life as it takes place, Boswell recreates himself as a fictional hero: Macheath, perhaps, if not Aeneas (e.g., p. 264); or an archetypal "Man of Pleasure" (p. 140); or a mythological version of Addison (p. 62). He needs to feel his interludes of "bad fortune" as mere vicissitudes attesting his heroism, good fortune and bad alike belonging to a pattern elaborately constructing itself toward the necessary happy ending.

The journal, Boswell understands, is a work of the imagination (p. 202), a word having for him primarily its Addisonian sense of the faculty that reproduces images. But the Addisonian meaning readily expands, as it was expanding for other writers of the period.7 In the introductory section, explaining his motivation for keeping a journal, Boswell runs through a sequence of orthodox literary and moral pieties, beginning with an assertion of the value of self-knowledge. Toward the end of these justifications, he observes, "Very often we have more pleasure in reflecting on agreeable scenes that we have been in than we had from the scenes themselves" (p. 40). The crucial noun carries its theatrical meaning for Boswell as for Richardson.8 Soon afterwards, Boswell refers to his pleasure in "the scene of being a son setting out from home for the wide world" (15 Nov. 1762; p. 41)—a pleasure clearly derived from seeing his experience in literary terms. Long before he supplied his dramatic renditions of Dr. Johnson's performances, Boswell was a sharp observer of his own, and the recapturing

of scenes in which he could understand himself as having played a glamorous role or create after the fact the glamor that he had not directly experienced, exercised his imagination. Unlike Cibber and Pamela, though, he felt himself to be his most significant audience.

The work of the imagination is not, from Boswell's point of view, real work. He associates imaginative activity with pleasure, an undertone of guilt sometimes suffusing it. Trying obsessively to assess his own character, Boswell congratulates himself on having worked hard at his journal, letters, and essays. Then he reflects that these are "all works chiefly of the imagination," and that he could never work equally hard at the law, "hearing a heavy agent explain a heavy cause, and then to be obliged to remember and repeat distinctly the dull story, probably of some very trivial affair" (25 Feb. 1762; p. 202). Yet his own trivial affairs, transformed by his imaginative reproduction of them, seem to him (and to us, his readers) anything but dull, and his capacity to "remember and repeat distinctly" comprises the genius of the journal.9 His preservation of his experience guards against depression. "An Hypochondriack," he would explain later, "is subject to forgetfulness," due often to the "darkness in his mind." He must try to stock his mind with as many "agreeable ideas" as possible, to protect him from the "total vacancy" of "wintery days." 10 Boswell's journal provides his stock; it is an artificial memory.

The sin of which Fielding accused Cibber—living his life in order to record it—defines Boswell. "Sometimes it has occurred to me that a man should not live more than he can record, as a farmer should not have a larger crop than he can gather in."11 Confined to his rooms for several weeks of treatment for venereal disease, he worries that he may lack sufficient material for his writing, then congratulates himself because such fears prove unjustified. "How easily and cleverly do I write just now! I am really pleased with myself; words come skipping to me like lambs upon Moffat Hill; and I turn my periods smoothly and imperceptibly like a skilful wheelwright turning tops in a turningloom. There's fancy! There's simile! In short, I am at present a genius" (9 Feb. 1763; p. 187). Although his self-awareness again bears an edge of self-ridicule, he also reveals an important truth. As experience converts itself into "periods," the turning of a sentence temporarily replaces the attempt to turn his life in new directions. Temple's warning of the dangers of journal-keeping, in terms foretelling the injunctions young Fanny Burney would receive ("he imagined that my journal did

me harm, as it made me hunt about for adventures to adorn it with"; 25 May 1763, p. 269) acknowledges the temptation to subordinate life to art; the record suggests how frequently Boswell succumbed to it.

Boswell's relation to his own imagination focuses his journal's drama as he details the struggle to reconcile inner and outer reality, and to discover the principle of reconciliation. For Tom Jones and his fictional contemporaries, the battle to find a place in the world involved coming to understand the demands of actuality and to conform to the standards of society without undue compromise of individual integrity. Boswell faced equivalent demands, social pressures, and fears of compromise. But he also faced, with full awareness, the trap of subjectivity. Were his ideas about himself and about the world valid guides to conduct or illusions created by an overheated imagination? The problem, which troubled Robinson Crusoe in fiction and William Cowper in fact, exists for everyone. But Crusoe and Cowper do not fully recognize it as a difficulty; Boswell's painful knowledge repeatedly confounds him. Even his most "whimsical" ideas, testifying the vitality of his inner life, feel to him both valuable and dangerous.

The most obvious paradox in Boswell's nature is his dual commitment to his "warm heart and . . . vivacious fancy" (p. 54) and to an ideal of "coolness and moderation" (p. 65). "I... went coolly to bed. There's conduct for you" (p. 71). His emotional vacillations lead him to rational conclusions and away from them. Although he claims a true character as reserved, grave, proper, he also asserts the validity of feeling as the ultimate test of character (p. 228) and the significance of imagination as a means to transcendent experience (e.g., p. 294). He struggles not merely to control his imagination by reason, but also to use it as a guide to truth. The reconciliation achieved by the end of the London Journal involves a profound commitment to that "blest imagination" (p. 181) that can illuminate as well as transform reality. Boswell's acceptance of his own nature amounts to a dramatic denouement for the interior development of the London months. His decision about his career and his reconciliation with his father may be understood as offshoots of that fundamental self-acceptance. If the journal has not fully enabled him to know himself, it has helped him to come to terms with himself even without full understanding.

From the journal's beginning, it is clear that certain kinds of fanciful ideas seem to Boswell ends in themselves. To choose London as residence involves the choice of imaginative stimulation. It is as though

the filling of the mind with "London images" (p. 177) represents salvation. If he can furnish his imagination with the correct raw material, stocking up for his old age and protecting himself from disagreeable external facts, he may avoid confronting his inadequacy to his ambitions. The proper ideas and images, in fact, may miraculously make him adequate, guarding against those terrible fantasies that issue from within.

For although Boswell glorified his "blest imagination," he also feared "the sickly suggestions of inconsistent fancy" (p. 205) and attributed his intermittent misery to the "frightful imaginations" that sometimes populated his mind (p. 254). London would provide, he anticipated, a talisman against them. He would rely on abundant external stimuli to ward off the dangerous inner forces that he felt often powerless to combat. At the beginning of his journal, leaving Edinburgh, he stops his chaise to bow to the Palace, the crown of Scotland, and "that lofty romantic mountain," Arthur Seat (p. 41). He then explains at length how remarkable is the character such actions reveal. At the journal's end, preparing to leave London, he stands in the middle of St. Paul's Cathedral and bows to every quarter of it (p. 331). London has not saved him from himself; his "frightful imaginations" overtake him there as in Scotland. 12 But London has educated him. He is still capable of romantic reverence (although he takes pains to point out that Dr. Johnson shares his high regard for St. Paul's) but less self-conscious and self-congratulatory about his capacities. The London images and English ideas he has absorbed have broadened his perspective. John Morris has noted that "Boswell desires among other things to enlarge himself, to incorporate within himself as many kinds of experience as possible."13 Fulfilling this passionate desire in London, he learns as a result that no single experience deserves taking too seriously. The bowing to St. Paul's occupies two sentences; then the diarist moves on to Dr. Johnson's bon mot about woman preachers. Hungering for internal as well as external experience, he would not miss the opportunity to test and display his feelings by bowing to the cathedral, a symbolic act of leave-taking as well as obeisance. But he no longer protests that his feelings make him remarkable. He has learned to value the external world of people and things at least partly for its own sake as well as for the private images and ideas it generates.

Through most of the journal he wonders how to determine the real

nature of that external world. From the beginning he recognizes uneasily that his ideas bear no necessary relation to things in themselves. He faces a symbolic choice between studying law, as his father wishes, and becoming a Guardsman, his own romantic dream. His positive thoughts about the army all partake of his confused fantasy of independence. Whenever he actually examines the soldier's life, however, or even thinks concretely about the nature of soldiers' work, he realizes his lack of military vocation. Because the idea of the Guards is so intimately connected with that of London, any dissatisfaction with the actual city extends itself readily to disinclination for the military. "I thought London a bad place for me. I imagined I had lost all relish of it ... I thought I would go immediately down to Edinburgh, and would be an advocate in the Parliament House, and so lead a comfortable life. I was vexed to find all my gay plans vanished" (22 Jan. 1763; p. 165). These melancholy reflections suggest vividly how completely Boswell is controlled by what he here calls his "wayward, diseased fancy." External reality hardly exists for him. He suffers from the loss of his "gay plans" and is comforted when Erskine reminds him how miserable he was at home (the reminder temporarily resolving his ambivalence), but then he becomes increasingly depressed when a visit from his brother brings "many low old Sunday ideas when we were boys" into his memory, making the present feel like a version of the past. More real than London or Guards, or, for that matter, Edinburgh and the advocate's life, is the realm of thought, imagination, memory, and plans—that realm of charmed experience but precarious control.

Deliberate imaginative exercises may provide some illusion of mental control. Boswell constructs for himself an elaborate interior picture of the advocate's joys ("I might keep a handsome machine. Have a good agreeable wife and fine children and keep an excellent house"; 24 Feb. 1763; p. 200). They add up to a self-image as "a man of consequence" (p. 201), a vision so exciting that he can hardly endure the prospective delay of a year or two on the Continent. The next day he has second thoughts: "The notion of being of consequence was not much, for . . . just now I knew from experience that just by strength of imagination I could strut about and think myself as great as any man" (p. 201). He works up a counter-fantasy of the Guardsman's life of "romantic adventures" (p. 202), then comments on his own ambivalence and on his capacity to justify both sides of it: "Such were my rea-

sonings upon both sides of this question, which are, in my own opinion, very ingenious. It is strange to consider that the same man who could waver so much could produce them. I was somewhat uneasy at the consideration of my indetermined state of mind, which argues a degree of imbecility" (p. 202). Imbecility, intellectual weakness, folly. Boswell worries about his incapacity to decide the course of his life, but considers his imaginative capacity—his ability to reason on both sides of a question by evoking balanced images of different life conditions—counter-testimony of uprightness and power.

Or do his fantasies, in fact, attest his weakness? His sexual activities, as reported in the London Journal, demonstrate not only the gap between Boswell's self-imaginings and reality but the degree to which his imaginings might interfere with his capacity to assess reality. Perhaps he could not know or suspect that his Louisa suffered from venereal disease, but certainly his effort to convert reality to romantic fiction in evaluating their relationship must have obscured any conceivable clues. "I am hurt with the taunts of ridicule and am unsatisfied if I do not feel myself something of a superior animal. This has always been my favourite idea in my best moments," Boswell confides (1 Dec. 1762; p. 61). Two weeks later: "Indeed, in my mind there cannot be higher felicity on earth enjoyed by man than the participation of genuine reciprocal amorous affection with an amiable woman. There he has a full indulgence of all the delicate feelings and pleasures both of body and mind, while at the same time in this enchanting union he exults with a consciousness that he is the superior person" (14 Dec. 1762; p. 84). The fantasy that sexual activity necessarily testifies male superiority, socially supported though it is, seems peculiarly personal for Boswell. His anxiety about consummating the relationship with Louisa centers on his prowess (e.g., p. 117). After the liaison is established but before venereal symptoms have developed, Boswell goes to a gathering at Lady Northumberland's. "I strutted up and down, considering myself as a valiant man who could gratify a lady's loving desires five times in a night; and I satisfied my pride by considering that if this and all my other great qualities were known, all the women almost in the room would be making love to me" (14 Jan. 1763; p. 142). The five acts of intercourse in a single night perhaps represent fact, but only Boswell's enlarging imagination makes him as a result "a valiant man" of "great qualities." 14 That imagination is ever at work. Taking two whores to a tavern, he thinks himself Captain Macheath

surrounded by his doxies and sings a song from The Beggar's Opera to emphasize the resemblance (p. 224).15 Engaging with a prostitute on a bridge, he explains that "the whim of doing it there with the Thames rolling below us amused me much" (p. 255). Yet he sustains his grandiose imaginings only with effort. Toward the end of the Journal, Boswell reencounters Sally Forrester, his first London mistress, approaching her, characteristically, "with something like the air of a tragedy hero" (10 June 1763; p. 277). She willingly joins him for a cup of tea, providing an opportunity for the hero to compare himself in past and present. "Alas! my ideas have not now that giddy fervour which they had when I was first in London. However, I now walk on surer ground." Walking on surer ground, that alas suggests, hardly compensates for what has been lost. In this encounter Boswell glows "with pleasing imagination," but promptly atones for imaginative indulgence by feeling "a great degree of satisfaction at thinking that my father would now be happy, and all things go well, and that I might indulge whim with a higher relish."

Typically, Boswell thus converts his sensible choice of gratifying his father's wishes into yet one more glamorous fantasy. Yet this episode marks the increasing strain in his grandiosity. No longer does his imagination effortlessly lead him from one adventure to another, mindless of cost until costs must be paid. Looking back, he perceives his loss of "giddy fervour." As actuality impinges more and more, his efforts to convert trivial sexual exploits into manifestations of greatness flag. After Louisa, he relinquishes his vision of a long-term mistress to provide cheap, secure, sustaining gratification. His relationship with Dr. Johnson, supplying other kinds of security and satisfaction, occupies much of his time; his recognition of the ridiculous becomes more acute as he reports his imaginative efforts to glamorize chance encounters. He begins to understand that the "great man" must do something.

In a perceptive moment Boswell describes himself as one who acts passively. Such action, he explains, results from his persistent recognition that "Great People, those who manage the fates of kingdoms, are just such beings as myself: have their hours of discontent and are not a bit happier" (11 Dec. 1762; p. 77). He then hints at the connection between that perception and his mode of passive action: "I may say, I act passively. That is, not with my whole heart, and thinking this or that of real consequence, but because so and so things are established and I must submit." Reflections on this subject lead him quickly to an

account of his "severe illness" (probably, Pottle explains, a nervous collapse) at the age of seventeen and his subsequent struggles with melancholia.

In this bit of self-characterization Boswell describes an absence of full commitment in action. His passivity consists in withholding himself. To act with his whole heart would imply assent to reality; he consents only to submit. In his protest against the intolerable fact that Great People are just like everyone else he pretends that nothing is "of real consequence." His belief that he acts without full involvement protects him from the necessity to judge himself seriously as a member of the same world and the same species as the Great Men he admires and envies.

The quality of self-withholding that Boswell here identifies is crucial to the psychic shape of the London Journal. It derives from his characterological commitment, much fuller than any commitment to action, to the life of the imagination, which often denies but always modifies the nature of reality. Even reporting his persistent melancholia, Boswell feels impelled to add, "My lively fancy always remained" (p. 77). That fancy provides compensation for misery both externally and internally caused, but awareness of its operations hinders meaningful action. "I do think it is a happiness," Boswell remarks, "to have an object in view which one keenly follows" (11 Dec. 1762; p. 79). His object, at the moment, is to win a commission in the Guards. But "it is very difficult to be keen about a thing which in reality you do not regard, and consider as imaginary. But I fancy it may do, as a man is afraid of ghosts in the dark, although he is sure there are none." Even while he longs passionately for that commission, he knows it only another ghost. Nothing has for him absolute authenticity apart from what his fancy makes of it. His devotion to Johnson surely derived partly from Johnson's apparent certainty about the real: kicking a stone, the moralist refutes all philosophic questionings. Boswell's questionings, more peculiar to himself, are less easily refuted.

In the many eighteenth-century novels shaped by their heroes' efforts to find places in the world, potential obstacles to achievement do not include doubts about whether a place in the world makes any conceivable difference. Fielding's ironies about Tom Jones typically concern the young man's insufficient awareness, not the value of his endeavor. Boswell's ironies challenge not only his persistent posing but his very belief that it matters whether one becomes a Guardsman or an advocate. Only in non-ironic moments, when he is melancholy or

paralyzed by his terrors, does he abandon doubt about whether action is meaningful. But when he acts he can rarely avoid his own conviction that all he does derives from his own fantasy and therefore has little meaning in the real world.

The poet James Macpherson, at lunch with Boswell, observed "that to retain our high ideas of anything, we should not see it. He said too that few, if any, people were happy" (27 April 1763; p. 249). Only by avoiding actuality can one enjoy it. Boswell's ultimate fantasy about himself is that he can be a man without fantasy, a "prudent" man conforming to his society's standards of conduct. A sense of the absolute antithesis between prudence and pleasure dominates much of his thinking. Proud though he is of his lively imagination, he centers his dreams of moral possibility on developing the opposite side of his nature. The operations of his fantasy encourage his dangerous desire to please others: theoretically his father, whom he imagines as gratified by a son's drudging, but more immediately the men and women with whom he comes in daily social contact. He can satisfy women, he imagines, by his sexual prowess. There is no conflict here between what he wants for himself and what he thinks others want of him. Often, though, it is difficult for him to determine what he wants for himself, so actively does his imagination respond to the fancied demands of others. Such response, he feels, makes him ridiculous; people treat him as "a very inferior being."

I was, in short, a character very different from what God intended me and I myself chose. I remember my friend Johnston told me one day after my return from London that I had turned out different from what he imagined, as he thought I would resemble Mr. Addison . . . Indeed, I must do myself the justice to say that I always resolved to be such a man whenever my affairs were made easy and I got upon my own footing. For as I despaired of that, I endeavoured to lower my views and just to be a good-humoured comical being, well-liked . . . Now . . . I felt strong dispositions to be a Mr. Addison. Indeed, I had accustomed myself so much to laugh at everything that it required time to render my imagination solid and give me just notions of real life and of religion . . . Mr. Addison's character in sentiment, mixed with a little of the gaiety of Sir Richard Steele and the manners of Mr. Digges, were the ideas which I aimed to realize. (1 Dec. 1762; p. 62)

The paragraph elaborately demonstrates Boswell's conviction "that we may be in some degree whatever character we choose" (21 Nov.

1762; p. 47); it also demonstrates the psychic cost of such a view. If one can be anyone at all, one's character bounded only by his imagination, the possibilities of choice become infinite and its responsibilities enormous. How tempting to see oneself as a Mr. Addison, although to be "a good-humoured comical being, well-liked" offers more immediate rewards. But the problem of "solidifying" the imagination to provide an accurate account of "real life" remains insurmountable. Certainly the notion that James Boswell can will himself into a combination of Addison, Steele, and the actor West Digges results from no reconciliation of imagination and reality. The young man seeks desperately outside himself for some image that he can internalize and fulfill, but he can imagine giving up the comical version of himself only for some artificial self that will be yet more compelling to the world at large. He cannot commit himself totally to the dignity of Addison. Wanting too much—to please too much, to be too much he vacillates among his grandiose alternatives, unable to make even a definitive choice of models. The sense of possibility punishes its possessor, denying the reality of limitation and tormenting the youth with his conviction that everything depends upon his conscious decision of who to be.

Almost six months after writing about Digges, Addison, and Steele, Boswell returns to the idea of God's intent as an aid to his own crucial choice. The "natural character" that he wistfully perceives—that character God intended for him—still differs sharply from the character he generally manifests.

I was rational and composed, yet lively and entertaining. I had a good opinion of myself, and I could perceive my friend Temple much satisfied with me. Could I but fix myself in such a character and preserve it uniformly, I should be exceedingly happy. I hope to do so and to attain a constancy and dignity without which I can never be satisfied, as I have these ideas strong and pride myself in thinking that my natural character is that of dignity. My friend Temple is very good in consoling me by saying that I may be such a man, and that people will say, "Mr. Boswell is quite altered from the dissipated, inconstant fellow that he was. He is now a reserved, grave sort of man. But indeed that was his real character; and he only deviated into these eccentric paths for a while." Well, then, let me see if I have resolution enough to bring that about. (13 May 1763; p. 258; my italics)

The concern with what people will say, the reliance on his friends'

opinions to support his own, the conviction of the drama of his own nature—these remain unchanged from the earlier set of reflections. Boswell's fantasy that happiness depends on uniformity of rational character makes explicit what lay just beneath the surface before. But his tone is less extravagant, his ambition less exalted, and his belief in infinite possibility noticeably diminished. In December he could assert what God intended as confidently as what he himself chose; by May, he merely thinks his natural character dignified, and his pride derives more from the thinking than from the character. Believing that he can never be satisfied without constancy and dignity, he displays no assurance that he can achieve those virtues. When Johnston tells Boswell he should be an Addison, Boswell feels a "strong disposition" to be one. When Temple makes a comforting speech, Boswell understands it as exactly that and reacts with very tentative determination ("let me see if I have resolution enough . . . "). Instead of a series of incompatible models, the young man now focuses on specific virtues, his father's virtues: constancy and dignity. He congratulates himself for being "lively and entertaining" but stresses qualities opposed to liveliness. He wants, or wants to want, moral solidity.

The Boswell of the winter was a youth entirely possessed by his fantasies; by spring, he has encountered actuality. In conventional ways he appears to be growing up: lowering his sights, moderating his tone, leaping less precipitously into experience. The man who wonders whether he has enough resolution to achieve the character he desires will shortly accept the advocate's life as more viable than the guardsman's—and will subsequently take to drink in order to make his choice more tolerable.

But if Boswell relinquishes some illusions about himself, he also learns to affirm the value of what he is as well as what he might be—to affirm, specifically, the value of the capacity that allows him endlessly to imagine what he might be. His tone is measured in the May self-assessment, but its very moderation betrays an undercurrent of self-satisfaction. Locating exceeding happiness in the future, he yet expresses pleasure in the present: pleasure in his strong ideas and pride in his ability to think about his own character.

Boswell's fit of bowing to the national monuments as he leaves Edinburgh has ludicrous aspects. His return to the subject of Arthur Seat as a basis for comparison between himself and Dr. Johnson does not. Johnson has just announced that "the noblest prospect that a Scotsman ever sees is the road which leads him to England!" Boswell

joins in applauding that epigram. "At the same time, I could not help thinking that Mr. Johnson showed a want of taste in laughing at the wild grandeur of nature, which to a mind undebauched by art conveys the most pleasing awful, sublime ideas. Have not I experienced the full force of this when gazing at thee, O Arthur Seat, thou venerable mountain! . . . Beloved hill, the admiration of my youth! Thy noble image shall ever fill my mind!" (6 July 1763; p. 294). However derivative the Scotsman's rhetoric, his bold accusation that his mentor lacks taste and his assertion of imaginative superiority mark rising selfconfidence. Johnson, he concludes, is only witty; he himself is wise, specifically because of his fidelity to his feelings and his psychic capacity to receive and absorb sublime ideas. Injured vanity doubtless contributes to his response, but this testimony to the value of his imagination marks an important stage in his developing self-acceptance. He does not lose, he hardly modifies, his tendency to dream of glorious changes in himself and his situation. 16 Toward the very end of the Journal, we find him fantasizing that he will live in Johnson's garret after the great man's death. Such a place, he says, would be favorable for meditation (pp. 311-312). We understand that he imagines producing works to rival Johnson's. Although Boswell acknowledges that this amounts to building castles in the air, he does not apologize. Finding his place in the world has meant not only deciding on a career, discovering friends, achieving reconciliation with his father, but also finding how to value his own divided nature. He will continue to suffer from its divisions, still imagining unlikely schemes of happiness, but something has been resolved. As at the end of a novel, the hero looks forward now to new challenges, having confronted the challenge that faced him at the outset. Now he knows how to be true to his fanciful nature without being ridiculous. He may find himself ridiculous again, but, understanding that dignity need not be incompatible with imagination, he has, in fact, asserted imagination's dignity. The complexity and subtlety of psychic patterning in the London Journal, the power of its plot, depend on the book's rich investigation of the relation between inner and outer experience in a man torn among conflicting views of himself and of the world outside him.

Tom Jones does not tell his own story, and Fielding calls attention to the importance of this fact: "For let a man be never so honest, the

account of his own conduct will, in spite of himself, be so very favorable that his vices will become purified through his lips, and, like foul liquors well strained, will leave all their foulness behind. For though the facts themselves may appear, yet so different will be the motives, circumstances, and consequences, when a man tells his own story, and when his enemy tells it, that we scarce can recognize the facts to be one and the same."17 Fielding, no enemy, as teller of Tom's story claims emphatically and repeatedly to tell objective truth. "It is our business to relate facts as they are," he remarks, adding that "every passage in our work is transcribed" from "the original book of nature" (Bk. VII, ch. 12; IV, 37). The novel is, as Andrew Wright puts it, morally true—"true because it is a fiction . . . because to see life spectacularly is to be generous about human motive."18 Maynard Mack believes that "life apprehended in the form of a spectacle rather than in the form of experience" belongs to the comic novel. 19 The contrast between spectacle and experience, however, suggests not only a distinction between comedy and tragedy but one between third-person fiction and autobiography—and even between third-person fiction and first-person fiction. Even so self-conscious and self-observing a diarist as Boswell interests himself primarily in how each particular form of his appearance feels to him; Pamela's meticulous attention to her own emotion helps to create that aura of affectation that Fielding despised. If Tom Jones like Boswell exemplifies the young man creating himself through his imagination, we understand this fact more through his actions than through his consciousness. He has been seen and placed by another consciousness; the narrator's intervention prevents the character's vanity or hypocrisy from controlling his story. Tom, like Boswell, must imagine his place in the world before he can assume it, but Fielding must imagine Tom first. And this point exists not only in the background of our awareness, as with Pamela—part of our knowledge of what it means to read fiction—but frequently in the foreground: the narrator calls attention to the fact that he invents, as the autobiographer cannot, thus declaring his mastery of all that happens.

The narrator's control, Fielding implicitly argues, authenticates the fiction's truth. Yet this third-person novel, constantly reminding the reader of its fictional status, differs less than one might suppose from the straightforward autobiography. *Tom Jones* resembles Boswell's *London Journal* in more than its concern with a young man's matur-

ing. For all its ostentatious artifice, it imitates autobiography in purporting also to record in the first person a sequence of imaginative experience. This experience, belonging to the novel's narrator, illuminates and comments upon Tom's. It clarifies the essential plot of *Tom Jones* partly by supplying an analogue for it.²⁰ And it helps to focus the reader's attention on the crucial theme of imagination—an issue alike, as Boswell too came to realize, in the writing of books and the living of lives.

Imagination in a complex sense lies at the center of Tom's experience. What this young man must learn in order to grow up seems at first far less problematic than what Boswell must learn. Fielding tells us directly that his hero, despite his many virtues, lacks prudence, a quality, involving awareness of likely consequences, that may derive from imagination or from reason. Its more rational varieties, in the novel, are unappealing. The prudence of Bridget Allworthy, of her servant Mrs. Wilkins, of Captain Blifil and of his son, of Sophia's servant Honour, stem from narrow calculation of self-interest and involve considerable affectation. The prudence Tom finally achieves, a larger virtue, amounts to the power to discriminate wisely and depends upon imaginative grasp of the needs and responses of others as well as of the self. Tom learns, in other words, to enlarge his imagination rather than, like Boswell, to control it.

The hero of epic, elevated above his contemporaries, both surpasses them and exemplifies their deeply held values. Tom fulfills these functions in the comic epic that contains him. But the untried youth must learn his heroism. The human imagination, he sees, focuses most intensely on money. Captain Blifil, a minor character, typifies Tom's world in his preoccupations. Marrying for money, he then directs all his mental energy toward fantasies of expenditure on Allworthy's property after the squire's eagerly anticipated death. Such fantasies, from Fielding's point of view, evidence fundamental perversity. Captain Blifil's contemplation of money not only substitutes for but militates against proper human concerns, encouraging him to yearn for his benevolent brother-in-law's demise. The simple irony of the captain's own unforeseen death in the midst of his calculations emphasizes man's inability to control his destiny, however extensive his planning, but also suggests divine punishment for fundamental impiety.

Similar impieties, often well concealed, pervade all social levels.

Not everyone denies normal human ties to Captain Blifil's extent, but treachery readily associates itself with desire for gain. The innkeeper whose lively imagination convinces him that Sophia is the Young Pretender's mistress, Jenny Cameron, wonders whether more profit lies in fawning or in betrayal. Sophia's servant, Honour, turns over in her imagination the gain and loss involved in helping her mistress and in betraying her; Mr. Nightingale, like Squire Western, assumes that to arrange a mercenary marriage for his child involves no wrong, since he assumes also the paramount importance in every imagination of financial concerns. Squire Western himself, by no means an imaginative man (as the narrator directly tells us), is immediately roused to action by his daughter's horrifying hint that her aunt might not will her money to the squire.

Nightingale exemplifies with particular clarity the reductive effects of preoccupation with money. "As money . . . was always uppermost in this gentleman's thoughts, so the moment he saw a stranger within his doors it immediately occurred to his imagination that such stranger was either come to bring him money or to fetch it from him. And according as one or other of these thoughts prevailed, he conceived a favorable or unfavorable idea of the person who approached him" (Bk. XIV, ch. 8; V, 128). And again: "He had indeed conversed so entirely with money, that it may be almost doubted whether he imagined there was any other thing really existing in the world; this at least may be certainly averred, that he firmly believed nothing else to have any real value" (Bk. XIV, ch. 8; V, 128). The idea of money, in other words, can utterly control the imagination, overriding other values and inhibiting discrimination. The kind of prudence displayed by those obsessed with money thus opposes itself to the more profound prudence Tom needs to develop, while confusingly parodying that crucial value.

The narrator of this novel inhabits the same moral world as his characters, although his capacity to discriminate exceeds theirs. He too faces the problem of focusing his imagination properly. He too must acknowledge money's importance. The novel's opening sentence establishes a financial relationship between author and reader: "An author ought to consider himself, not as a gentleman who gives a private or eleemosynary treat, but rather as one who keeps a public ordinary, at which all persons are welcome for their money." This relationship, he points out, gives the reader some right to have what he

wants. The author presents himself as a man working for his living, his work involving not only traditional artistic making but the corollary of distribution. He knows how money can both corrupt and stimulate imagination. In a long introductory passage to Book XIII, Fielding invokes love of fame and love of money as the author's indispensable impetus to write, although he also acknowledges specifically and at length the likelihood that desire for wealth may lead the writer toward the popular or fashionable rather than the substantial. Men wish to gain from what they do; the artist in this regard cannot separate himself from mankind.

The author's announced attitude reveals the possibility of healthy respect for rather than obsession with money. Tom's ideal prudence demands equivalent respect, although the point is not fully spelled out. His adventures, however, frequently involve him with financial issues. The romantic abandon with which he flings away the bank note bestowed on him by his benefactor, the idealism that makes him refuse to use Sophia's money—such attitudes represent luxuries of youth. In actuality, he finds himself gigolo to Lady Bellaston partly for lack of a shilling to take a coach. Without money one cannot survive, but each individual must determine the moral price he will pay for financial security. Tom in his sentimentality condones acting as a highwayman for the sake of starving wife and children; Fielding takes no clear position on this point. Indeed, the issue of money rather trails away at the end. Theoretically, it has been settled. Through its minor and major actions the novel states clearly that obsession with money generates moral and imaginative destruction, but so does refusal to take thought of money. The practical problem of money, on the other hand, is not entirely worked out. Each of Fielding's novels demonstrates more insistent concern with the question of how a human being can properly procure the money he requires; the only viable answer seems to be a deus ex machina. Someone must give the hero money, or give him the means of getting it. His unaided efforts never achieve even minimal financial security.21 Fielding's pessimistic view increasingly assumes the lack of connection between intrinsic worth and social reward; only in fiction, only by authorial manipulation, do the good receive their just deserts.

The discrepancy between money as reality and as fodder for the imagination, never fully resolved, is only one instance of the conflicts between the real and the imagined that appear everywhere in *Tom*

Jones. Boswell's problem, as he delineates it, centers on his way of imagining himself. His imaginative awareness of other people, throughout the early journals, proves extremely limited. Other people for him represent various ideas, embodying, say, romantic beauty or gloomy Scots notions or aristocratic grandeur. From the point of view of a reader, though, the supporting cast of Boswell's journals comprises a series of projections of his hopes, fears, and psychic needs. The young man believes himself to relate to others; the reader suspects that he relates only to his own fantasies. The divergence between people's real natures and Boswell's understanding of them occasionally becomes an open issue, as when Louisa ceases to be a glamorous actress and turns into a poxed whore, but the diarist never draws any general conclusions from his repeated misunderstandings.

Fielding, on the other hand, presses his reader if not his central character relentlessly toward general conclusions. Seeing his hero from without, he can call unstinting attention to his ridiculous aspects. Tom's imagination often makes him ludicrous. The reader must concur in the narrator's negative, though often indulgently amused judgment of the fancy that treats others as creatures of the self's needs and that reduces vast realities (war, death) to means of dramatizing private emotional states. When reality and imagination fail to coincide, the imaginer must be wrong. He may also be noble and generous, as when Tom imagines Molly's ruin if he leaves her, or brave, as when he dreams of a glorious death in the service of king and country, or devoted, as in his fantasies of Sophia. The author's voice accords the hero full credit for such virtues. But Fielding laughs at Tom much more than Tom laughs at himself and usually for the same reason: some version of the eternal gap between the real and the imagined. Tom rhapsodizes by moonlight, reflecting that "the solemn gloom which the moon casts on all objects is beyond expression beautiful, especially to an imagination which is desirous of cultivating melancholy ideas" (Bk. VIII, ch. 10; IV, 104). He proposes climbing to the top of the hill, where he can better encourage his melancholy, only to be undercut by literal-minded Partridge, who concludes that the hill's bottom must encourage merriness if the top stimulates gloom. In this instance, as in several others, we recognize the invincible naïveté of the hero's fancy, and we are invited to be amused but also to wonder at the propulsive force of imagination. By imagination Tom (like the rest of mankind) progresses. His fancy places him in the world he per-

ceives, largely determines his course of action, and preserves him from despair. Fielding allows us to admire Tom's invincible imagination even while mocking it.

We now come to the question *Tom Jones* loudly raises: what, precisely, is the ultimate value of imagination? (The previous question, what constitutes imagination, does not emerge as an issue. Imagination is assumed to mean what Dr. Johnson thought it to mean: "the power of forming ideal pictures," "the power of representing things absent.") Imagination helps to determine Boswell's experience. Glorifying it as an emblem of his uniqueness, he learns how often it leads him astray. Tom never thinks about imagination as a problem, but the narrator thinks about it constantly. Through his hero and through his tale he conveys more fully than Boswell a view of how imagination functions fruitfully in art and in life.

The divergence between imagination and reality, the novel finally suggests, need not be inevitable. Such imaginations as Honour's or Blifil's, directed always toward personal gain, limit perception. But ideally a human being can achieve clearer vision through imagination: the message of Robinson Crusoe, now yet more elaborately stated. Blifil, loving only himself, imagines only in terms of himself; Tom from his early youth can imagine the feelings of others. Although on occasion he reduces the world to an adjunct to his fantasies, his dealings with the Seagrims demonstrate that he can also fantasize constructively about human needs quite different from his own. By the last quarter of the novel, both Tom as character and Fielding as narrator suggest how this kind of imaginative grasp can become a guide to morality. Tom appeals to Nightingale to engage his imagination about the girl he has seduced (Bk. XIV, ch. 7; V, 124). He invites, in other words, systematic exercise of the imaginative faculty to engage aesthetic and emotional response in support of right action. Nightingale should make an honest woman of Nancy not simply because it is right to do so, but because not to do so can be imagined as causing pain and the prospect of doing good generates fantasies of pleasure.

Tom's benevolence to the Seagrim family, however, dictated by the same kind of vicarious participation in their situation, leads him astray. And toward the novel's end, when Tom wishes to forgive Black George the theft of £500 from him, Squire Allworthy rebukes him sharply, arguing that "such mistaken mercy is not only weakness, but borders on injustice, and is very pernicious to society, as it en-

courages vice" (Bk. XVIII, ch. 11; V, 358). Eager imaginative involvement with the affairs of others, in short, readily produces the sentimentality that may prove pernicious. Clearly the imagination requires control; clearly, too, by the end of the action Tom has not altogether mastered the principles of control. Nor does any character in the novel attain full imaginative penetration into reality. Either narrow realism limits the imagination, as with Blifil and Nightingale, or misguided confidence in others distorts perception, as with Allworthy (frequently blind to true motives), or enthusiastic empathy reduces moral insight, as with Tom. Moreover, the reader himself is directly implicated in the mistakes of imagination. In one of his moods of benevolent mockery, the narrator wishes for his reader the same sanguine temper that Tom richly demonstrates, since such a temperament ensures pleasures of illusion far more enjoyable than anything actuality can provide. "I make no manner of doubt but that, in this light, we may see the imaginary future chancellor just called to the bar, the archbishop in crape, and the prime minister at the tail of an opposition, more truly happy than those who are invested with all the power and profit of those respective offices" (Bk. XII, ch. 6; V, 56-57). Only possibility truly gratifies. One thinks of Boswell, clinging to his belief that he can be whoever he chooses. How surely we know that no actual choice will satisfy him.

To seek imaginative pleasure for its own sake is to run the danger of acting passively—a danger for Tom as well as Boswell. And a danger for the novel-reader, ideally engaged in a fruitful partnership with the writer but needing, Fielding suggests, constantly to be prodded toward activity and toward right perception. The reader needs the author to penetrate the characters. He is wrong, Fielding announces, if he thinks that Thwackum appeared to Allworthy as he appears to the instructed reader; the source of instruction is the inspired author (Bk. III, ch. 5, III, 125). Art, in other words, provides more insight than life. But art can also generate in the reader the imaginative energy that provides a vital resource in life, and Fielding's adjurations often focus on this point, as when he rebukes the reader's laziness, explaining, "thou art highly mistaken if thou dost imagine that we intended, when we began this great work, to leave thy sagacity nothing to do; or that, without sometimes exercising this talent, thou wilt be able to travel through our pages with any pleasure or profit to thyself" (Bk. XI, ch. 9; IV, 295).

Tom, like many other fictional characters, takes a symbolic journey toward maturity; so does the reader.²² Traveling through the novel, he too learns and grows. If he resembles Tom in his sensibilities, the narrator remarks (Bk. XV, ch. 8; V, 178-9), he will learn more; if not, he may like Blifil be unable to profit morally from his experience. But Fielding's insistence that to read a novel constitutes a dynamic process dictates much of his literary procedure.

The imaginative testing of the author precedes but parallels the imaginative testing of reader and characters. Boswell begins his narrative with the adjuration "Know thyself." The imperative that dictates Tom Jones's growth (and the reader's, and the narrator's) is "know the world": what lies without rather than within. Tom neither has nor achieves any particular desire to know himself. Assuming himself as known, he enacts the same self (unlike Boswell) in all his adventures, and develops a desire to reform rather than to discover his nature. He learns the possibilities both of adventure and of reform not only through direct experience but through imaginative participation in the experience of others: the Man on the Hill, Mrs. Fitzpatrick, young Nightingale, Anderson (the would-be highwayman), and the rest. The reader, of course, has only this means of knowing. The author, who boasts his control of reader and characters alike, faces directly in his role the problem of achieving and substantiating imaginative insight.

Early in the novel, Fielding's self-presentation as narrator emphasizes his omnipotence within the world of the book and his freedom to play with reader and characters. Rhapsodizing about Squire Allworthy's exalted virtue, he deflates his own rhetoric by observing that he has got the reader up as high a hill as Allworthy's and he is not sure how to get him down again. The linguistic play of his mock-epic excursions emphasizes his mastery of literary tradition as well as his complex perspective. He calls attention to the beauty of his own similes or imagery, announces that he has been "set over" his readers for their own good, boasts that the Muse has entrusted him with secrets, and mocks critics' pretensions to judge him: he creates, in short, an impression of effortless and pleasurable mastery. The novel's second half, on the other hand, reveals the degree to which mastery involves struggle and suggests the author's serious concern with the moral implications of his craft.

By an imperceptible progression, literary issues merge with moral ones.²³ The imagination can help to achieve the knowledge of the

world everyone needs but only if it functions as an instrument of penetration rather than a means of illusion. The novelist's announced concern for probability, his doctrine of the "conservation of character," and his rejection of the supernatural: all reflect his commitment to the real. But he is also profoundly committed to the products of his own imagination. In a mock-pathetic passage with serious reverberations, the narrator elaborately develops the conventional metaphor of literary productivity as childbirth. Insisting upon the unbreakable tie between the author and his creation, he calls attention to the sexual overtones in the analogy: "The reader who hath suffered his muse to continue hitherto in a virgin state can have but a very inadequate idea of this kind of paternal fondness" (Bk. XI, ch. 1; IV, 244). The notion of a sexual connection between author and muse, recalling Gibbon, emphasizes the passionate energy of the writer's involvement, and the suggestion that every reader is also a potential writer coexists with the statement of crucial differentiation between practising author and relatively passive reader. Love and work, in this metaphor, are not merely the components of human happiness; they become in effect identical, as Fielding draws a diagram of sublimation. The metaphor's development stresses pain and effort: "the uneasiness with which the big muse bears about her burden, the painful labor with which she produces it, and lastly, the care, the fondness, with which the tender father nourishes his favorite, till it be brought to maturity, and produced into the world." Finally the speaker declares the essential identity of author and book: "The slander of a book is, in truth, the slander of the author" (IV, 245). Acknowledging the comic overtones of his treatment, he reminds the reader that truth often emerges through jest: this metaphoric fantasy demands to be taken seriously.

So taken, it focuses attention on the novel as evolved from the union of the author's brain with the mysterious forces of inspiration. Earlier, the narrator has examined at some length the notion of genius, finding it to comprise "that power, or rather those powers of the mind, which are capable of penetrating into all things within our reach and knowledge, and of distinguishing their essential differences" (Bk. IX, ch. 1; IV, 157). He labels those powers invention and judgment. Invention, he continues, is generally agreed to be "a creative faculty," but in fact it may be better understood as "a quick and sagacious penetration into the true essence of all the objects of our contemplation." In a third discussion of the same issue, he wonders about the proper

relation of learning to imagination, pointing out that learning has often been considered "entirely useless to a writer, and, indeed, no other than a kind of fetters on the natural sprightliness and activity of the imagination" (Bk. XIV, ch. 1; V, 91). Poets, critics, and politicians, he concludes, can get along without knowing anything in particular, but the novelist must be conversant with the life of his times, in the mass and in detail.

Taken in conjunction, these three discussions suggest the nature of the plot focused on the novelist, which in essential respects duplicates that concerned with Tom's career. The action that Tom must fulfill, the action underlying plot, is by natural process to understand the world; the action of the narrator is identical. By long and laborious birth the muse produces her child, the writer's child. Product of genius, it must therefore result from accurate penetration into the essence of things. It both derives from and generates knowledge of the world. The imaginative enterprise, in Fielding's stated view, must stand or fall on the basis of its truth.

The pattern here sketched suggests a fairly clear relation of author, reader, and hero. All three wish, need, and depend upon understanding of the world. All three learn through imagination; the writer also teaches through imagination (as does Tom, at least once, in his interchange with Nightingale). He depicts characters teaching and learning and enforces a view of human existence as centrally involved with those activities. His demand for the reader's active involvement derives from his deep convictions about human life. Accepting for himself the full responsibility of realism as a creator, he demands that the reader take equivalent responsibility to use his imagination constructively.

For, after all, the author cannot control the reader's imagination, however grandiose his claims of power, and one must remember again that neither Tom nor Allworthy finds his imaginative perceptions a perfectly dependable guide to moral truth. Fielding introduces into his narrative two curious episodes to suggest the unpredictable and ambiguous consequences of communication through the imagination. A carefully expurgated puppet show, purified of all lewdness, is performed; shortly afterwards, the puppeteer's assistant is discovered fornicating with a servant girl on the stage. The young woman explains that she has deduced from the puppet show the bad conduct of the depicted characters. What was the fine lady doing when she lay away

from her husband all night? Slightly later comes Patridge's famous encounter with *Hamlet*, which leaves him terrified of the ghost, impressed by Claudius as a fine declaimer, and scornful of Garrick's Hamlet because the part involved no acting at all: of course the little man would feel scared of the ghost.

These two episodes of stage entertainment force attention to the relation between life and art. In his introductory chapter to Book VII, Fielding considers the analogy between the world and a stage under several different aspects. Reminding his readers that art imitates life, he finally insists upon his own novel as a theatrical performance; the distinction between art and life, by the time he finishes his playful exploration, has become hopelessly confused. An artful author may induce such confusion; on the other hand, no author can sufficiently guard against it. It is not Shakespeare's fault or Garrick's that Partridge cannot distinguish between an actor playing a frightened man and a man truly frightened; the fellow who purified his puppet show, however foolish, bears no responsibility for the maidservant's lapse. The maidservant, in fact, is responsible for the use she makes of a dramatic spectacle, just as Partridge, determinedly uneducable, must be held responsible for his foolishness. Both, as spectators of drama, closely resemble—by Fielding's own richly developed analogy—the reader of the novel. Both warn of the necessity to discriminate: between art and life, between good and bad. Invention and judgment, the novelist tells us, are the stuff of genius. They are also the stuff of humanity. Everyone has them; everyone must use them. Invention, imagination, creativity, amount finally to penetration. Judgment, on the other hand, discriminates and discovers differences. The reader, the author, the hero: all are responsible to both faculties, and all must learn to respond properly, to create properly, and to act properly in the world: functions that are significantly analogous. Fielding emphasizes the development of sympathetic imagination but assumes the parallel necessity of controlling judgment. Boswell's learning and Tom's have much in common, and so do Boswell's learning and "Fielding"s. Unlike "Fielding," though, Boswell does not function consciously as teacher.

By abandoning the form of autobiography Fielding enlarges the possible points of view on the course of a human life. It is worth noting that he did not abandon that form altogether. In this novel too, someone inside speaks directly to us who are outside.²⁴ Paralleling the

fictional biography of the picaresque hero is a shadowy fictional autobiography of the novelist as novelist: a form of self-presentation that calls attention to the issue implicit in all autobiography: what does it mean to convert a life into a work of art? The relationship of life to art constitutes a central subject of *Tom Jones*. And the intricate form through which that relationship is conveyed depends partly on the novelist's exploitation, even in this work of high artifice, of some of the special resources of autobiography.

The aesthetic distance from which Fielding observes "Fielding," the narrator-character in his novel, cannot readily be achieved by the literal autobiographer. Boswell's eagerness to perceive himself as a hero of drama or fiction contributes to the vibrancy of his narrative; he constructs himself for his benefit and ours, the self-artificer in his life as in its recording. But, of course, he is not only a self-artificer. The substantial self that eludes his perception yet remains a fact. His efforts to shape himself become increasingly difficult, desperately to be abandoned and desperately resumed. Freud is said to have refused to write a letter of recommendation for a patient on the grounds that he could not do so, knowing the man as he did only from the inside. If the psychoanalyst has such a problem, the diarist who wishes to convey as well as to record himself has it yet more emphatically. Of necessity he knows himself only from within, forced to surmise what others see. Boswell, almost as deeply concerned with how he is seen as with how he feels, learns inevitably that he can control neither manifestation. The sequence of records following the London Journal do not duplicate the optimistic, essentially novelistic, shape of the first volume. Yet they confirm the impression of a necessary order in Boswell's experience, an order created partly by the diarist's unremitting effort to convert his life into a work of literature as he lived it. Fielding argues through the form and content of Tom Jones that elaborate artifice can illuminate reality. Boswell's early journals amount to a counter-argument: reality is, or may be, identical with artifice.

"I am uneasy to think that I am not yet master of myself, but I always hope to be better," twenty-five-year-old Boswell writes to John Johnston, near the end of his Grand Tour.²⁵ His stated goal has changed from self-knowledge to self-mastery, as his increasing grasp of reality deflates his sense of possibility. The three volumes following the London Journal report his time of study in Holland and his travel

through France, Germany, Switzerland, and Italy: the journeying of the traditional hero. But they also record a process of diminishment. The desire for self-mastery derives from near despair at the impossibility of full self-knowledge.

The records of Boswell's continental experience owe more to their twentieth-century editors and less to the writer's own sense of form than does the London Journal. Boswell in Holland reconstructs a coherent account of the year from the young man's memoranda and letters, his journal itself having been lost. The two volumes now called Boswell on the Grand Tour include letters to and from Boswell and some material he published himself. Yet the thematic unity of each account presumably derives from psychic experience as well as from editorial skill. Reading the records in chronological sequence, one understands the young man's continuing process of learning. In Boswell in Holland he sets out to follow a plan, to control the self that in London he had come precariously to know. The first volume of *The* Grand Tour (in which he tells of his encounters with Rousseau, Voltaire, and Frederick the Great) shows him struggling simply to be himself, whatever self that might be. The second volume (in which Boswell, returning to London after a long series of amorous encounters, proves sadder if not wiser than his fictional counterparts) tells of the wistful "hope to be better" referred to in the letter to Johnston. Growing up, for Boswell, involves abandoning treasured fantasies. Tom Jones at the end of the novel retreats to the country with his Sophia to live out a dream of idyllic domesticity. Fielding as narrator, calling attention to his elegant plot, commits himself to an ideal of control and implies that control resolves conflict. On the other hand, Boswell's immediate record of growth, seen not from the vantage point of secure adulthood but from the short and precarious perspective of struggling youth, emphasizes conflict, which is expressed even in his syntax with its frequent reliance on imperatives to the self and its manifest effort to achieve certainty in short, assertive declarative statements. Boswell cannot afford the luxury of Fielding's ruminative sentences, nor can he achieve their serenity of outlook. Fielding's control implies containment; Boswell never quite learns to contain his own experience.

Yet he uses Fielding's moral terminology, particularly in Boswell in Holland, with its emphasis on the effort at control. Affectation, the great sin and folly of Joseph Andrews, is Boswell's bugbear too;

prudence, Squire Allworthy's ideal and the virtue Tom Jones most needs to acquire, looms large for Boswell. Like Tom (and to some extent Joseph, a simpler character), Boswell uses his imagination to conceive virtue and shun vice. But he also discovers an opposite need to curb imagination by substituting doing for dreaming. In *Boswell in Holland* he no longer congratulates himself for imaginative vigor or for success in acting a part; he substitutes a notion of acting, or doing, in the world, specifically because action eliminates dangerous imagination.²⁶

The "Inviolable Plan" that Boswell composed 15 October 1763 stresses "the misery of being unsettled" and advocates "propriety of conduct, that you may be respected." Propriety, but not unnaturalness. "You are not to set yourself to work to become stiff and unnatural," he tells himself. "You must avoid affectation." He reminds himself "that idleness renders you quite unhappy" because "then your imagination broods over dreary ideas of its own forming, and you become contemptible and wretched." He urges himself to remember "religion and morality" and "the dignity of human nature." Most important, it seems, is the idea of a plan in itself. "Without a real plan, life is insipid and uneasy" (BH, p. 376). Moving on to details of proper conduct, he employs a rhetoric of moral verbs: command, be firm, persist, remember, be prepared, bear, resolve, check, encourage. The idea of imagination recurs, to be firmly rejected. "Your great loss is too much wildness of fancy and ludicrous imagination. These are fine if regulated and given out in moderation" (BH, p. 377). He continues with more wise saws about conduct, then concludes with rather qualified hopefulness: "Upon the whole you will be an excellent character . . . But yield not to whims, nor ever be rash" (BH, p. 378).

The rest of *Boswell in Holland* glosses this text, as the writer struggles against depression—a moral failing, he concludes, product of improperly disciplined imagination. "I really believe that these grievous complaints should not be vented," he writes to Johnston (9 April 1764), thus venting them; "they should be considered as absurd chimeras, whose reality should not be allowed in words. One thing I am sure of, that if a man can believe himself well, he will be really so. The dignity of human nature is a noble preservative of the soul. Let us consider ourselves as immortal beings . . . My dear Johnston, let us retain this splendid sentiment" (*BH*, p. 207).

The anxiety about giving fantasies the reality of words focuses the

diarist's dilemma. Yet his yearning to "retain" a "splendid sentiment" acknowledges that formulation preserves the salvational as well as the dangerous. If Boswell rejects "chimeras" that are produced, he believes, by a "distempered imagination" (p. 274), he also suggests in his words to Johnston that imagination now seems virtually the only reality. He will consider his miseries mere chimeras, and he will not allow their reality in words. By controlling thought and language he can control feeling. What a man believes himself to be, the writer here says explicitly, determines what he really is. He must rely on "splendid sentiment," learning modes of self-formulation that will preserve a sense of power and dignity.

The special importance of Boswell's diaries for anyone interested in the possibilities of autobiography depends partly on the insistence with which they confront the meaning of putting lives into language. Richardson, choosing to write epistolary novels, implicitly recognized how people define and sustain themselves by setting down what happens to them. Pamela thrusts herself into a new social class by telling her story. Her linguistic discriminations recurrently call attention to usage as conveying value; her dramatization of writing as a process reflecting the processes of life emphasizes the importance of the form she has chosen for asserting herself.27 Boswell heightens the awareness of Pamela in ways rich in implication for the novel as well as for various forms of autobiography. He knows that the self of which he writes has little objective importance; as he puts it in the Hypochondriack essay on diaries, the diarist exposes himself to ridicule "when self-importance is obtruded upon others to whom the private concerns of an individual are quite insignificant" (no. LXVI; II, 258): a weakness Fielding perceived in Pamela. But Boswell also knows the utility of keeping records of the self—less for their potential public value in providing insight into human nature than for their immediate private function in resolving "uneasiness" (II, 262).

Unlike Pamela, Boswell well understands the claim of self-importance implicit in writing about the self. He understands the temptations as well as the advantages of performing rather than being a self, and he understands his writing as part of his performance, although also as a desperate attempt to escape the need to perform. Unlike Cibber or Pamela, he finds himself to consist of an evolving set of problems rather than a given arrangement of characteristics. The process of writing in his view partakes of a process of change; his

insistence that he has changed creates a comic-pathetic counterpart for his continuing revelation of how much he remains the same. In formulating his moral and emotional dilemmas, he also formulates the complex values of first-person narration, demonstrating and describing how the writer's self-consciousness helps to shape his life by his record of it.

His awareness of how his view of himself affects actuality can become an agony, as we see in a desperate letter to Temple written just over a week after he expressed his resolve to retain noble sentiments (17 April 1764).

My ideas alter above all with respect to my own character. Sometimes I think myself good for nothing, and sometimes the finest fellow in the world. You know I went abroad determined to attain a composed, learned, and virtuous character. I have supported this character to admiration . . . Certain it is that I have for seven months conducted myself in a manly and genteel manner. "All is well, then," one would say. It is so in all appearance. But I, who am conscious of changes and waverings and weaknesses and horrors, can I look upon myself as a man of dignity? . . .

I ask you this. If I persist in study, and never mention my splenetic chimeras, am I not then a man? Can I not review my life with pride? Counsel me. I will swear to observe the precepts of my friend. (BH, p. 218)

The man who had earlier taken such pleasure in manipulating appearances now finds the divergence between internal reality and external appearance almost unbearably painful. Wishing to "attain" a fine character, he can achieve only a simulacrum of one. His pathetic final questions to Temple, begging for assurance about the nature of reality, also reiterate his faith in language's magic: if he never mentions his chimeras, perhaps they cannot destroy him. Still his consciousness of the vulnerabilities generated by the imagination remains to torment him.

The first volume of *The Grand Tour*, organized around its narrator's encounters with the great, shows Boswell forced to judge himself in conjunction with men he admires, therefore thinking more and more complexly about who he is and can be. In a particularly brilliant passage, he arrives at the determination which dominates this volume.

My mind was clear and firm and fertile. It contained in itself both male and female powers: brilliant fancies were begotten, and bril-

liant fancies were brought forth. I saw my error in suffering so much from the contemplation of others. I can never be them, therefore let me not vainly attempt it in imagination . . . I must be Mr. Boswell of Auchinleck, and no other. Let me make him as perfect as possible . . . What gloomy nonsense have I often imagined! I recollected my moments of despair when I did not value myself at sixpence, because, forsooth, I was but an individual, and an individual is nothing in the multitude of beings. Whereas I am all to myself. I have but one existence. If it is a mad one, I cannot help it. I must do my best.

Amidst all this brilliance, I sent forth my imagination to the Inner Temple, to the chambers of Mr. Samuel Johnson. I glowed with reverence and affection, and a romantic idea filled my mind.²⁸

His resolve to be himself includes renewed commitment to his imagination. His sexualized mind ("firm" like a man, "fertile" like a woman) requires no muse. Containing within itself both the male power of fertilizing fancy and the female one of expression, it possesses the materials for its own salvation. Imagination's creativity rescues Boswell from imagination's destructiveness. His error involves directing his fantasy toward the superior virtue or happiness of others or allowing gloom to dominate him. Now he sees that imagination can help him grow. He will dream of his own perfectibility, acknowledging fully in fantasy his importance to himself and using that sense of importance as the foundation for change. Returning to the "romantic idea" of his friendship with Johnson, he thinks less of the great man's superiority than of his own affection. Allowing himself to dream and to enjoy and value the dreaming-without reference to what his father might say—he thus values himself, not explicitly as a writer, but for the qualities that make him a writer, that vivify the journals, and that he discovers partly through what he has written.

But whatever possibility imagination promised, it offered no dependable response to reality. Repeatedly and with increasing desperation, although sometimes with an odd note of self-congratulation, Boswell observes the split between internal and external perception.²⁹ His journal cannot rescue him from misery; present misery has the power to reshape even the recorded past. "I must observe that my journal serves me not so much as a history as it serves me merely as a reservoir of ideas. According to the humour which I am in when I read it, I judge of my past adventures, and not from what is really recorded. If I am in gay spirits, I read an account of so much existence, and I think, "Sure I

have been very happy." If I am gloomy, I think, "Sure I have passed much uneasy time, or at best, much insipid time." Thus I think without regard to the real fact as written" (GTI, 140). Again, he defines an aspect of all autobiography: like novels, but more disturbingly, records of the self are at the mercy of their readers. The dynamic interchange among writer, character, and reader that Fielding described exists no less powerfully when all three are literally the same person.

The rhythm of the journal follows Boswell's responses to his own imagination; the self he boldly determined to be and to perfect remained consequently confused. He seeks reassurance from Rousseau, inviting the philosopher to show him how to improve. An early encounter had ended with Rousseau remarking, "You are irksome to me. It's my nature. I cannot help it." BOSWELL. "Do not stand on ceremony with me." ROUSSEAU. "Go away" (4 Dec. 1764; GT I, 224). Not reacting openly to the serious rejection in this interchange, Boswell continues to demand help. He makes memoranda of what he might say: "And you, O great philosopher, will you befriend me? Am I not worthy? Tell me . . . If I am, take care of me" (13 Dec. 1764; GT I, 246). The next day, he says it: Boswell. "But can I yet hope to make something of myself?" ROUSSEAU. "Yes. Your great difficulty is that you think it so difficult a matter" (GTI, 247). Writing to Mme. Denis, Voltaire's niece, to entreat permission to spend a night under the philosopher's roof, Boswell adopts an opposite tactic. "I present myself in my natural character, which I find suits me the best of any. I own that I have in some periods of my life assumed the characters of others whom I admired. But, as David found the armour of Saul, I found them by much too heavy for me, and like David was embarrassed and unable to move with freedom . . . I do not, however, think lightly of my own character" (25 Dec. 1764; GTI, 276). Three days later, in Voltaire's home, he confides to his journal, "I ought to have a good opinion of myself, but from my unlucky education I cannot get rid of mean timidity as to my own worth" (GT I, 281). (In an earlier reference to his education, Boswell had explicitly blamed it for his obsessive roleplaying: "As I was ill-educated, I am obliged to affect more genteel manners and so have learnt the habit of playing a part" [18 Oct. 1764; GT I, 139].)

This series of conflicting statements about Boswell's sense of self epitomizes the journal's tensions. Bragging of his expert performance, he tries to convince himself that it reflects his true value: a man

everyone loves must be lovable. Seeking Rousseau's help, he both claims the inherent interest of his nature and history and argues the difficulty of the problems his personality presents. To Voltaire he maintains his utter integrity, only to reveal subsequently his lack of faith in it. But all his self-presentation reflects imaginative vacillation and linguistic manipulation. Alternately convinced of his utter worthlessness and his unique superiority, he plummets from hope to despair, struggling with the knowledge that Boswell is that being whose imaginings lead him to know the irreconcilabilities of human experience.

The drama he reports remains centered on verbalization. Boswell's history, the journals suggest, is that of a man trying to tell his story, not—like Pamela—to preserve integrity, but to seek it. His efforts to describe himself, embodying all his conflicts, comprise his crucial activity. The enterprise of the journals, in other words, is substantially identical with that of the life they record. Self-mastery like self-knowledge seems to depend on putting the self into words. As the narrator of *Tom Jones* claims power, control, and imaginative enlargement through his literary endeavor, Boswell through his journalizing and letter-writing seeks the same benefits.

The saga of imagination narrated in these early journals reaches a culmination in the second volume of *The Grand Tour*, where Boswell, returned to London, achieves a precarious maturity of relative disillusionment. He suggests now that the value of his experience lies in its capacity to correct his imagination. Writing to Rousseau of his stay in Italy he says: "It was my imagination that needed correction, and nothing but travel could have produced this effect" (3 Oct. 1765; GT II, 3). Later in the same long letter, he confesses that he experiences moments in which not even Rousseau seems important and in which the imagination, eluding rational control, still causes him pain. "My judgment tries in vain to free me from the grasp of a troubled imagination. It is hard to suffer so much" (GT II, 8). On the whole, though, his imagination seems less troublesome to him as his travels draw toward their end. He still indulges in lavish fantasies about women, as well as in actual liaisons; he still allows himself romantic dreams of the supernatural, proclaiming defiantly: "My having seen the realities shall not undeceive me" (To Wilkes, 31 July 1765; GT II, 115). But he feels that his travels have liberated him. "I had got upon a rock in Corsica, and jumped into the middle of life."30 The capacity to

immerse himself in real life—even though fantasy still intervenes—implies escape from his earlier doom of acting only "passively," feeling constantly and excessively acted upon by others and, more importantly, by his imagining of others.

Summarizing the personal impact of his famous visit with General Paoli on Corsica, Boswell says that he has achieved a more exalted sense of human possibility; he now wishes more ardently to distinguish himself, "and I was, for the rest of my life, set free from a slavish timidity in the presence of great men, for where shall I find a man greater than Paoli?" (28 Oct. 1765; GT II, 201). Back in London, Boswell reencounters Rousseau. His memorandum comments, "He seemed so oldish and weak you had no longer your enthusiasm for him" (13 Feb. 1766; GT II, 296). Later the same day he sees Dr. Johnson, maneuvering himself into a splendid scene in which he actually kneels to ask the great man's blessing. Then Johnson "hugged you to him like a sack," speaking affectionately. "You for some minutes saw him not so immense as before, but it came back" (GT II, 297).

Boswell, when he saw Rousseau, had just seduced the Frenchman's mistress; his vision of his former idol as "oldish and weak" reflects a guilty internal effort at self-justification. When he sees Johnson as less "immense" than before he quickly manages to reverse his perception. Many years of Johnson-worship yet lay before him. Still, his response to great men has in fact changed. Asking to be helped and seeking models, he had long focused his imagination outside himself and encouraged his tendency to fantasize about the superiority of others. His determination, his making of "inviolable plans," his grandiosity, and his misery gradually lessen into the hope that he can master himself, and his externalized idealization also diminishes. His reliance on and subjection to his imagination and his dependence on language to confirm his reality have given way to intimations of power to be exercised in the realm of actuality. Language, of course, is power, as Fielding knew, and imagination has power. The fictional argument of Tom Jones implies that language and imagination supply tools that action in society must ultimately validate. When Boswell jumps "into the middle of life," having acknowledged that he cannot, after all, be those whom he admires, he accepts the necessities of reality. Great men show weakness; neither fathers nor philosophers provide ultimate stability; fantasies about them do not enable one to live. One cannot replay forever the relationship with a parent, bound by "slav-

ish timidity" before one's elders and resenting the bondage; one must leave Paradise Hall. Unlike Tom, Boswell does not return to Paradise. To make something of himself remains a difficult matter. Yet, recording in the sequence of four journals his commitment to imagination and his partial retreat from that commitment, he comes out at approximately the same point as Fielding, if not Tom. His diaries dramatize for the reader (as Fielding had dramatized) human problems about one's place in the world and how to fill it; his writing insists on the role of imagination in confronting such difficulties, and his identity gradually formulates itself as a result of his imaginative and linguistic efforts as well as his efforts at relationship. The writings of a neurotically introspective young man thus have much in common with the fictional presentation of an enormous canvas of life with an unintrospective young man at its center. Fielding and Boswell talk about very different matters. But they also find ways to talk about the same crucial issues: the relation of the internal to the external world and of life to art; how the imagination guides one to reality; how and when the imagination deceives.

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Laws of Time: Fielding and Boswell

he writing defining the self considered thus far-even of socially restricted women, of melancholic William Cowper has demonstrated or, at least, asserted fundamental optimism: belief in a divine plan, belief in the secular salvation of social virtue or in the power of writing itself, or—minimally—in the presence of an audience interested in watching. Moreover, as I have already suggested, the essential enterprise of autobiography and novel alike, in the eighteenth century, involved affirmation of individual value, the act of such writing an act of faith. But eighteenth-century thinkers were well aware how precariously, how ludicrously even, a man asserted his own importance; a slight shift of focus might raise a storyteller's doubts about the value of his hero's selfhood. Boswell and Fielding, aging, incorporated into their work implicit speculation about the extent to which the separate personality can survive, or hope to survive, inevitable pressures of time and of society. Amelia, Fielding's last novel, published when he was forty-four, four years before his death, and Boswell's journals now assembled as Boswell for the Defence, recording the Scots lawyer's experience from 1769 to 1774, when he was thirty-four, alike dramatize the increasing tensions of the effort to preserve selfhood in maturity. Life entangles men in obligation. Do they lose or fulfill themselves through such involvement? The works we have considered thus far rarely admit society as a vast, vague, inescapable force impinging on the individual, although

they deal with society as arbiter of manners, as spectacle, or as moral abstraction. In *Amelia* far more than in *Tom Jones*, Fielding concerns himself with the serious dilemmas of personality in society, and Boswell, in the journals of his early maturity, suggests that such concern belongs inevitably to one's growing up.

Both Fielding and Boswell seriously consider the problem of change. Early in the Life of Johnson, Boswell articulates his conviction that "the boy is the man in miniature: and . . . the distinguishing characteristicks of each individual are the same, through the whole course of life." Biography thus reports a series of episodes reiterating the same themes. And autobiography? The Johnsonian variety of stability, it turns out, is an index of moral and intellectual superiority rather than a universal human characteristic. "Nothing is more disagreeable," Boswell writes in a Hypochondriack essay of 1783, "than for a man to find himself unstable and changeful. An Hypochondriack is very liable to this uneasy imperfection, in so much that sometimes there remains only a mere consciousness of identity. His inclinations, his tastes, his friendships, even his principles, he with regret feels, or imagines he feels, are all shifted, he knows not how. This is owing to a want of firmness of mind . . . In proportion . . . as the intellectual faculties are exalted, will the character be fixed."2 He is writing, of course, essentially about himself. In his journals, finding himself changeful, he obsessively explores the meaning of his alterations, trying to justify what he feels as profound weakness. Fielding, on the other hand, with an optimistic view of change as potential moral growth, has apparent difficulty convincing himself of its possibility in the individual. Seeking to construct a fable of moral progress without fully committing himself to theological determinism, he hints at a pessimism quite opposed to Boswell's, suggesting how disagreeable it may prove for a man to find himself stable in weakness and corruption.

"All autobiographies hold what was up to view in light reflected from what is," Wayne Shumaker writes. Boswell for the Defence, a day by day record, has—like the London Journal—the shapeliness, the sense of story, that we expect in formal autobiography. It has the artistic form that, Fielding suggests early in Amelia, belongs to life itself. In Boswell's case the past casts its light upon the present as well as the reverse. To live in time, for human beings, means to live with

the awareness of approaching death, which casts its shadow in the process of diminishment individuals endure. Boswell makes determined efforts in his narrative to declare his present preferable to his past, as in many obvious respects it is. "Everything depends upon our ideas," he observes on the first day of his trip to London, with specific reference to his intense distress at separating from his wife—a twomonth separation being, he points out, "something considerable to a domestic man who has any turn to anxiety of mind."5 Three days later, seeing a lovely girl, he "cannot help being instantaneously affected by the sight of beauty." His legal practice has made him "callous to the most attentive looks of the ablest men. But a glance from a fine eye can yet affect my assurance. I felt this today. I compared myself to one of those animals who by their strong scales or tough skins are invulnerable by a bullet but may be wounded by the sharp point of a sword, which can pierce between the scales or hit some weak point of the skin" (p. 31). The next day, since nothing much happens, Boswell sets down a simile formulated three days earlier, remarking, "This is a good idea; and upon some occasion when my imagination is warmer and my expression more fluent I may expand it" (p. 32). A day later (19 March), he declares an important theme of this journal: "I looked back on former parts of my life, and my present firmness and cheerfulness of mind had full value by comparison with the weakness and gloominess which I recollected" (p. 33). He passes through a street full of prostitutes, feeling "a good deal uneasy. My ideas naturally run into their old channels, which were pretty deeply worn, and I was indulging speculations about polygamy and the concubines of the patriarchs and the harmlessness of temporary likings unconnected with mental attachment. I was really in a disagreeable state and yet would not free myself from it by taking a coach. I resolved never again to come to London without bringing my wife along with me" (p. 35).

The reference to his wife brings the sequence full circle—a sequence providing an elaborate gloss on the notion that "everything depends upon our ideas." Boswell creates his experience by his ways of thinking about it; the pattern of self-characterization, analogy, simile, comparison, speculation is more important than the pattern of events. By imagination he deals with past, present, and future. The past, he feels, strengthens him, his experience as a lawyer generating self-assurance. It provides standards of comparison that enable him to

declare his continued progress. But the episode involving the street of whores suggests a more complex relation between present and past. On the one hand, the diarist feels burdened by his ideas running "naturally . . . into their old channels"; on the other hand, he has developed new modes of response. Retaining the old ideas, no longer does he act directly on the basis of them by taking a woman to bed. He attempts to substitute imagination for action (another form of indulgence, as his language acknowledges) by merely thinking about concubines and polygamy (a favorite fantasy); the attempt results, predictably, in increased tension. He comes closest to resolving the clash between past ideas and present restraint by fantasies about the future. Next time he will bring his wife.

Next time, of course, he does nothing of the sort. Before long, in fact, he has returned, at least occasionally, to the casual sexual alliances of his youth. The future, becoming the present, inexorably follows the laws of the past. Only in fantasy does it contain rich possibility, as when Boswell anticipates expanding his simile some day when his powers are greater. As his imagination operates in the present, telling him both that he is a domestic man and that he is fatally, and necessarily, vulnerable to beauty; assuring him of "the harmlessness of temporary likings unconnected with mental attachment," and claiming that his wife will protect him from the consequences of such fancies—as his imagination operates, we see how it helps to create the future of sexual and alcoholic indulgence that will produce a man quite different from his exalted and hopeful visions of himself.

"Time is the most difficult of all subjects on which our thinking faculty can be employed," Boswell wrote. In the journals of the early 1770s, he shows himself constantly involved with the perplexing reality of time. As the examples cited thus far suggest, time was becoming a dramatic component of his story. The passage of years and the unavoidable changes of aging are objective phenomena. The subjective measure is Boswell's shifting sense of the meaning of his past and the possibility of his future. Paul Alkon has written of the ways in which Boswell made time an essential element of his Johnson biography by constructing the book's great mass to effect some metaphoric equivalence between the reading time and the time described. The temporal equivalences one experiences in reading the journals are yet more intricate, for Boswell's means of describing his consciousness of time past and future duplicate his methods of dealing

with time as a problem in his life, and his imagination in both cases is his weapon. Like Tristram Shandy, most time-obsessed of fictional characters, he finds in writing his frail stay against mortality. The creative power of his fancy, earlier his means of self-invention, becomes now his method of self-defense—subject and technique of the journal.

Burton Pike has suggested that the necessary fictionality of all autobiography stems from the anomalies of the human relation to time. Since the past has no existence, once experienced, it must be created by the experiencer: an act of the imagination, an exercise in fiction.⁸ "What makes all autobiographies worthless," Freud wrote, "is, after all, their mendacity." In Boswell at work, we see autobiography's "mendacity," its inevitable fictionizing, come into being. This journal of his middle years, embodying efforts to confront the past, shows how they rapidly convert themselves into processes of reassuring reinterpretation.

He wishes to believe not in unsteady change but in orderly improvement. "Let me endeavor," he concludes a sequence of self-assessment, "every session and every year to improve" (p. 269). The view that history records decay is not for him. Reflecting rarely on social or political history, he insists that the sequence of his life testifies the possibility of constant progress. But elsewhere in the journal he hints at his knowledge that such a view embodies more hope than perception. Occasionally another kind of recognition breaks through the determination to believe the present better than the past and the future superior to either.

Two moments of self-revelation are particularly striking, both belonging to the long series of comparisons Boswell offers, in this time-conscious record, between his present and his past. ¹⁰ In one episode he experiences an unusual fit of depression. A Scots friend calls upon him. "He brought strong upon my mind the dreary ideas of wet weather and weary nights which I have endured in Ayrshire, when all things appeared dismal. I have not had such a cloud of hypochondria this long time. I wish it may not press upon me in my old age" (17 Aug. 1774; pp. 272-273). Of course depression often generates mournful memories of the past and dismal anticipations of the future, but Boswell rarely admits that his acknowledged dependence on ideas for his sense of reality implies that psychic instability may mar the future as it has shadowed the past. More than a year earlier in one of his

habitual optimistic comparisons, he had revealed a consciousness of loss as well as gain in his progress toward a more controlled mental state. "I remember the time when my mind was in such a state of fermentation that whenever the lid put upon it by the restraint of company was removed, it was like to boil over, or rather, to use a better metaphor, when not stirred by company but left to stagnate in solitude, it soon turned upon the fret. But now it has wrought itself into such a sound state that it will *keep* for a long time. The satisfaction which I feel from the comparison of my present with my former self is immense; though I must own that during my fermentation there were grand ebullitions and bright sparkles which I can no longer perceive" (1 April 1773; p. 157).

This statement testifies Boswell's conflict over what kind of interior state he should prefer. He tries to persuade himself by his metaphors that all alternatives to the sound state are manifestly inferior; yet he regrets that "grand ebullitions and bright sparkles" have vanished from his life. Giving up depression implies relinquishing exhilaration. Boswell believes himself a better man, a better citizen, and a more admirable human being than he was ten years earlier. But the loss of psychic youth feels like loss indeed—and not even this sacrifice necessarily protects against further loss in age.

"Creative imagination," Hans Meverhoff has written, "is creative recall. Recollection as an activity, an operation—not the passive reproduction of habitual memory response. To construct a work of art is to re-construct the world of experience and the self."11 And one can reverse the last proposition: the reconstruction of past experience and the reconstitution of the self reflected in it generate art. Meyerhoff here specifically alludes to Proust, whose reconstructions involved fictional disguises and heightenings. Boswell's more immediate reconstructions, constantly delineating the activity of his mind, achieve an art at once of intimacy and of imaginative distance. His "creative recall," as his journals continue, more and more involves the distant past. As he looks back on experience that he had previously recorded, closer to the time of happening, it assumes new forms. Meyerhoff, again, remarks that "the literary reconstruction of one's life invariably involves two dimensions: a subjective pattern of significant associations (poetry) and an objective structure of verifiable biographical and historical events (truth)."12 "Truth" remains the same as the past recedes, but "poetry" changes. Boswell's shifting sense of his past and

of his future emerges through his journals, as autobiography in process and autobiography discovering its form.

Although he no longer presents himself as Aeneas or Macheath, Boswell continues to insist on his own inventiveness and on the degree to which he creates the experience he sets down—even though it purports to be literal truth. Describing himself as though he were a fictional comic hero, he inhabits a world too real to supply the benign reorderings of literary comedy. 13 Yet he can partly reconstruct a more reassuring world. Still conscious of the operations of his own imagination, although he has it under firmer control than a decade earlier, he shows its transformations in action. "I just sat and hugged myself in my own mind. Here I am in London, at the house of General Oglethorpe, who introduced himself to me just because I had distinguished myself; and here is Mr. Johnson, whose character is so vast; here is Dr. Goldsmith, so distinguished in literature. Words cannot describe our feelings" (10 April 1774; p. 104). Boswell's determination to heighten, glamorizing himself by exalting his companions (elsewhere, of course, he freely expresses his contempt for Goldsmith), leads him even to associate his feelings, through the formulation about the inadequacy of language, with the profound emotional conflicts of ladies in the novel of sensibility. (Amelia abounds in such phrases.) Words intensify his experience, fully realized only through the artifice of its telling.

As a moral being Boswell, like Captain Booth in Amelia, has flaws; this journal focuses attention on them. He compensates, from the reader's point of view and from his own, by his continued (although, in his view, waning) imaginative vitality. Johnson has told him that "the great thing" in keeping a journal "was to register my state of mind" (25 June 1774; p. 215). Nothing much happens to him, he reflects: "The state of my mind must be gathered from the little circumstances inserted in my Journal." But after observing once more the paucity of external event in his life, he concludes, "Of this week I can observe that my mind has been more lively than usual, more fertile in images, more agreeably sensible of enjoying existence" (9 July 1774; p. 222). Two weeks later, he engages in a drinking bout with friends. "How I appeared this night to others, I know not. But I recollect having felt much warmth of heart, fertility of fancy, and joyous complacency mingled in a sort of delirium. Such a state is at least equal to a pleasing dream. I drank near three bottles of hock, and then

staggered away" (22 July 1774; p. 231). "Fertility" of fancy or of images (much the same thing, presumably) compensates for bad conduct, imagination thus becoming in effect a moral index.

Boswell's claim that imaginative capacity amounts to moral accomplishment emerges most clearly in his account of one of his meetings with the other partners of *The London Magazine* (7 April 1772). The only Scotsman present, he finds himself entirely one of the company "from my perfect art of melting myself into the general mass. Most individuals when they find themselves with people of a different country cannot get free of their own particular national distinction. The individual, instead of being melted down, as I have remarked of myself, remains as hard as a piece of iron in a crucible filled with lead or silver. I should not wish to be melted so as not to be again separated from the mass. But when the heat is over, I gather myself up as firm as ever, with perhaps only a small plate or thin leaf of the other metal upon me sufficient to make me glitter, and even that I can rub off if I choose it" (p. 100). A bit later later in the same account, Boswell reports looking through the magazine's records. "I had more enjoyment in thinking of my share of the profits of this than if I had been to draw ten times the sum out of an estate." His capacity to "melt" into harmony with others and to enjoy whatever happens derives from the fertile fancy that permits him to grasp so fully the natures and demands of his companions that he becomes temporarily indistinct in his separate identity, only to regain it in enriched form. This fantasy of perfect freedom from distinction combined with aggressive assertion of distinction embodies Boswell's most positive selfimage. He sees himself as triumphantly passive (allowing himself to be "melted down") only in order to act successfully (gathering himself up). His imagination provides his key to morality in the simplest sense of that difficult noun. It exemplifies what he considers good in himself. Yet the journal reveals that it cannot, finally, rescue him.

The London Journal had begun with Boswell trumpeting "Know thyself." In Boswell for the Defence that adjuration recurs in a very different context. "I had stripped and gone to bed again in my night-gown after breakfast, which favoured my tranquility. A man who knows himself should use means to do him good which to others may seem trifling or ridiculous" (17 July 1774; p. 228). Dr. Johnson had argued "that action can have no effect upon reasonable minds"; Boswell presumes to disagree, on the grounds that "Reasonable beings are

not solely reasonable. They have fancies which must be amused, tastes which must be pleased, passions which must be roused" (7 April 1773; p. 169). Both the particular action of going back to bed, with Boswell's commentary, and his general observation about the nature of man reflect the same abdication of grandiosity. To know himself, he fancied in his youth, would be to discover his greatness. In fact he discovers his pettiness and irrationality and his sharing of them with mankind in general. Not only action, but trivial action affects men. In 1762 and 1763, Boswell could readily see himself as a hero of epic or drama. By 1773, his fantasies of future glory had reduced themselves to a hope of being admitted to the English bar (a hope ultimately to be fulfilled, as his earlier fantasies could never conceivably be). He dreamed still of self-improvement, but no longer of grandeur. However complacent his implicit assertion that his willingness to engage in trifling action testifies his wisdom and however large his claimed superiority to Dr. Johnson in his readiness to admit human irrationality, he acknowledges repeatedly the straitening of his self-imagining.

Most of all, he must defend against a sense of his own insignificance: here is the center of the journal's drama. He may defend by embracing, as when he proclaims that self-knowledge sends him back to bed, or by denying, as when he declares his self-improvement. He defends through his ceaseless activity of introspection, of looking forward and backward, of interpreting and reinterpreting. And, like most men, he defends himself by his profession, the profession chosen for him by his father that gives him institutional authority and a public role of significance to counteract any private feeling of worthlessness.

Law as a human institution embodies, among other things, an attempt to preserve order and grandeur in spite of, even by means of, time. It rests on a system of precedents: the past ensuring an undiminished future. It insists on consequences; the relation of past, present, and future thus becomes a logical and comprehensible system of cause and effect. If it cannot ensure progress, it at least guards against decay. The judges deliberating Boswell's plea for a client accused of stealing nineteen sheep feel themselves supporters of stability, believing that law—not the theoretical notion but the actual existing structure—belongs to the essential order of things, providing a vital stay against chaos. Boswell, allying himself with this great structure, expresses his ambivalence even through the alliance. Not judge but

advocate, he supports lost causes. Much of the overt drama of Boswell for the Defence comes from the trial and subsequent appeals of his sheep-stealing client, John Reid, who had some years earlier supplied Boswell's first case when accused—and subsequently acquitted—of another bout of sheep-stealing. The second time he proved less fortunate. Convicted and sentenced to death, he remained the object of Boswell's concern, because the lawyer felt his own prestige involved in the case but also clearly for more complex and subtle reasons. Having won a two-week reprieve, Reid hoped it would be followed by a royal pardon. Instead came a reaffirmation of the conviction. Boswell urged his client to prepare for death, meanwhile making feverish plans to try to revive his corpse after the hanging. He also arranged for a portrait of the condemned man, anticipating an interesting complexity of facial expression, and he did not neglect to make detailed psychological observations of the criminal's state of mind as his foreknown hour of death approached. Dissuaded finally from the attempt at resuscitation (on the ground that whether or not successful it would have bad effects on other criminals), he watched the execution. Then "gloom came upon" him, he was so "affrighted" that he hardly dared leave his chair. A friend shared his supper and a bottle of claret: "But still I was quite dismal" (21 Sept. 1774; p. 336).

His own account of his gloom suggests superstition as its immediate cause: he feared John Reid's ghost. But the larger narrative indicates the intricate functions of the Reid case in Boswell's psychic life. The defense of Reid partook of Boswell's defense of Boswell; his execution marked a crucial failure. This fact becomes apparent as one reads the subsequent volume of the journal (Boswell: The Ominous Years, 1774-1776), with its increasing emphasis on melancholia and sexual and alcoholic indulgence, its recurrence of internal and unresolved problems. Facing his death, Reid confided to his lawyer that he had taken sheep in the past, including some for which he was never accused, but he persisted in denying his theft of the crucial nineteen. His reputation doomed him. The conviction rested on circumstantial evidence and on the fact that Reid was generally believed a thief. Boswell's personal gifts, his eloquence and determination could not prevail against the complicated sequence of cause and effect by which a man's misdeeds in youth determine his fate in middle age.

For Boswell, the defeated attempt to save John Reid violated his optimistic sense of his "own consequence" (p. 295); his local prestige,

he feared, would be lessened as a result of failure. It testified the finitude of his powers. Given full will and full engagement, he yet could not achieve what he wanted. More serious, it probably suggested to him a diminishment of his public force. Once he had been able to save this man, now he could not. And it confronted him directly with the reality of death. His desire to resurrect the hanged man certainly reflects a wishful fantasy that death should not be final, that he too might escape the final doom.

Almost two years later, Boswell had an interview with David Hume, dying, as he had lived, a skeptic. Talking obsessively about death and the possibility of an afterlife, he tried in vain to make Hume reveal some vestige of Christian faith. As the skeptic remained impervious, Boswell became increasingly frantic in his verbal manipulations, joking and fantasizing. His inner state, however, was yet more disturbed than his verbal manifestations indicated. "I . . . felt a degree of horror, mixed with a sort of wild, strange, hurrying recollection of my excellent mother's pious instructions, of Dr. Johnson's noble lessons, and of my religious sentiments and affections during the course of my life. I was like a man in sudden danger eagerly seeking his defensive arms."14 In his repeated confrontations with John Reid, Boswell poses as a wise, benevolent, convinced Christian, explaining to the criminal his good fortune in having time to prepare himself for death. He refutes Reid's tendency to believe in predestination as firmly as though he himself had never endured hours of mental conflict over the possibility that his choices were predetermined; he assures the condemned man that hanging is easier than most other deaths. Or he insists on his distance as a spectator, hoping that Reid's anticipated pardon will not arrive until after his portrait's completion, since the portrait's interest depends on its rendition of a man under sentence of death, or discussing with the victim the fine weather characteristic of days of execution. Yet all these—like his later efforts to rely on his mother's pieties and Dr. Johnson's—represent defensive tactics against the terror of time running out. No matter how much claret he consumes, he cannot protect himself against mortality; he feels himself growing older and only dubiously wiser; he feels the loss of power.

In the natural body, I believe, you will allow there is the season of youth, the season of manhood, and the season of old age; and that, when the last of these arrives, it will be an impossible attempt by all

the means of art to restore the body again to its youth, or to the vigor of its middle age. The same periods happen to every great kingdom. In its youth it rises by art and arms to power and prosperity. This it enjoys and flourishes with awhile; and then it may be said to be in the vigor of its age, enriched at home with all the emoluments and blessings of peace, and formidable abroad with all the terrors of war. At length this very prosperity introduces corruption, and then comes on its old age. Virtue and learning, art and industry, decay by degrees. The people sink into sloth and luxury and prostitution. It is enervated at home—becomes contemptible abroad; and such indeed is its misery and wretchedness, that it resembles a man in the last decrepit stage of life, who looks with unconcern at his approaching dissolution.¹⁵

The character in *Amelia* who offers this detailed analogy belongs to the vast group of those unwilling to reward merit, but exemplary Dr. Harrison, who hears it, makes no effort to refute it, only suggesting that proper adherence to religion—with its extension of futurity beyond death—may rescue men and nations alike. In *Amelia* as in *Tom Jones*, the good get better and the wicked, more wicked, but everyone ages. Men and nations alike can flourish but briefly.

Boswell for the Defence reveals the writer's paradoxical dual consciousness of time as the medium for growth, in which he can see himself as ever better and wiser, and for decay, in which he must recognize his repeated failures and his downward progress toward death. The same duality permeates Amelia, where a narrowly focused view of individuals may reveal evidence of growth and fruitful development, although the larger truth remains that of deterioration. In fact, more emphatically even than Boswell, Fielding demands our awareness of time's multiple complexities. "The complex of relationships between the different time-values of the reader, the author, and the hero [of a novel] produces a highly involved and delicately balanced structure," A.A. Mendilow writes. 16 In Amelia Fielding adds to this basic structure the differing time-values of several other characters, many of whom offer their reminiscences, sometimes interrupted with reminders of a present reality quite opposed to that of the past they narrate. The author, despite his general practice of refraining from interference in the story, intervenes to offer a gratuitous reference to his own youth. Speculations and fantasies about the future occupy many characters. Reminding his reader frequently of the relation of cause to effect, the author deliberately introduces conditional possibil-

ities for the reader's moral future. At one point, one character interrupts another to supply a memory that she knows to be distorted. In large ordering and in minute detail, *Amelia* emphasizes the degree to which an experience's location in time determines its psychological valence, the ways in which time controls possibility, and the importance of time as an element in understanding.

Fielding in his own voice suggests that he has kept himself as contriver out of the reader's view because of his convictions about the nature of the experience that novels record.

Life may as properly be called an art as any other; and the great incidents in it are no more to be considered as mere accidents than the several members of a fine statue or a noble poem . . . By examining carefully the several gradations which conduce to bring every model to perfection, we learn truly to know that science in which the model is formed: as histories of this kind, therefore, may properly be called models of Human Life, so, by observing minutely the several incidents which tend to the catastrophe or completion of the whole, and the minute causes whence those incidents are produced, we shall best be instructed in this most useful of all arts, which I call the art of Life. (Bk. I, ch. i; VI, 14)

Lives really are stories, then; artistic form belongs not to the literary shaping of experience but to the experience itself. A perfect life, meeting aesthetic as well as moral criteria, can be valued for the way its individual episodes contribute to the shape of the whole.

Autobiography, this argument might seem to imply, automatically achieves the status of art, since even more emphatically than the novel it provides models of human life. Yet the skepticism that *Tom Jones* suggests about the capacity of human beings to tell their own stories becomes intensified in *Amelia*, which hints that comprehension of a life's shape depends on distance and on moral as well as aesthetic grasp of experience. People cannot adequately report themselves. In the preface to *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon*, his last, autobiographical work, Fielding makes this point explicitly. Writers, he maintains, often recount trivia about their own experience in the belief that whatever happens to them must interest others, or they lie, inventing marvels to compel attention.¹⁷ Either device lacks literary validity.

Yet Amelia, though it is a third-person narrative, relies heavily on individuals' first-person accounts of themselves, and accounts loaded with trivia. To some extent the epic model justifies the story's begin-

ning with Captain Booth in prison and then allowing him to narrate his own past at length. Miss Matthews, his temporary inamorata, does the same, and so, later, does Mrs. Bennet for Amelia's benefit. Briefer episodes in which characters tell something of their pasts occur fairly frequently.

Critics have perceived the longer first-person narratives as structural excrescences in a strained narrative. 19 Yet their form emphasizes their significant narrative purposes as they provide systematic instruction in the undependability of human testimony about the self. Miss Matthews's story begins with a ferocious declaration of her satisfaction in having committed murder. The author interrupts to call attention to the apparent inconsistency by which "a lady in whom we had remarked a most extraordinary power of displaying softness should, the very next moment after the words were out of her mouth, express sentiments becoming the lips of a Dalila, Jezebel, Medea, Semiramis" (Bk. I, ch. vi; VI, 40). Such incongruity, he demonstrates, belongs to human nature in its political and personal manifestations. Miss Matthews's lurid tale shapes itself in accord with her immediate psychic needs. Thus a minor episode, long past, in which Booth defended her right to stand uppermost in a dance, assumes for her as much importance as the climactic murder. She views and presents herself as a victim. Only as the novel continues do we come fully to understand her weakness and why it amounts to depravity.

Critics have also commented on the novel's disparities of characterization, largely generated by the juxtaposition of different points of view about a single person. Fielding's technique implicates "the reader directly in the experience of a world where any smiling face many turn out to be a mask, where, indeed, the face behind the mask may sometimes prove to be but another mask."²⁰ Moral identity, as the reference to masking may suggest, remains problematic to most characters in the novel. People must rely on their public identities for protection partly because private identity feels often precarious.²¹ Both kinds of identity, Fielding's technique indicates, develop partly from the operations of time on personality and are reinforced by people's stories of themselves.

Told in the timeless setting of the prison, and reconstructing the patterns of time past, Miss Matthews's story demonstrates a systematic if unconscious development of identity through self-interpretation.²² Like Boswell, although with more immediate purpose and audience,

Miss Matthews recreates herself in story. Her account calls attention to the way emotion forms memory and to the contributions of time to pyschic drama. At the narrative's end, she apologizes for her peculiar emphases. "If I have tired your patience by dwelling too long on those parts which affected me the most, I ask your pardon" (Bk. I, ch. ix; VI, 58). Indeed, the art of Miss Matthews's story considered as Fielding's creation depends heavily on its odd elaborations. Her learning to play the harpsichord, perhaps better than her talented sister, receives more detailed rendition than her murder of her lover. She spends a long time discussing how people look and dwells obsessively on the episode at the dance. Her emphases, belonging to the present, reveal how she identifies and justifies herself in her new and glamorous role as murderess and how she feels toward Captain Booth.

Delay structures Miss Matthews's drama. Hebbers, her faithless lover, relies on postponement. He complains about "the delay of his joys," but makes no effort to set a date for his marriage, and, as Miss Matthews points out, "a woman who hath given her consent to marry can hardly be said to be safe till she is married." Such safety cannot accrue to the narrator. Her lover pretends "that he should, in a very few weeks, be preferred to the command of a troop," an event which will increase the propriety of his marriage. The woman acquiesces in the consequent new delay, only to learn that her lover has been ordered to another post. When she demands immediate marriage, he replies that the time is wrong for mentioning the matter to her father. She rages, "I will have no excuse, no delay—make me your wife this instant" (Bk. I, ch. viii; VI, 49, 50-51). But control of time is not within her power: she cannot effectively insist that anything be done "this instant."

It turns out, or so she thinks (indeed, Hebbers "confesses"), that her lover has married long before. Now postponement becomes her chosen tactic as well as his; she agrees in delaying their marriage. Given the passage of time, she herself changes, listening "to a proposal, which, if any one in the days of my innocence, or even a few days before, had assured me I could have submitted to have thought of, I should have treated the supposition with the highest contempt and indignation" (Bk. I, ch. ix; VI, 54). Months go by. She lives as Hebbers' mistress, bears him a child, but feels discomfort and remorse. Then, seeing her lover with another woman at a play, she

learns that he has in fact married only "a few days since." The difference between the idea of his unalterable marriage contracted in the distant past and that of a marriage entered in the near present provokes her to stab Hebbers to the heart with a penknife.

Her memories sometimes revive old emotion and sometimes enable her to find new feelings. Both responses stress the importance of memory, which may generate special distortions. An episode that Miss Matthews reports emphasizes precisely this point. Booth inquires what has become of her father, banished from the narrative by her obsessive narcissism. She responds that she thought of her father constantly. "His dear image still obtruded itself into my mind, and I believe would have broken my heart had I not taken a very preposterous way to ease myself." She relies on summoning up a past happening "too trifling to have been remembered." Once her father had been persuaded to let her brother take her sister with him in the chariot, an act that prevented Miss Matthews from attending a ball to which she wished to go. "I had long since forgotten it," she insists, adding that "it was the only thing in which I can remember that my father ever disobliged me." Somehow she manages to revive in her mind this forgotten slight and to use it as comfort. "When any tender idea intruded into my bosom, I immediately raised this phantom of an injury in my imagination, and it considerably lessened the fury of that sorrow which I should have otherwise felt for the loss of so good a father, who died within a few months of my departure from him" (Bk. I, ch. ix; VI, 55-56). His goodness pales in her mind when she recalls his slight to her vanity and self-indulgence; she uses her aggressive impulses to protect against the sense of loss.

This gratuitous and rather implausible little story demands the reader's attention to the important issue of how memory functions in the psychic economy. Linking each individual to his own past, it may be to some extent—so Miss Matthews's story implies—controlled by will. It reveals the nature of the rememberer's true concerns: Miss Matthews's recollections proclaim her self-absorption, envy, and malice. If emotion affects memory, as the woman's large narrative indicates, so can memory affect emotion. She uses a selected memory deliberately to defend against painful feelings. People's accounts of themselves may be untrustworthy, then, because memory serves other functions than merely recording the past: a potential weakness of

autobiography. Memory's selectivity provides interpretation and, more particularly, self-justification. Captain Booth has, in effect, been warned to be wary; so has the reader.

The author's single explicit reference to his personal memories employs recollection for moral purpose. He recalls in his youth seeing a young girl at a play, the picture of innocence, and overhearing a woman comment that the girl is likely to be ruined by allowing herself to be alone with a young man; then the narrator further remembers recalling, at the time, that he has earlier encountered the same girl "in bed with a rake at a bagnio" (Bk. I, ch. vii; VI, 41). The story illustrates that one cannot trust appearances. The novel illustrates the larger truth that memories themselves comprise a sort of appearance, also capable of manipulation and deception.

How are people formed by their histories and by their memories? Fielding, who raises the question loudly, answers it confusingly. The moral flaccidity and self-indulgence of Miss Matthews's past mark her with increasing clarity as the novel continues. Her refusal to make hard choices and her eagerness to nourish her own self-regard, one might argue, shape her as a moral being, her past thus implying her future. The novel's other bad or weak characters, if sufficiently developed to have histories, demonstrate how their inability to make crucial discriminations, for example, perpetuates itself. At any moment in time, it seems, one might see them fully revealed, each of their histories an inevitable continuum.

This is only to say that, like the characters of other eighteenth-century novels, they do not change, but solidify. Fielding's good characters in *Amelia* learn strikingly little from their experience. Amelia discovers the danger of masquerades; she already knows the importance of virtue. A contemporary woman commenting on the character expresses irritation with this female paragon: "As for poor Amelia, she is so great a fool we pity her, but cannot be humble enough to desire to imitate her." Another writes, "The Love part foolishly fond beneath the dignity of a man. Amelia vastly good, but a little silly." Amelia seems at best "a little silly," at worst "so great a fool," because of her inadequate psychological response to the mishaps that befall her. As a character she suggests a very simple view of personal history: once good, always good; and if good, as a woman, then passive. She pawns the family possessions for her husband's debt, she cooks

meals, and she arranges a substitute self to go to the masquerade (this plan, however, is not her idea). Mostly, she accepts, never angry at her reprehensible husband, never making any serious concerted effort to urge him toward change. She declares her willingness to go to work for the sake of the family's survival, but she takes no steps toward doing so. Her increased knowledge of the nature (i.e., the evil) of the world intensifies her conviction that the only wise course is to remain at home. Her history, in essence, records stasis, as does Booth's.

Not that nothing happens internally. Booth presumably undergoes a most crucial change: from deism, perhaps even atheism, to assured Christianity. The novel's account of that implausible shift, however, does not increase its plausibility. "Since I have been in this wretched place," Booth explains to Dr. Harrison, "I have employed my time almost entirely in reading over a series of sermons which are contained in that book (meaning Dr. Barrow's works, which then lay on the table before him) in proof of the Christian religion; and so good an effect have they had upon me, that I shall, I believe, be the better man for them as long as I live. I have not a doubt (for I own I have had such) which remains now unsatisfied" (Bk. XII, ch. v; VII, 312-313). Immediately afterwards, his wife's unexpected inheritance makes his course smooth. He thereafter avoids London, never loses his temper, and rears a happy family.

George Sherburn attributes the unconvincing aspects of this sequence to Fielding's lack of available technique for the portrayal of characterological alteration.²⁵ One may postulate, however, some difficulty of belief as well as technique in Fielding. The author's sense of psychology, belonging to the comic novel, takes character as given rather than evolving.²⁶ Amelia investigates evolution as a possibility; it implicitly inquires how change might take place. And the answer it hints at is Boswell's inconclusive answer: "Everything depends upon our ideas." Although Booth is said to shift from the beliefs of a social nonconformist to the views that his society nominally upholds, only his state of mind really seems to alter; he has never had truly operative convictions. The art of life, as he embodies it, involves not only a way of living but a way of perceiving. He explains his previous lack of faith as being based on his conviction that, since men "act entirely from their passions, their actions could have neither merit nor demerit" (Bk. XII, ch. v; VII, 313). Moral discrimination is therefore irrelevant.

Reading a book has changed his mind, corroborating the novel's constant implication that language—ways of speaking and telling—shapes perception.

We are back to Fielding's curious emphasis on personal histories. not only as sequences of reported events but as acts of telling. Even the happy resolution of the novel derives directly from someone's telling his story. Dr. Harrison goes from Booth's confession of faith to a "death-bed confession" which exposes the villainy that has deprived Amelia of her rightful heritage. One cannot rest much weight of meaning on so hackneyed a literary device, but in this special novelistic context, one final report and reinterpretation of past events, assuming its place in a long series of stories about the self, seems more than a cliché. Booth, converted by a book rather than by direct life-experience, becomes prosperous as a result of another man's new perspective on his own life, caused by his fear of death. Dr. Harrison agrees with Booth that men act from passion; he adds, though, that Christianity employs as its ethical sanctions the strongest passions, hope and fear. The criminal who believes himself dying demonstrates the point; motivated by fear of divine punishment he uncovers the truth. His is a truth of fact; he brings the Booths literal wealth, thus resolving the novel's action in factuality.

Yet the book has raised questions that cannot be so resolved. If "everything depends upon our ideas," external fact diminishes in importance. The stories people tell emphasize that point, which emerges particularly in fantasies about the future. A single, complicated instance demonstrates the discrepancy between idea and fact. Captain Booth's retrospective account of his courtship and marriage (offered to Miss Matthews) claims to report verbatim a speech that he made to Amelia "after the highest professions of the most disinterested love." In it, he concerns himself with a possible consequence of their marriage: Amelia's suffering of "dreadful inconveniences" (Bk. II, ch. iii; VI, 76). The evils that he foresees befalling Amelia depend on his profession and on the fortunes of war, not on any specific action he may take or fail to take. In the event, of course, he involves Amelia in distress more dreadful than he has imagined. She suffers not only economic and emotional but even moral danger. He repeatedly intensifies his wife's suffering by his own folly, ignorance, or mistake, thus becoming directly responsible for her misery, although his economic inadequacy derives from no fault of his own.

The ironic relation between the future Booth imagines and the one that becomes the principal present of the novel indicates one dimension of the reiterated discrepancy between people's ways of seeing themselves and their actual being. It also suggests that events may make more sense than the people enduring them can recognize. Booth assumes the injustice of his suffering, and in a large sense Fielding concurs, remedying that injustice at last with the unexpected inheritance. But Booth also creates the future he fears, gambling beyond his means, allowing himself to be deceived by plausible appearances, and naïvely offering bribes to the wrong person. The meaning of those events is altogether different for Amelia. Her most dreadful apprehensions, model of Freudian femininity that she is, involve separation. Booth, about to go abroad as a soldier, finds Amelia on her knees, "praying for resolution to support the cruellest moment she had ever undergone, or could possibly undergo" (Bk. III, ch. ii; VI, 111). The happiest day she can anticipate is that of reunion (VI, 116).

Amelia undergoes all the sufferings that comprise her husband's vision of a terrible future for her, but since her sole desideratum is closeness to her mate, her personal misery hardly disturbs her. Both partners get, from one point of view, what they deserve: Captain Booth, the realization of his fears; Amelia, the fulfillment of her dearest wish in the physical proximity of her husband. Of course, eventually both get more: economic and emotional security in safe isolation from the corrupt city. If this benign arrangement violates our sense of probability, it emphasizes the author's power to dispose at will of his characters. But through most of the novel he has allowed them, in effect, to dispose of themselves: to enact their natures and to demonstrate the consequences of such enactment. Fielding does not speak of imagination in this novel, nor of wit, fancy, or genius. He intervenes as moralist, not as manipulator, implicitly claiming for his personages some status as real people rather than as imaginative constructs.²⁷ His telling analogues refer to his tale as history, not as stage representation, deliberately generating uncertainty about the reality of his world. His moral commentary, pointedly referring to the reader's experience, suggests its identity with the characters'. "The admiration of a beautiful woman, though the wife of our dearest friend, may at first perhaps be innocent, but let us not flatter ourselves it will always remain so; desire is sure to succeed; and wishes, hopes, designs, with a long train of mischiefs, tread close at our heels" (Bk. VI, ch. i; VI, 279). Colonel James's passion for Amelia thus implicates us, the readers, as well as the author. In *Tom Jones* Fielding involved his readers in dilemmas of imaginative response; in *Amelia*, apparently demanding rather than mocking the total suspension of disbelief, he involves us in equivalent moral intricacies. In a sense he denies the fictionality of his creation and his power in inventing it.

Finally, however, seeing and depicting his characters in long temporal sequences, Fielding demonstrates how his function as moralist does not supersede but becomes identical with his role as artist. As an artist, as a historian, as a moralist, he wishes to show. He handles time as though it were space, providing his readers with constant opportunities to "see around" the persons of the novel. Those persons see themselves, distortedly, as existing in the moment. Although they have, rely on, and report memories, their memories are not dependable. They think about their futures but never perceive the relation between their thoughts and what happens to them. The artist-moralist, perceiving more, demands that his readers recognize the necessary discrepancy between short and long views of experience and invites them to participate in both and to enjoy and reflect upon the tension between them, which creates the most memorable drama of *Amelia*.

Fielding's art, Erich Auerbach remarks, expressing with economy a widely held view, shows an "energetic contemporary realism of life in all its aspects" but "sheers away from any problematic and existential seriousness."28 I am arguing that the technical devices of Amelia supply a version of exactly that sort of seriousness, by raising as a moral problem the implications of emotionally dictated fluctuations of perception. Dr. Harrison, Mrs. Atkinson, Miss Matthews, Booth, and Amelia: each sees the same world in a different way. They even perceive identical experience differently. The story Amelia would tell about her husband must differ sharply from the tale he would offer of himself, or the story Fielding gives us. One cannot say merely that one version of events is right and another wrong; or one good, another bad. But one can say—indeed, one is invited to say—that moral choice and action derive from and depend upon perception. After Booth reads his book of sermons, he perceives the world differently and therefore acts differently. He has changed. But the "problematic and existential seriousness" of the issues the novel has exposed make one question the depth of such change. In one sense, the action argues, people change all the time. Booth may read another book and feel dif-

ferently. In another sense, they never change. Booth remains, for example, quite as patronizing as he has always been toward his admirable wife. Fielding does not appear to have worked out in his own mind the relation between fluctuation and stability. He retreats frequently into sentimentality or simple moralizing. One yearns in vain for the secure comic perspective of *Tom Jones* when, for example, Amelia reacts to the news of her unexpected wealth. "She then desired her children to be brought to her, whom she immediately caught in her arms, and having profusely cried over them for several minutes, declared she was easy. After which she soon regained her usual temper and complexion" (Bk. XII, ch. viii; VII, 337). *Amelia*, to put it bluntly, is often boring. But its mode of "seeing around" characters suggests an important effort to explore the intricacies of psychic process and the relation between the operations of that process and those of storytelling.

In such a novel as Amelia, combining the advantages of third-person and first-person point of view, the novelist provides the complex perspective on his characters that time alone supplies for the autobiographer. He manipulates point of view as the autobiographer cannot; he incorporates time as a dramatic element in his fiction. The novel can invite almost simultaneous and equivalent perception of past, present, and future as components of experience for imagined characters. The autobiography, establishing its poise of time perspectives in different ways, also demands and creates awareness of time's essential contributions to understanding. The sequence of Boswell's journals reveals, for example, the shifting shapes that a man's life assumes in his perceptions of it. Each recorded span of time possesses a special pseudo-fictional form, but we see how the present changes form as it becomes the past. Boswell, like Captain Booth, is tempted to believe that he is not really responsible for his actions, that all is determined, or that causality derives from forces outside the self. And Boswell like Booth dramatizes ways of dealing with his experience of time's diminishments.

The plots of Boswell for the Defence and Amelia alike describe rather tentative shapes of failure, differing in this respect from their authors' previous work and from most eighteenth-century non-satiric masterpieces. Amelia has its happy ending, manifestly imposed, but the logic of the novel's events points overwhelmingly to its protagon-

ists' defeat. Boswell remains intact at the end of the 1774 journal. In the journal as in the novel, however, one feels the pressure of forces too powerful to be resisted. Captain Booth hardly notices time's attritions, although the novel that contains him demands that the reader notice, but he cannot fail to observe how social institutions entangle and oppress him and how powerless he is before them. His involvement with marriage and with the legal system creates difficulties that effectively unman him.²⁹ Boswell, although the law is his profession and his marriage has been conceived as totally nonrestrictive, faces similar difficulties. ("I . . . bargained with my bride," he explains, "that I should not be bound to live with her longer than I really inclined; and that whenever I tired of her domestick society, I should be at liberty to give it up."³⁰)

For Boswell and for Booth marriage as an institution creates obvious problems about sexual possibility. Both men continue to yearn for sexual opportunities that exist only outside marriage, and both learn with some perplexity that married women may condone such yearning.

I don't remember how we introduced the subject of matrimonial infidelity. She [Peggy Stuart, an old friend of Boswell's wife] candidly declared that from what she had seen of life in this great town she would not be uneasy at an occasional infidelity in her husband, as she did not think it at all connected with affection. That if he kept a particular woman, it would be a sure sign that he had no affection for his wife; or if his infidelities were very frequent, it would also be a sign. But that a transient fancy for a girl, or being led by one's companions after drinking to an improper place, was not to be considered as inconsistent with true affection. I wish this doctrine may not have been only consolatory and adapted to fact. I told her I was very happy; that I had never known I was married, having taken for my wife my cousin and intimate friend and companion; so that I had nothing at all like restraint. (29 March 1772; p. 76)

The point of view here articulated by Mrs. Stuart will recur frequently in Boswell's imagination, as he tries to justify his continued impulse toward random sexual indulgence. As Boswell struggles with his imagination and with his physical needs, he reveals with increasing clarity that marriage to a "cousin and intimate friend and companion" does not after all keep a man from knowing his bondage. He decides that "interviews with women of the town" (p. 66) are dangerous, since "I might fall into an infidelity which would make me very miserable" (p.

67). By autumn he has fallen, suffering the physical consequences of venereal disease, and again during the winter (see pp. 140, 146). Succeeding journals record more frequent "falls," and more obsessive speculation about how (or whether) they might be justified.

Captain Booth, who, like Tom Jones, lacks any highly developed inner life, is not described as consciously perplexed by sexual problems. Fielding nevertheless makes it clear that Booth, shortly after describing to Miss Matthews what a paragon he has married, succumbs to his listener's blandishments and during his week's imprisonment conducts a liaison with her. Like Boswell, he makes no emotional commitment to a temporary mistress; when he leaves her, he hopes to free himself from all involvement with her. She, on the other hand, wishing to preserve the attachment, threatens him with exposure if he fails to visit her. In his shame he foolishly tries to conceal his infidelity from Amelia, who, however, turns out to have known of it but to have taken Mrs. Stuart's large view of male wandering.

To the more or less upright men delineated in these books, marital faithfulness and all alternatives to it seem equally impossible. Booth describes his life with Amelia as "a calm sea" (Bk. III, ch. xii; VI, 167), a vision Miss Matthews rejects with disgust: "The dullest of all ideas," cries the lady." Boswell, writing of his sober Edinburgh life, generalizes, "The life of every man, take it day by day, is pretty much a series of uniformity; at least a series of repeated alternations. It is like a journal of the weather: rainy-fair-fair-rainy, etc. It is seldom that a great storm or an abundant harvest occurs in the life of man or in the progress of years" (9 July 1774; p. 222). Obviously deploring the monotony of day-to-day existence, Boswell characteristically appends a comment on the fertility of his own fancy. Booth, speaking to an audience, declares his enthusiasm for the placid life he has described. Yet shortly thereafter he accepts the variety and excitement that Miss Matthews offers. Marriage, as an institution and as an experience, embodies for good people the principles of order and stability, which may come dangerously close to the principle of boredom. Amelia contains several representations of bad marriages, in which commitment to change and excitement, by one partner or both, creates travestyrelationships, tawdry and destructive mockeries of human possibility. Inadequate alternatives to dull stability confirm the dilemma.

Man's predilection for wandering, then (women in these books rarely have predilections), epitomizes the individual's need for possi-

bility and change, the traditional desiderata of growth. Although both Booth and Boswell declare themselves devoted husbands, neither can quite settle down. Booth, proclaiming to Miss Matthews his happiness in his idyllic state, manages by his own actions to destroy it. As for Boswell, in London, conversing with Johnson, Goldsmith, and General Oglethorpe, he comments expansively, "Nothing was wanting but my dearest wife to go home to, and a better fortune in the mean time to make her live as she deserves" (10 April 1772; p. 107). At home with his dearest wife, drunk, he curses her and throws "a candlestick with a lighted candle at her. It made me shudder to hear such an account of my behaviour to one whom I have so much reason to love and regard" (18 Sept. 1774; p. 321). The conventional pieties that Boswell, like Booth, readily utters cannot control the fierce passions raging beneath his conventionality. The desire for individual expression outside institutional restrictions, as Boswell and Booth epitomize it, produces not growth but chaos. When Booth settles down to rural isolation with Amelia, he enjoys "an uninterrupted course of health and happiness" (Bk. XII, ch. ix; VII, 340-341). Exploring other possibilities, he lives in anxiety and internal disorder. Boswell, tormenting himself with his imaginings, understands that he grows more through efforts at control than through impulse toward expression. Marriage emblemizes the conservative forces of the culture, of which Boswell and Fielding alike attest the value, however their feelings urge them in another direction.

"Amelia's 'heroic' role as wife and mother," Leo Braudy observes, "restates the conflict between private and public history as a conflict between essentially female and essentially male values. Fielding, like Richardson, situates ultimate value in a woman." Well, yes and no. Certainly female values win in Amelia, as domesticity, patience, and endurance receive their reward. And certainly male and female values clash vividly. Yet the melancholy tone dominating this book may make one question the existence of any "ultimate value." The clash embodies the reality; Amelia's way of life avoids problems without resolving them. As manifestly as Boswell's record of his early middle age, the novel insists that there are no answers. Both these books report the human struggle with time—that struggle in which one necessarily loses. The resignation that attends the recognition of inevitable loss carries over into other areas. Boswell accepts the impossibility of winning universal admiration; Booth learns experientially, more

convincingly than he learns the truths of Christianity, that all depends on money, which can rarely be obtained by unaided individual effort. He accepts passivity, happily acceding to the role of recipient and living thus by a conventional but hardly an ultimate female value. Marriage as a full commitment associates itself with the relinquishment or sharp diminishment of ambitions that, experience testifies, are unlikely in any case to produce significant reward.

But the moral complexity of these works depends partly on their recognition that experience's lessons are characteristically ambiguous. If marriage, through its association with order, sameness, commitment, and monotony, epitomizes to Boswell and Booth the painful awareness of freedom lost and hostages given to fortune, it also represents for both a form of salvation. Without wife and children, Booth would less acutely feel his economic misfortunes; he would retain greater scope for action, but he would also lack emotional sustenance and moral support. Boswell's "valuable Peggy" helps to bear the burden of his melancholy. When Tom Jones encounters the corrupt society of London, he experiences it as an alien force that may involve him for a time but from which he essentially remains separate even when functioning as gigolo to Lady Bellaston. Booth and Boswell through their marriages are committed to the social order from which they profit and at which they chafe. Their losses and gains in maturity often derive from a single source.

Boswell and Booth experience the pressure of society not only in their most intimate relationships but in more generalized dealings with the legal system. Law as embodiment of social values, actual and professed, assumes symbolic and structural importance in *Amelia* and in *Boswell for the Defence*.

In Amelia law functions symbolically and literally as agent of disaster for Booth, and finally as means of reward. Mistakenly arrested at the end of the second chapter, the captain repeatedly faces the danger and the reality of imprisonment as his financial affairs become increasingly murky. His economic misfortunes, partly the result of his inability or unwillingness to play the games expected of him by the social world, make him a natural victim. Those who wish to harm or exploit him, adept at society's manipulations, can readily have him jailed. The law as it operates in the novel has become the instrument of injustice and self-aggrandizement.

Idealistic Dr. Harrison argues the possibility of reconciling law with Christian love, holding forth a vision of criminals prosecuted purely from a laudable desire to uphold the laws of the country. "Good laws should execute themselves in a well-regulated state," the author observes in his own voice early in the novel (Bk. I, ch. ii; VI, 15). Such statements of what social organization should imply echo ironically behind the novel's detailed demonstration of how badly executed laws in fact testify the fallibility of human institutions. Writing out of his knowledge as a magistrate, Fielding invents with fury the corrupt representatives of English justice and furiously describes the workings of the system, in court, bailiff's house, and prison. Everywhere, wealth and social class dictate response; individual merit is irrelevant; "private malice" governs (Bk. IX, ch. viii; VII, 165). Booth's experience provides a microcosm of social disorder.

The second chapter of *Amelia*, entirely occupied with a theoretical discussion of law and a demonstration of its operations through a justice of the peace, establishes symbolic terms for the rest of the novel and emphasizes the connection between the problems of marriage and those of life in society. The author describes a poorly organized family, in which the talents of every servant are "misemployed," offering this description as an "illustration" to "set my intention in . . . a clearer light" (VI, 16). Offices involving administration of law, he concludes, are also bestowed on the wrong people, as in Thrasher's court, where Booth is condemned to imprisonment for mistaken reasons. Justice Thrasher, an unwitting follower of Rochefoucauld, judges wrongly, because of his unremitting self-love, far oftener than the law of averages would permit if he judged at random. The assortment of guiltless men and women he sends to prison in Chapter II thereafter disappear from view, except for Booth, but they represent the vast assemblage of the world's victims, punished for acting rightly. Thrasher's court emblemizes society's moral confusion, which contaminates even those institutions designed to guard against it. This confusion obviates direct moral perception—the justice cannot see the most manifest evidence of uprightness and innocence—in the courtroom as in other social spheres. Everywhere people seek in one another only sources of advantage, unable to see beyond the issue of gain.

The proper course for the individual to follow, given this state of affairs, is far from clear. Explicitly, Fielding often declares the irrelevance of legal corruption to individual responsibility. The operative

system of rewards and punishments in the world bears little relation to merit, but one may posit the right assignment of rewards and punishments in an afterlife; Dr. Harrison and Amelia do so, and the reader is presumably expected to assent. Booth learns that Justice Thrasher's principles are those of the world, in which a man may advance by pimping for his wife sooner than by fighting bravely in his country's service. They are also the principles of many families, where husband and wife, individually dominated by self-love, go their separate ways, and appear to flourish. But Fielding observes at intervals that the flourishing of the wicked can be only apparent, since laws beyond the human continue to operate. Innocence is preferable to guilt, he suggests, partly because it feels better: "Her sorrow, however exquisite, was all soft and tender" (Bk. VIII, ch. iii; VII, 77). The innocent have a less difficult relation to time than the guilty, since they can expect ultimate reward. The novel's plot superficially supports the implications of such a viewpoint: the Booths' distressed circumstances are converted into opulence; the captain's acceptance of orthodox Christianity promises him a share in heaven with his wife; the family's miseries of social oppression are resolved by their retreat to the country.

But the novel's true moral complexity, despite its irritating pieties, derives from deeper implications of its action and its development of character—implications more paradoxical than the doctrines directly stated. Booth, learning that retreat is a valuable strategy, learns also the necessity of strategy. His long experience of official injustice masquerading as its opposite teaches him that one cannot afford vulnerability. If the kingdom in its administration resembles a family, through comprehending the law in practice one may realize more profoundly the structures, acknowledged and unacknowledged, that control family life and the difficulty of ordering them by rational principles. Booth comes to understand the almost impossible demands of virtuous living, but he understands more acutely the dangers of being judged. His final choice involves a retreat from one arena of judgment and a willingness to behave in such a way that he will not suffer from the kinds of assessment still brought to bear on his conduct.

Booth experiences society as enemy because social judgments derive largely from general categories rather than from specific perceptions. Unemployed, he has no social role except that of pariah, no meaningful social class, hence no power base. Fielding shows us, through the

case of Sergeant Atkinson, how crucial such a theoretical distinction as military rank can be. Atkinson's wife, ashamed to admit her alliance with a noncommissioned officer, would literally prostitute herself to gain a commission for her husband. Booth's captaincy, though hardly an operative reality, anchors his precarious sense of worth. Unable to find gainful employment because his employment serves no immediate social interest, he acquires status and security simply by receiving money. This arrangement is not altogether comforting. Booth, conforming and living the prosperous rural life appropriate to his condition, finds society finally no threat. But he has experienced the ease with which a man can become an outsider, the difficulty with which he regains security, and the arbitrariness with which rewards as well as punishments are assigned.

Law exemplifies things as they are. At one point Booth brings bank-ruptcy on himself by setting up a carriage. He can well afford it, at this particular stage of his life, but other men at his social level do not own carriages, therefore he should not. His neighbors, embodying society's force, rise in disapproval against his presumption and effect his financial overthrow. The triviality of this particular instance of overreaching—one thinks of what "presumption" means in Greek tragedy—reflects the triviality of society's preoccupations, which, however, by no means diminishes their power. A man must not presume beyond his station; he must not want too much. These are the important lessons Booth learns: never to act rashly and finally, virtually not to act at all.

When he has been totally paralyzed by his misfortunes—literally imprisoned, but also reduced to a condition where meaningful endeavor has become impossible—the law becomes the instrument of his rescue. The machinations about the will by which Amelia receives her inheritance vividly exemplify the arbitrary nature of law and of the social system it represents, which bestows reward and punishment with equal insouciance. Booth shows great good sense in retiring with his gains; nothing in his experience suggests the possibility that he can use them responsibly in the world. The coterminous processes of aging and of encountering society's forces in action alike appear to demand the yielding of any hope for functioning effectively in the public sphere, the sphere of corruption. One must retreat to the domestic, the novel argues, the smallest social unit, the unit of virtue.

Boswell, on the other hand, continues to function in public and to

function, indeed, as an agent of law. Yet his experience of law as symbolic representative of society oddly parallels Booth's, even though he remains law's spokesman rather than its victim. The structural function of law in Boswell's narrative of himself reiterates the ambiguities of Booth's career.

Booth's central problems concern how to act; Boswell's continue to involve how to feel. More fundamentally, he faces the difficulty (which has confronted him in various ways since his early youth) of determining what kind of value feeling has in comparison to rational judgment.

Theoretically, the law's impersonality seems to Boswell one of its merits. He comments that "the nation is more civilized and judges have better notions of justice" than in the past, being now less influenced by "private regard," since justice has come to be understood as a an abstract consideration. Yet his language of approval betrays familiar ambivalence: he profoundly values the personal and private, the realm of feeling. Is justice purer now because most people have less powerful emotions than once they had? As he continues to ponder the matter, he realizes that he is reluctant to blame "our judges of the last age" for their less abstract adherence to justice because he understands their bias as deriving from the "warmth of their hearts." Legal cases provide such abundant opportunity for rational disagreement that it seems quite proper to him that emotion should in some instances cast the balance (15 June 1774; p. 210).

His own practice of law involves a high degree of emotion; the rewards he values are rewards of feeling. He declares himself "a kind of enthusiast in my profession," confessing his "great pleasure in observing different specimens of it" (5 April 1773; p. 162). These comments occur more than a year before his reflections on abstract justice, but indications of his emotional involvement with his profession abound throughout the Reid case. On the day John Reid is convicted, the lawyer emphasizes his narcissistic satisfaction with his own performance. "Being elated with the admirable appearance which I had made in the court, I was in such a frame as to think myself an Edmund Burke—and a man who united pleasantry in conversation with abilities in business and powers as an orator. I enjoyed the applause which several individuals of the jury now gave me and the general attention with which I was treated" (1 Aug. 1774; p. 253). But the glamor of the functioning lawyer's appearance, to himself and to others, can only

superficially affect the reality of how he feels. In 1770, in an essay in *The London Magazine*, Boswell had discussed the actor's profession, partly in terms of the kind of feeling involved in it, and had compared it, in this respect, with the barrister's activity.

If I may be allowed to conjecture what is the nature of that mysterious power by which a player really is the character which he represents, my notion is that he must have a kind of double feeling. He must assume in a strong degree the character which he represents, while he at the same time retains the consciousness of his own character. The feelings and passions of the character which he represents must take full possession as it were of the antechamber of his mind, while his own character remains in the innermost recess. This is experienced in some measure by the barrister who enters warmly into the cause of his client, while at the same time, when he examines himself coolly, he knows that he is much in the wrong, and does not even wish to prevail. (Quoted in *Boswell for the Defence*, p. 17)

Boswell thus defines the lawyer's role as epitomizing the ambivalence that characterized his own emotional life in and out of his profession. Paul Fussell has remarked of Boswell, "He constantly welcomed incongruities in the world around him . . . as a way of persuading himself that his own painful internal divisions had really a counterpart in the objective world outside and were not the deforming secret singularities which he feared they were." His perception of the barrister's function represents a different version of this habit of mind.

The duality of the lawyer's experience resides not simply in the relation between his clients' interests and his own sense of justice; it resides in Boswell as well. He feels concern with the glamor of his role, desire to preserve or enhance his prestige, warmth of heart (which intensifies his deep psychic involvement with Reid's fate), yearning for power, and rage at the sense of powerlessness afflicting those who confront the majesty of law. He had lost cases before and endured clients' executions. His special anxiety this time partly reflects the immediate intensity of his effort to make a place in his father's world. Boswell, in the Reid case, clearly felt an outsider. Fielding defines Captain Booth as an outcast by making him a debtor. Boswell, no outcast, even applauded by the jury that had just convicted his client, yet feels alone as he pleads for Reid's life. Society insists that the sheep-stealer must die; society tells Boswell that he must not try to revive the hanged man. In both cases Boswell accedes—he has no choice. He feels de-

feated. His father, always on the side of the law-abiding majority and always right, has judged—Boswell must have felt—thief and lawyer alike and found both wanting. Lord Auchinleck embodies the law; the law—for Boswell as for Fielding—speaks for society, and in a single voice, which forbids the ambiguities that Boswell perceives everywhere. Nor does society's judgment any longer—though Boswell fancies that once, in practice, it did—allow for "warmth of heart" as a component of judgment. Law, like time, is experienced as a force that diminishes. Booth escapes from the pressure of law as public institution into the lesser restriction of the family institution. Boswell, uncomfortably committed to both, must learn to live with both.

The London Journal ended in an atmosphere of qualified triumph, with the individual's assertion of himself and his destiny. Young Boswell, sadder than before at the conclusion of his London year, is at least wise enough to know that he cannot do everything nor be everyone he admires. Boswell for the Defence ends somberly. John Reid's ghost metaphorically haunts Boswell, reproaching him for yielding to organized society, reminding him that the world inexorably exacts its punishments. He had done everything for his client—pled for him powerfully, written letters everywhere that might help, bought him drinks, comforted his wife, even abortively planned his resurrection—and everything was not enough. Society makes reputation a principle of judgment; society represents an irresistible force.

Boswell's divided heart leads him to identify passionately with the outsider, while as passionately yearning to be an insider. To be a successful lawyer supports his self-esteem, yet also threatens its very foundation. In London, Scottish friends comment that Boswell is like his father. "I indeed felt myself very steady and very composed," he comments smugly (28 March 1772; p. 68). The next day, he has his conversation with Mrs. Stuart about marital infidelity. To be steady and composed, functioning as a respectable member of society, yet at best a pale copy of his father—how much more tempting to have a seraglio! Sometimes working as a lawyer represents merely an escape from boredom. Johnson emphatically encourages this view, suggesting that leisure implies tedium (18 April 1772; p. 128). But such an argument for his profession hints Boswell's difficulty about participating fully in his culture's values. Every day he sees before him, in the persons of accused criminals, the high penalties of social deviation. So he expresses his impulse toward rebelling in the socially acceptable

(and socially conducted) activity of heavy drinking. The world values and supports him in his professional success; he tries to suppress his idiosyncrasies. To be an outsider, a nonviable luxury, represents constant danger.

Booth and Boswell, then, each a central character of a narrative action, engage in processes of growth that involve their coming to accept certain community values. Amelia, pole star for Booth's psychic wanderings, knows from the beginning the importance of Christian ethics and conventional morality. Her lack of sophistication in the ways of polite society fleetingly endangers her, but she has no difficulty distinguishing between good and bad standards of conduct and judgment. Her husband's asserted religious conversion in effect signals his final willingness to govern himself by beliefs shared by those who exemplify the official (as opposed to the actual) values of his society. For this conversion he is effectively rewarded by Amelia's inheritance, a development no more implausible than the change of heart that merits it. Boswell's account in Boswell for the Defence relates the process by which he assimilates himself into the life of an Edinburgh attorney—an assimilation also well rewarded, although not so dramatically as Booth's conversion. He repeatedly reports evidence of his improvement: new clients, praise from his peers and superiors, social acceptance. His misgivings about conformity express themselves far more eloquently in his journal than in the life it records, and he enjoys the conformist's rewards.

He does not describe himself as a failure, nor does Booth, content with the blessings the gods have bestowed. Boswell feels remorse and guilt for individual failures, nostalgia for the lost past, diminishment in accepting the requirements of his role, but usually also the consciousness that he is doing the best that he can. Fielding, similarly, does not finally condemn Booth. He makes Amelia a paragon, but she faces the struggle in society less fully than her husband. She must protect her virtue and her family, but she need not earn a living. Booth, responsible for making money, deviates from perfect rectitude and even from good sense. He rationalizes and misinterprets his inadequacies, but almost everyone in the novel rationalizes and misinterprets, telling their own stories as formed by their feelings. Fielding's large awareness of this universal human trait helps to excuse or forgive Booth and to convince us that he deserves his money for his sufferings if not for his virtue.

The superficial form of the narratives, in other words, emphasizes success rather than failure, despite the somberness beneath. Boswell succeeds in his conformity even though he is capable of perceiving conformity as defeat. Booth succeeds in finding domestic happiness, removed from the world's temptations, and thus can comfortably decide that the world, though corrupt, is irrelevant. But the new element in the shape of these narrative actions is the persistent substructure of defeat. The two men learn what cannot be conquered or contained as well as what can and experience that knowledge not merely as metaphysical reality (as it is, for example, in *Tristram Shandy*) but as social fact.

Of course Boswell's state at the end of this segment of his life seems far more conditional than Booth's at the end of Amelia. Booth has been allowed to achieve an existence with which he can presumably remain content; Boswell's contentment is highly problematical, as contentment in life must always remain—thus the abiding difference between the effect of happy endings in autobiographies and in novels. As the Greeks knew, one can count no man happy until he is dead. Modern novelists have devised artifices of uncertainty; Fielding's is an artifice of certainty and of completion. We reach eagerly for the next volume of Boswell's journals, and the next, and the next; Amelia generates no longing for a sequel. Yet its completed form embodies the same uncertainties as Boswell's: uncertainties about how a man can live, given the psychic difficulties of his mortal and his social condition. Booth with money bestowed upon him, making his peace with family life, finds an easy mode of existence. Yet the problems do not disappear as human or as novelistic realities because wealth seems to have solved them in his case.

The substructures of defeat echo and parody the imposed forms of happiness that are won by acceptance of official values: a paradox built into the plots of both the novel and the journal. Boswell struggles against time, against the restrictions of marriage, against the unbending rigors of the law: hence the drama of his narrative. Yet time, marriage, and law represent precisely the principles he must accept in order to progress. Defeat in his struggle thus bears a Janus-face of victory; he can win only by losing. But the loss remains part of every advance. Boswell as story-teller understands no more of that paradox than Boswell as victim; he helplessly records his vacillations between self-congratulation and despair, the essential causes of the contradic-

tory emotions being closely related. His story-telling allows him to express emotion often hidden elsewhere in his life, but it no longer effects experimental transformations of his experience. Facts in themselves have more weight for him than they did ten years before. His imagination operates fitfully to enlarge his self-image in the present, but it works better for the past and the future. He knows that imagination brings no income and that other people's standards of success impinge now on him. The jury applauds his performance for John Reid, but his performance has no power to change the course of events. In the world outside, people apparently manage not to live by their feelings; he struggles to do the same.

Fielding is manifestly conscious of comparable paradoxes in his history of the Booths and obviously feels uncomfortable about them. He distinguishes, as his central characters learn to distinguish, between good and bad values as exemplified in society, but the novel's argument insists that one must accept some of the community's beliefs in order to progress. Booth's individualism—his claim to make moral judgments on the basis of his personal intuitions—must be disciplined; his acceptance of Christianity marks his admission that he is not sufficient unto himself. His sufferings as victim of a society exemplified by its legal system lead him to self-restriction, retreat, moderation, and lessened aspiration: to socialization.

Deliberately choosing to create a fiction about what happens after marriage, Fielding commits himself to the difficult enterprise of dealing with the diminishments of maturity, celebrating not the potential but the achieved self. The ambiguities of his chosen technique—relying heavily on characters' often inaccurate stories about themselves to insist on the complexities of self-awareness and external judgment—appropriately reflect the ambiguities of his central fable with its flawed male protagonist and its frequently helpless heroine. Boswell's record of a few years of his maturity, partly aware of its own ambiguities, tells a story in some ways similar. Helpless without the protection of natural and social law, the self accepts diminishment and functional maturity as a paradox of success-in-defeat and defeat-in-success. Boswell ages, accommodates, and lives a life among men, while his youthful grandiosities survive unchanged behind convention's screen.

The plot structure of *Amelia* ultimately rewards the good and punishes the wicked. Authorial pieties assert the rationality of the cosmic, if not the social, order and thus appear sometimes to deny the impor-

tance of society's painful pressures. Fielding carefully distinguishes between good people and bad, between good and bad social values; Booth must learn the same distinctions. But he, like Boswell, suffers from the pressure of those forces with which he must cooperate in order to grow; he too loses energy, self-confidence, and charm in becoming socialized. Although he escapes social corruption by retreating to the country, he has in fact experienced a dilemma even more impossible than Boswell's. The relative powerlessness of virtuous, passive Amelia and her well-intentioned, desperate husband reveals the horror of social reality—a horror that Fielding finally evades. Fielding's novel and Boswell's journal both demonstrate the painful human need for self-assertion in the face of unopposable forces, the apparently random distribution of success and failure, and the ways in which the sense of self weakens and its literary renditions become increasingly complex. Justice Thrasher's court, with its arbitrary injustices, miniaturizes the world. The inadvertent form of autobiography and the intricate plotting of novel, in this case, illustrate similar truths through similar manipulations of painful paradox.

10

Selfhood, Given and Formed

wentieth-century autobiographies deliberately adopt the technique of novels. Twentieth-century novelists write thinly veiled autobiography, call it a novel, then complain if readers suspect some direct self-revelation. Or they write real novels and complain; readers still believe them to be autobiography. The multiplying confusions of genre are encouraged and publicized, becoming part of the general confusion of our time.

Investigation of our literary forebears, however, suggests that substantial distinctions between fictional and factual renditions of personality have always proved difficult to maintain, although they might in the past be taken on faith. The productions of the upright, sober, factual-sounding memoirists of the eighteenth century were paralleled by those of novelists sounding equally upright, sober, and factual; the extravagances of *Tristram Shandy* match those of Colley Cibber. The experience of reading Fanny Burney on Fanny Burney closely resembles that of reading Fanny Burney on Evelina.

The experience of reading must serve as a final resource to define a book's essential nature. In effect, this study has been seeking, through close investigation of individual texts, to arrive at some preliminary understanding of the modes of eighteenth-century autobiography and novel, in the sense usefully defined by Paul Alpers: "Mode is the literary manifestation, in a given work, of the writer's and the putative reader's assumptions about man's nature and situation." Such assump-

tions manifest themselves, of course, at many different levels; Professor Alpers goes on to demonstrate that one may locate different modes in various passages of a single work or, conversely, use the term to suggest linkages between books in obvious respects different from one another: *The Faerie Queene* and *Don Juan*, for example (p. 50). If we conclude, then—as I think we must—that autobiography and the novel in eighteenth-century England shared common modes, we are not declaring an identity of genres: only an important bond of shared assumptions, shared techniques, and shared demands on the reader.

Autobiography, from its writer's point of view, implies curious expectations. The autobiographer offers himself, his life, his story, for illumination, entertainment, and judgment. He assumes, and assumes the reader will assume, that a person can be known through his story. The rhetoric of eighteenth-century autobiographies, of course, refers to history rather than story, emphasizing the record's literal truth and implying its relative lack of artificial shaping. But the role of the writer in setting down his life involves more than memory and chronology. as Gibbon's false starts indicate; the historian like the fictionist forms his record to reveal the meaning he wishes to impart. "Knowing what was to happen after the events which they are chronicling, historians nearly always make it seem too inevitable . . . They lead us to forget how heavily the path ahead is obscured by fog, how infinite are the number of directions which the course of events may take."2 The autobiographer, inviting judgment, may attempt to control the reader's response partly by demonstrating the inevitability of the happenings that have made him: inviting judgment, he thus simultaneously disclaims responsibility. He makes every effort to preclude the possibility of final negative judgment. Even Cowper, insisting on his inadequacy and sinfulness, reminds us that his is a chronicle of salvation and that his painful struggle—partly self-justifying through its very pain—has eventuated in acceptance by God. How can mere mortals presume to oppose divine judgment? Colley Cibber, revealing himself a fool (in a fashion that foretells much twentieth-century autobiography in which the narrator insistently proclaims his sins and follies), demands approval for his self-revelation. The reader who shares Pope's contemptuous assessment, or Fielding's, does so only by forcibly rejecting the assumptions Cibber invites him to accept: assumptions about our common humanity, common folly, and about the arrogance of any claim to moral superiority.

The judgment the autobiographer invites, in other words, is one that confirms his self-evaluation, and he shapes his story to ensure it. Ralph Rader, trying to define what he calls the "general action model" of the novel, suggests that "the action model describes a work which the reader at some level of consciousness must know from the outset is being shaped beneath its realistic surface to meet the created requirements of desire. It has therefore the character of an objective fantasy, not such a fantasy as makes a reader the passive victim of a process hidden from his consciousness, but a deliberate, determinate, conscious, controlled fantasy identical with the cognitive structure of the book."3 This element of fantasy, one might think, would distinguish works of fiction from factual records. But investigation of even a few eighteenth-century autobiographies discloses similar elements beneath the surface. One might question the applicability of such terms as deliberate and conscious, but they are questionable in relation to novels as well. Granted, autobiographers deal with intractable happenings. One need only recall Boswell, however, to realize the multiple possibilities of interpreting any given happening. The stories in Amelia and the interpolated tales in Tom Jones remind us how rememberers use and form and distort the raw material of their memories.

They form the material to answer their wishes and ours—to meet, in Rader's phrase, "the created requirements of desire." Every literary work establishes its own ground of expectation, but the kind of wish gratified by eighteenth-century autobiography remains fairly constant. For writer and for reader, this sort of autobiography meets the desire that life should make sense, a yearning far more fundamental than any wish that one particular thing or another should happen to the protagonist of a literary work. The narrative mode that novel and autobiography share is in this sense a mode of fantasy rather than of belief. Declaring that meaning lies in sequence, in events following from preceding events, it speaks to uncertainties vivid to everyone, in whatever century. The spiritual autobiography of the period explicitly declares that lives have plots arranged by God. But every memoir reiterates the first part of that statement: autobiographies affirm the art of life, in the sense in which Fielding used the term, as stoutly as they affirm human identity. They affirm, in short, the fulfillment of deep human desires—precisely the desires answered by the artistry of the traditional novel.

Robinson Crusoe tells us that life makes sense, and so does Evelina. Even Tristram Shandy in all its incoherence, full of statements that life -and death-constantly frustrate expectation, speaks of reiterated pattern in human experience. We may smile at the crudity of wish fulfillment in Evelina, where good girl wins rich man, only to respond to the same sort of gratification at a deeper level in Pamela, where the good girl's winning involves more complex structures of cause and effect. At a deeper level still in Tristram, structure derives from the way that everyone fulfills his nature. The drama of that same demonstration—how inexorably a man enacts himself—absorbs us in Boswell's extended journals and in Hume's brief self-summary. The novels characteristically recount more absorbing individual events than the autobiographies, although Mrs. Charke, Mrs. Pilkington, and Boswell provide happenings at least as dramatic as anything that takes place in Evelina. On the other hand, virtually nothing of external interest happens to Gibbon or to Hume, by their reports. Cowper's account of himself contains only a single dramatic episode; we do not read Mrs. Thrale in search of sensational event. Yet all these books, like novels, meet our opposed desires for order and for excitement and for some reconciliation of the two. The excitement of Tom Jones derives from its happenings; that of Gibbon's memoirs, from the tension of his effort to trace his destiny. Both gratify the profound wish that everything should come out right. The difference in the material and the methodology by which they effect this gratification must be noted, but so must the underlying identity of achievement.

The two most fully achieved novels in the group we have investigated, Tom Jones and Tristram Shandy, resemble one another conspicuously in their elaborate attention to the role of the reader, the nature of the reader's participation constituting the central problem in the determination of mode. They assume the reader's active engagement in an imaginative process and his possession of intellectual capacities (wit, judgment), social attitudes (e.g., high regard for money and fame), and moral convictions (kindness is preferable to cruelty, openness to hypocrisy) that are felt to be more or less universal. Novelists who do not spell out their positions appear to make similar assumptions. Fanny Burney does not take account of the possibility that anyone might feel that Evelina should not marry Lord Orville. Defoe knows that his readers will congratulate Crusoe on amassing wealth. Autobiographers likewise rest their faith in their capacity to

lead readers through imaginative participation to desired conclusions. Gibbon acknowledges that his inability to ride horseback and his absence of profession separate him from his class, but his weighty sentences imply his certainty that the immediate audience will understand the necessities of his position. Indeed, his poignant references to the generations yet unborn who will be his friends suggest his conviction that readers will share his values if most of his acquaintances do not.

The modes shared by early autobiography and novel are styles of narrative and appeals to common fantasy. They are fundamentally optimistic modes in the faith they imply in their readers' good will, capacity, and shared nature, and in the faith they iterate in human stability and growth. But it is a mistake to assume that such facts declare the profound security of the eighteenth-century world or of its literature. The direct comments Fielding and Tristram make about their readers express not only optimism but anxiety. Granted common values, attitudes, and assumptions, readers yet remain unpredictable, individual beings; no faith in human nature can assure a writer of precisely the response he wishes or ensure him against conceivable negative judgment. Nor is the issue merely authorial vanity. The incalculable differences between people suggest the possibility of fundamentally different experiences of life. To say, as Fielding and Tristram do, that their readers' imaginations are not firmly under their control or that their readers may not work hard enough at the task of participation to receive what the writer has to give is to imply that the order of sequence, of cause and effect, cannot be counted on in life, although it can be created in literature.

The awareness of what cannot be counted on, in fact, looms large in these books, despite the air of assurance most of them convey. Given the common concern with human development shared by autobiographies and the novels that imitate or comment upon autobiographical form, one might expect to find these books raising common questions. Such questions indeed emerge, but without consistent answers. The questions rather than the answers define an important aspect of the eighteenth-century mode, inasmuch as it is investigative rather than simply affirmative. Even the autobiographies and novels that defiantly insist upon their particular answers often betray underlying uncertainties.

Most of the important questions posed by the literature that is centered on the dramatic study of human character are implicit in the

deceptively simple mode of spiritual autobiography. There is the problem of determinism, for example—or fate, destiny, God. Robinson Crusoe's retrospective assurance that God's plan for him operated through the very grains of corn clinging to the inside of a sack does not preclude, from his point of view, his free will. He sees his story as involving repeated, important choices. Similarly, Cowper, for all his passivity and his accounts of how he "was hurried" here and there or resuscitated by a vision of a joyous boy, implicitly assumes in his selfcastigation responsibility for his own moral choices. But the paradox of the fortunate fall operates in Crusoe's narrative, although he never acknowledges the fact. His story reports growth and salvation through the pain of self-will. God, of course, has made such salvation possible; yet Crusoe's wrong choices seem quite specifically responsible for his ultimate wealth and contentment. As for Cowper, the drive toward despair that he declares he has overcome informs his entire narrative; one feels the power of the willful self throughout the story of the self's powerlessness.

In secular contexts, the unanswerable question about the degree of human freedom emerges with equal insistence and with equal implicit anxiety. Gibbon's effort to understand his own history focuses frequently on the problem of necessity. He feels, as all people feel, the necessity of his identity, but how he came to be remains perplexing. Destiny? Choice? Looking back, he can perceive the crucial choices, only to reformulate the difficulty. What has impelled him toward those choices? To suggest, as he finally does, that his pain has formed him is merely to beg the question—as everyone ultimately must about the sources or necessities of that pain. Tristram Shandy, Gibbon's fictional opposite and counterpart, worries endlessly the problem of why he and others are the curious people they are, whether their conspicuous and agonizing lack of control over the outcome of even trivial events epitomizes the human condition, and whether there is any escape. Although the novel's consideration of these matters is more extensive and explicit than the equivalent in Defoe or Cowper or Gibbon, its conclusions are equally (and insistently) ambiguous. One can write books (but why?); one must die; Uncle Toby cannot get married; Walter Shandy cannot escape marriage. For what reason? Amelia, which brings up the problem of social determinism, simply evades it at last. Suggesting that the accidents of social fate have more bearing on individual possibility than do the most meticulous choices,

the novel cannot confront the implications of such a suggestion, retreating into affirmations of God's ultimate justice but leaving the reader exercised by his encounter with ominous social realities.

Boswell probably makes the problem of responsibility more vivid than any other writer of his century, conveying both his confidence that a man can be, by effort, whoever he chooses and his repeated discovery that he cannot simply select a role and inhabit it for more than a few hours or days at a time. The pathos of his repeated good resolutions calls attention to an essentially metaphysical problem. Fanny Burney, with all her good resolutions, reveals the problem's social counterpart in the special form inflicted upon women. Mary Wollstonecraft and Jane Barker in their fictions convey that a woman's efforts to take responsibility for herself will meet only frustration. All these books create images of human endeavor; most implicitly or explicitly glorify the life of striving. But they do not merely accept with bland optimism the assumption that striving brings the reward anticipated or desired.

Beneath all problems of heroism and responsibility lies the issue that most profoundly concerns the writers of the time: the relative power and validity of inner versus outer reality. The novelists without exception, although they describe protagonists at various stages between obsessive introspection and apparent unawareness of inner experience, testify to the shaping power of the psychic life. Pamela and Tom Jones, deriving from very different sorts of novelistic imagination, resemble one another in this respect. Tom's lack of forethought and speculation and concern for consequences repeatedly get him in trouble; his fantasies about the women who attract him determine many of his actions; more important, his consistent imagining of obligation to others leads to his blossoming into manhood. The narrator employs his jovial, mocking tone for discussion of Tom's tendency to mislead himself by his fancy, but Partridge's response to Hamlet and the maidservant's to the puppet show insist on the possibilities of imagination as directed by art to affect understanding and action. The novelistic enterprise involves the attempt to form readers' imaginations; it reports the redirection and increased control of Tom's fantasy life. He himself as a character comes dimly to understand the importance of his imaginings to his actions, as when he explains his enactments of lust as dependent on his lack of hope for Sophia and insists that once he imagined the possibility of winning her, he no longer could desire another woman.

The case is more obvious with Pamela, whose elaborately developed fantasies about the high significance of every minor event ultimately come to control her employer's vision of life, quite replacing his earlier assumption that a stolen kiss in the garden house means nothing at all. Pamela's highly charged perceptions of moral drama everywhere create that drama for others. She makes her wishes come true by the sheer determination with which she clings to them. Her imagining of Squire B. as a monster makes him monstrous to himself, her perception of him as paragon turns him into a sententious counterpart for her.

With varying degrees of energy and success, the protagonists of these novels change the world by their dreams of it. Robinson Crusoe, imagining his isolation on a desert island, finds himself the island; imagining his kingship, he creates the situation in which he can be a leader; imagining his self-mastery, he achieves it. Tristram Shandy's bizarre world reflects his grotesque imagination; he, more fully than any other fictional character of his century, understands the relation between fantasy and reality. Evelina, a much cruder novelistic creation, like Pamela makes her wishes come true, just as, more blatantly, Captain Mirvan in the same novel fulfills his sadistic fantasies of tormenting Mme. Duval. Amelia in relation to that issue emerges clearly as the protagonist of Fielding's novel. Her husband acts while she only suffers, but her vision of reality, in which virtue must finally triumph, is confirmed by the novel's ending; his imagining of how the world works is declared—rather artifically—to be mistaken.

To note this persistent theme in eighteenth-century novels is to realize that in a simple sense the plots of all the fictions we have considered involve a pattern of wish fulfillment for the central character. Each achieves exactly what he wants most. Even Tristram, the apparent deviant among a collection of more or less conventionally imagined figures, gets as much as, in the world of his imagining, he possibly can. He gets to write his story, to win precarious control of his readers, and to demonstrate his own reality. Here is the most fundamental optimism of this novelistic mode. It declares not only the stable identity of the individual, but his ultimate power—largely denied or made ambiguous by real life—to shape the world he experiences.

Real lives do not declare this power so clearly, but stories of real lives, in their eighteenth-century mode, often do. One may suspect at the same time that reality affects imagination as forcefully as fancy shapes the personal world. Does Mrs. Thrale's conviction of injustice reflect the ways that other people arbitrarily treat her or the way she causes them to treat her? The detailed record of her journal forces the reader to recognize the degree to which her vision of her predicament constantly reinforces it as well as the preexistent limitations of possibility she faced.

Only Boswell, among the century's autobiographers, discusses at length and explicitly the relation between internal and external experience. He knows beyond all doubt, to his own distress, that the way he sees things determines what they are, and that his ways of seeing may—probably will—change from one day to another. But it is the nature of autobiography to demonstrate this fact whether or not the writer is aware of it. Gibbon shows us that he became a historian because of his penchant for uncovering sequential pattern, and his efforts at autobiography demonstrate precisely how that penchant controls what he can and cannot see. Cibber imagines himself a triumphant fool and tells his story of triumphant folly. Fanny Burney fancies the social world a moral arena; in her narrative it becomes precisely that. Cowper, more totally than any of the others, reveals that his real life has been almost entirely one of the imagination, nothing in his experience having meaning apart from that.

To tell one's story, as these men and women tell it, thus becomes an affirmation of power, even when the story contains emphatic defeats (like Cowper's) or evidence of limitation or revelations of folly. To set down a personal interpretation of personal experience declares autonomy and demonstrates the dominance of the mental life, although the autobiographer's announced concern may be with external happening. Through subject or through technique the autobiographies of the eighteenth century establish a mode equivalent to that of much of the period's fiction: one based on assumption of the compelling energy of inner experience.

Yet this assumption does not obviate the question about precisely how powerful, how formative, that energy actually can be. The autobiographical and the novelistic modes root themselves less in securities than in wonderings. In this literature, as in life, the claims of society counter those of the psyche. *Amelia* embodies the most powerful statement of society's power to control and to destroy individual happiness, but every writer we have encountered recognizes at some level, even if he acknowledges it only by denial, the problem involved in the

individual's efforts to establish a viable relation to his social context. That the solution is often escape—for Crusoe, for Tristram, for Tom and Amelia, for Cowper and in a psychic sense for Hume, for Lady Mary, for the characters in romance—only emphasizes the insolubility of the problem. Fanny Burney's heroines, like Miss Burney herself, come to terms with the demands implied and stated by their social world but not without authorial recognition of the cost in freedom and self-assertiveness. Pamela assumes that she gets more than she relinguishes in becoming an impeccable model of upper-class decorum. Although the reader can hardly fail to notice the decrease in drama of her post-marital experience, Richardson, alone among these writers, implies not the slightest question about the value of living as a member of society. On the other hand, the structure of his novel depends on his profound questioning (profound answers are another matter) of the ways in which the assumptions of a class system may operate in practice.

Among the autobiographers, Cibber describes himself as living most fully in the public world—indeed, by his account, he has virtually no private life. The possibility of alternative orientations never seems to cross his mind. Although he imagines that he might have been a bishop or a military leader, he never conceives of living without the eyes of the world upon him. The world determines reality from his point of view; yet this extreme commitment to the importance of society as the center of experience conceals a radical sense of alienation, which is betrayed in the childhood reminiscences about rejection by his peers and emphasized by his defiant insistence on being himself, although he knows the world will judge him a fool. Gibbon, another figure who lived much of his life in society, describes himself as a solitary man concerned only with his vocation, and he resolves his personal problems by choosing exile, rejecting the life of his class, and associating with only a few. Even Boswell, who vividly enjoyed contact with others in large groups or small and took pleasure in feeling himself part of a community of his kind-Edinburgh lawyers, magazine owners, patriots—evokes an intermittent but compelling sense of separation, isolation, and even opposition to the values his various communities held.

The possibility and the usefulness of autonomy, of separateness, thus preoccupy at some level of consciousness all the writers we have encountered. Setting down on the page their self-definitions, or defin-

ing through action the being of a fictional character, they strike some balance between the opposed principles of selfhood and society, but they also express the precariousness of any such balance.

To convey questionings and convictions, autobiographers and novelists alike require artifices of sincerity and truthfulness. The more than two centuries of debate about exactly how artful and how conscious Pamela is in the process of getting what she wants might be extended in one way or another to include many books. In some cases the central character brings up the problem of artifice; in some cases, the author does. How does one come to terms, for example, with Fielding's ostentatious contrivances? He insists that he is relating a history and that his raw material is the truth of human nature; he reminds the reader constantly of the author's role as manipulator of events and controller of character. He simultaneously demands and rejects the reader's belief. Defoe proclaims, untruly, the factuality of his narrative. Fanny Burney asserts that the moral effect of fiction depends upon its probabilities, but she writes contemporary fairy tales. As for the autobiographers: Gibbon, offering prose remarkably formal and highly worked even for his time, tells us that style is the image of character. He declares truth the sole purpose of a narrative that omits entirely—to mention only one example—any reference to his not infrequent sexual liaisons. Cibber claims to tell everything and leaves out his private life. Boswell, writing about posing and acting parts as a problem in his experience, demonstrates in the writing the process he is describing. Hume, boasting the truthfulness of the dying man, makes every effort to convey a radically simplified view of himself.

I am not trying to suggest that these autobiographers do not tell the truth, or that the novelists really contradict themselves in announcing their truthfulness and telling the fictionists' lies. Novelists and autobiographers necessarily depend upon artifice—shaping, inventing, selecting, omitting—to achieve their effects. To say that Pamela would like to marry above her class and that she finds a canny way of achieving her goal is not to say that she does not believe in the value of chastity and in the moral integrity of her station. Artifice need not deny reality. It may provide the best—or even the only—way to express the real. Fielding does deal in truths of human nature; he conveys those truths by his invention and arrangement of fictions. Cibber evokes what we might call an image of himself—not a complete view

but one whose power and truth depend on its simplifications. Autobiographers rely mainly on artifices of selection; novelists, on those of invention. But both communicate vital truths through falsifications.

In many large ways, then, autobiographies and the novels related to them in the eighteenth century display their close connections. They speak to and derive from common fantasies; they involve themselves with common themes, problems, and metaphysical and social issues; they share a concern with character and with narrative and a faith that character emerges through narrative; they rely alike on artifice for the conveyance of truth, neither form telling the truth in any simple sense.

Yet, after all, they are in most instances easy to tell apart. The true confusion of genres in the twentieth century, when practitioners of both forms often deliberately obscure the line between them, does not belong to the eighteenth. The similarities of assumption, response, concern, and technique that have been asserted do exist, and they are profound. The differences are harder to define and by no means invariable. The most vexed cases, here too, are those in which an author has deliberately created confusion. We may suspect that Mrs. Pilkington really is partly inventing her experience in order to make her history of herself conform to fictional models; we know that Defoe is making every effort to imitate a form consecrated to the telling of truth. But putting the most fictional kind of eighteenth-century autobiography and the most autobiographical kind of fiction side by side, we still can tell the difference, since factuality affects narrative stance.

Both autobiographer and novelist tell stories shaped by imagination, but they obviously bear a different relation to the stories they tell. To tell a story of the self is—as this study has argued in various ways—to create a fiction. We know this even from day-to-day experience. Even as we form an anecdote to relate in company, we are deliberately or reluctantly sacrificing some part of the actual experience for the sake of its telling, as we shape what has happened into a story. When we speak of ourselves, trying to tell someone—an intimate, even—what we are like, we often feel with desperation the impossibility of accuracy and know that we yield complexity for the sake of comprehensibility. In the more public kind of communication involved in writing down an account of the self, such processes become exaggerated. The capacity of the autobiographer to achieve an image and a fable that can even partially express himself depends finally on his literary artistry and his mastery of the techniques of evocation. He need

not consciously invent—or become aware that he does not entirely know what he remembers from what he has made up—but he must use his selectivity in much the same way that the novelist uses his.

Yet the raw material of his narrative remains himself, what has literally happened to him, and the truth he wishes to tell, however wide its ramifications, is that of his own being. Despite all decorum, he risks exposure in a way the novelist does not. He is bound by his sense of factuality. It may not correspond to the factuality of camera or tape recorder, but it nonetheless establishes limits of possibility. And he must acutely feel the bounds of his selfhood. Those bounds operate, of course, for everyone, always, and most writers have experienced in some fashion the desperation of being unable to reach beyond their own talents, experience, and psyches. When one's talent, experience, and psyche become the subject as well as the means of the literary enterprise, the pressure markedly increases.

The result of this special set of tensions, risks, and pressures is the special quality of autobiography as a reading experience, and the nature of that quality, almost impossible to formulate adequately, is nonetheless easy to feel. The urgency of Gibbon's narrative and of Cibber's—at opposite extremes of dignity—comes from the drive to preserve and convey a given essence of selfhood, and from the tension (even in Cibber) between the desire to express and to conceal. That particular urgency (which expresses itself often, paradoxically, in leisurely meditative discourse) does not mark Robinson Crusoe's narrative, where the narrator's fascination with his own history appears to imply no awareness of the psychic difficulty of setting it down. The only novel that approximates autobiographical urgency is that exception to so many rules, *Tristram Shandy*, in which the urgency itself becomes a central subject of discussion, as it does not in any true autobiography of the century.

Fiction, of course, has its own urgencies. The novelist too obviously must endure the limits of his being; he too must find means to express his values, feelings, and perplexities: means more indirect than the autobiographer's. But his equivalent for the memoirist's pressure to express consists of the pressure to invent. His terrible freedom to create demands that he spin out of his own head, imagination, guts, a plausible world, characters, actions, all persuasively imitating life but not duplicating it. More completely responsible for what he chooses to imitate than the autobiographer, who can always plead that facts con-

trol him, and usurping—as Tristram realized—the function of fate, he writes with more awareness than the autobiographer needs of the necessities of plot. Autobiographies too have plots but "discover'd, not devis'd." Their authors seldom feel creatively responsible for them.

One need not speculate, however, about the psyche of the novelist in order to recognize that the eighteenth-century novel, even such a novel of character as Pamela, calls attention to the importance of happenings in ways that the autobiography does not. Pamela's letters and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's premarital correspondence have something in common: intense feminine self-consciousness and carefully preserved postures of virtue or of cynicism. The collection of Pamela's letters, on the other hand, shares little with the collection of Lady Mary's and not simply because Lady Mary's correspondence extends into her old age. Although both epistolary assemblages create a powerful impression of characterological unity, only Pamela's moves the reader toward an understanding of a retrospectively inevitable sequence of events in which every minor piece of action helps to elucidate the total pattern. The pattern that holds together the series of genuine letters depends more heavily on the writer's consistency of attitude than on what literally takes place. First-person narratives always concern "what happened (happens, will or may happen) to me," but fictional versions give the verb at least as much emphasis as the personal pronoun, although factual fictions tend to stress the pronoun. We have discovered the unity of action in the autobiographical records here considered; it derives from the central character's singleness of expectation, desire, or will: to discover, defend, assert, manufacture the self.

Eighteenth-century autobiographies sound different from their novelistic counterparts sentence by sentence because they employ, by and large, a different rhetoric and a different narrative atmosphere. Autobiographies—even the informal kind created by journals—rely on a rhetoric of explanation, shading often toward self-justification. Even Mrs. Pilkington uses it. For all her extravagances of sensational happening, she intervenes frequently to explain that her husband was mistaken, that her father really loved her best, that her mishaps were caused not by her own misdoing but by that of others. Hume begins explaining from the first sentence of his autobiography: putting forth his lack of vanity, his exemplary purpose in writing, his evenness of temper and imperviousness of disposition. Gibbon explains, in vari-

ous versions, the importance of his ancestors, the nature of his child-hood indispositions, the complexities of his relations with his father, the intricacies of his vocation—everything. Boswell seeks desperately to explain himself, as much for his own benefit as for that of others. At some level, this kind of language and logic suggests, the purpose of all these autobiographies is the same: projection and justification of personality.

Novels, in contrast, rely on a more dramatic rhetoric. The emphatic theatrical metaphors in Richardson, Fielding, and Sterne, conventional though they are, call attention to the novelistic endeavor to express character through adventurous imagery. Of course Pamela talks about, even explains, what has happened to her at least as much as Mrs. Pilkington, but she also describes, in vivid detail, actions as trivial as pretending to plant beans in the garden and as momentous as ordering the carriage to turn around in ways that illuminate not only her own character but the natures of others and that establish clues for future happenings. Tom Jones at the masquerade or eating at the inn with Mrs. Waters, Evelina lost in the maze, Toby at work on his fortifications—all enable the reader to envision not only a personality but a world and to perceive, not because something has been verbally elucidated, but because it has been enacted and described in a language of action.

Novels sound the way they do partly because they express a broader ambition than autobiographies. This book has concentrated, for obvious reasons, on first-person novels (also offering detailed accounts of two third-person fictions that both use and comment upon autobiographical techniques). But even fiction written in the first person aspires, in the eighteenth century, to bring to life more than a single character and to suggest a world. Fanny Burney and Boswell vivify other personages than themselves through convincing records of their speech, though not even Dr. Johnson seems as important to Boswell's story of himself as Uncle Toby seems to Tristram's. The formal autobiographers give no one but themselves scope and reality. Their ambition concentrates on the demanding effort to evoke a single subjectivity; they hope to do no more.

To compare eighteenth-century fiction and autobiography is not to suggest that they cannot, in some way, be distinguished from one another but to invite contemplation of the multifarious and often surprising affinities that exist within the context of manifest difference.

This, finally, is the center of the perception achieved by such a comparative study. Selfhood and consistent identity, whether by sheer illusion-making or through collaboration with experienced actuality, is the underlying obsession and final achievement of the literary imagination in both of these related genres. It provides the ground on which the complex relationship of subjective vision and verifiable truth enacts itself.

Notes

Chapter 1 / Identity in Fiction and in Fact

- 1. An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1690), ed. Alexander Campbell Fraser, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1894), Bk. IV, ch. ix, sect. 3; II, 305.
- 2. Dialogue III, "Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous" (1713), The Works of George Berkeley, ed. Alexander Campbell Fraser, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1871), I, 326.
- 3. A Treatise of Human Nature (1738), ed. A. D. Lindsay, 2 vols. (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1959), I, 239.
- 4. "Essay on the Intellectual Powers of Man" (1785), The Works of Thomas Reid, ed. Sir William Hamilton, 7th ed., 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1872), I, 344.
- 5. Joseph Butler, "On Personal Identity," Works (New York, 1842), p. 301.
 - 6. See, for example, Reid, Works, I, 340.
- 7. Hume, Treatise, I, 87. Locke and Berkeley present similar formulations.
 - 8. Reid, Works, I, 340.
- 9. Ian Ross touches on this point in his extremely interesting essay, "Philosophy and Fiction. The Challenge of David Hume," *Hume and the Enlightenment*, ed. William B. Todd (Edinburgh: The University Press, 1974), pp. 60-71.
- 10. Observations on Man, His Frame, His Duty, and His Expectations, facsimile reproduction with introduction by Theodore L. Huguelet, 2 vols. in 1 (Gainsville, Fla.: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1966), I, 331.
- 11. The Rambler, ed. W. J. Bate and Albrecht B. Strauss, The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson, vols. III-V (New Haven: Yale Univer-

- sity Press, 1969), #4, 31 March 1750; III, 23.
 - 12. The Rambler, #60, 13 Oct. 1750; III, 318-319.
- 13. The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling, The Complete Works of Henry Fielding, Esq., ed. William Ernest Henley, vols. III-V (New York, 1902), Bk. X, ch. 1; IV, 195-96.
- 14. The Wanderer; or, Female Difficulties, 5 vols. (London, 1814), Dedication, I, xvi.
 - 15. Time and the Novel (New York: Humanities Press, 1972), p. 35.
 - 16. Hume, Treatise, I, 239-40.
- 17. Northrop Frye, noting the emphasis on moment-by-moment occurrence in the literature of the late eighteenth century, attributes it to the desire "to give the impression of literature as process, as created on the spot out of the events it describes." "Towards Defining An Age of Sensibility," Fables of Identity: Studies in Poetic Mythology (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963), p. 131.
- 18. Roy Schafer, "Self and Identity in Adolescence," *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 42 (1973), 52.
- 19. Memoir of Sir John Pringle, quoted in *Boswell for the Defence*, 1769-1774, ed. William K. Wimsatt, Jr., and Frederick A. Pottle (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959), p. 137.
- 20. An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding . . . with Hume's Autobiography and A Letter from Adam Smith (Chicago, 1907), p. v.
- 21. Design and Truth in Autobiography (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 148.
- 22. Boswell's London Journal, 1762-1763, ed. Frederick A. Pottle (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1950), 21 Nov. 1762, p. 47.
- 23. "And thus we may perceive, that all the Pleasures and Pains of Sensation, Imagination, Ambition, Self-interest, Sympathy, and Theopathy, as far as they are consistent with one another, with the Frame of our Natures, and with the Course of the World, beget in us a Moral Sense, and lead us to the Love and Approbation of Virtue, and to the Fear, Hatred, and Abhorrence of Vice" (Hartley, I, 497).
- 24. Lionel Trilling, Sincerity and Authenticity (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), p. 135. The sentence by Richard Gilman is quoted by Trilling on the same page.
- 25. Schliemann's autobiography, William Calder writes, "is a Wunschbild, a picture that he had created of himself and that he wished posterity to accept." William M. Calder III, "Schliemann on Schliemann: A Study in the Use of Sources," Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies, 13 (1972), 343.
 - 26. "Myth, Fiction, and Displacement," Fables of Identity, p. 36.
- 27. Confrontations with Myself: an Epilogue (New York: Norton, 1973), p. 15.
- 28. "The ordering of his experiences into a shape that answers better than mere continuous sequence to his notion of what his life really means is often one of the chief purposes of the autobiographer." John N. Morris, Versions of the Self: Studies in English Autobiography from John Bunyan to John Stuart

Mill (New York: Basic Books, 1966), p. 11. Wayne Shumaker points out that "in autobiography structural needs cannot, as in poetry and fiction, freely generate appropriate material. There is a donnée which preexists the form, a body of subject matter that can be hewed down like a block of marble but not filled in at will like a blank piece of canvas." Wayne Shumaker, English Autobiography: Its Emergence, Materials, and Form (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954), p. 33.

- 29. Locke, Essay, Bk. II, ch. xxvii, sect. 15; I, 457.
- 30. Berkeley, "Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge" (1710), Works, I, 152.
 - 31. Hartley, Observations, I, 283.
- 32. See Fredric V. Bogel, "Structure and Substantiality in Later Eighteenth-Century Literature," Studies in Burke and His Time, 15 (1973-4), 145.
- 33. The Great Tradition: A Study of the English Novel (Garden City: Doubleday, 1954), pp. 12-13. (First published 1948.)
- 34. The Art of Biography in Eighteenth Century England (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), p. 131.

Chapter 2 / The Soul's Imaginings

- 1. For detailed accounts of the seventeenth-century tradition of spiritual autobiography, see G. A. Starr, *Defoe and Spiritual Autobiography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965) and Paul Delany, *British Autobiography in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969).
- 2. Samuel Richardson, Pamela, or, Virtue Rewarded, 4 vols. Shake-speare Head Edition (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1929), I, 213.
- 3. The Spectator, ed. G. Gregory Smith, 4 vols. (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., n.d.), #413, III, 63.
- 4. The two most widely accepted readings of Robinson Crusoe concentrate on its status as spiritual autobiography and on Crusoe's role as exemplar of economic man. G. A. Starr (see note 1, above) and J. Paul Hunter, The Reluctant Pilgrim (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1966) have studied the novel as a religious document, a study supplemented by such essays as William H. Halewood, "Religion and Invention in Robinson Crusoe," Essays in Criticism, 14 (1964), 339-51; Martin J. Greif, "The Conversion of Robinson Crusoe," Studies in English Literature, 6 (1966), 551-74; Robert W. Ayers, "Robinson Crusoe: 'Allusive Allegorick History,' " PMLA, 82 (1967), 339-407; Edwin B. Benjamin, "Symbolic Elements in Robinson Crusoe," Philological Quarterly, 30 (1951), 206-11. The economic interpretation has been richly expounded in Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding (London: Chatto and Windus, 1957) and Maximillian E. Novak, Economics and the Fiction of Daniel Defoe (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962). Both interpretations direct attention to important aspects of the novel; I wish to refute neither. My own focus on Crusoe's emotional and imaginative experience derives, however, from the as-

sumption that, whatever else the novel may be, it can be fundamentally understood as deriving from the tradition of spiritual autobiography.

- 5. Daniel Defoe, The Life & Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, Defoe's Writings, Shakespeare Head Edition (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, n.d.), VII, 39. Subsequent references to the novel, taken from this edition, will be incorporated in the text.
- 6. The Imagination as a Means of Grace: Locke and the Aesthetics of Romanticism (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), p. 21.
- 7. Benjamin Boyce long ago observed that "this book, in its central, famous part, is loaded with fear." "The Question of Emotion in Defoe," Studies in Philology, 50 (1953), 51. He did not speculate about the significance of this emotion. Frank Ellis, who sees the "idea of man's isolation" as the organizing theme of the novel, has examined some of Crusoe's terrors in relation to this theme. Twentieth Century Interpretations of Robinson Crusoe (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1969), Introduction. An even fuller investigation of the ramifications of fear in Robinson Crusoe is contained in Homer O. Brown's brilliant essay, "The Displaced Self in the Novels of Daniel Defoe," ELH, 38 (1971), 562-591. Seeing the relation between Crusoe's fear and his alienation, Brown points to his "fear of solipsism and anonymity; alternately, fear of being captured, 'eaten' by the other" (p. 569).
 - 8. "The Displaced Self," p. 573.
- 9. Watt comments on how "egocentric" are Crusoe's relations with Friday, seeing the interchange between the two as entirely based on patronage (Rise of the Novel, pp. 71-72).
- 10. Not only does Friday clearly enlarge Crusoe's emotional life, but the savage's later encounter with his father unmistakably demonstrates his great capacity for love. Friday's inarticulate but active filial devotion contrasts sharply with Crusoe's relatively sterile acknowledgements of his father's rightness, unaccompanied by clear evidence of love.
- 11. See James Sutherland, *Daniel Defoe: A Critical Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 139.
- 12. I am essentially in agreement with those who see Crusoe as a romantic forced to come to terms with reality. George Levine comments, "Admiring the middle station and the energies that earn it, Defoe largely invents a form that will become central to the realistic novel: the story of the romantic youth who must learn to deal with reality." "Realism Reconsidered," The Theory of the Novel: New Essays, ed. John Halperin (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 245. Maximillian Novak describes Crusoe as "a prototype of Shaw's Bluntschli—the hero raised as a tradesman but with a romantic temperament." "Robinson Crusoe's 'Original Sin,' " Studies in English Literature, 1 (no. 3, 1961), 20. It seems important, though, to add that Crusoe conquers his romantic tendencies only by exploring their full possibilities.
 - 13. "The Displaced Self," p. 581.
- 14. "The Autobiographer's Art," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, 27 (1968), 224-5. Stephen Shapiro, on the other hand, believes that "there is a sense in which all autobiographers are unreliable narrators." "The

- Dark Continent of Literature: Autobiography," Comparative Literature Studies, 5 (1969), 434.
- 15. The Dynamics of Literary Response (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 68-70.
- 16. See Jerome L. Singer, Daydreaming: An Introduction to the Experimental Study of Inner Experience (New York: Random House, 1966), p. 27.
- 17. "Autobiography As Narrative," Michigan Quarterly Review, 3 (1964), 211, 212.
- 18. The Memoir was composed in 1766 or 1767 and sent to Martin Madan in September 1767. See Charles Ryskamp, William Cowper of the Inner Temple, Esq. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), p. 174. Cowper's words are from Memoir of the Early Life of William Cowper, Esq., 2nd American edition (Newburgh, 1817), p. 67. (First published 1816.) Subsequent references, from this edition, will be incorporated in the text.
- 19. Design and Truth in Autobiography (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 52. Pascal refers this insight specifically to the implications of autobiographies written between 1782 and 1831, but it surely applies also to earlier works.
- 20. Versions of the Self: Studies in English Autobiography from John Bunyan to John Stuart Mill (New York: Basic Books, 1966), pp. 165, 139.
- 21. See Michael V. DePorte, Nightmares and Hobbyhorses: Swift, Sterne, and Augustan Ideas of Madness (San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1974), p. 21.
- 22. Maurice J. Quinlan, William Cowper: A Critical Life (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1953), p. 91.
- 23. "Notes for an Anatomy of Modern Autobiography," New Literary History, 1 (1970), 490.
- 24. Barrett John Mandel, "Autobiography—Reflection Trained on Mystery," *Prairie Schooner*, 46 (1972), 326.

Chapter 3 / Female Identities

- 1. See Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding (London: Chatto and Windus, 1957), p. 310.
 - 2. Charlotte Lennox, Euphemia, 4 vols. (London, 1790), II, 165.
- 3. Susannah Rowson, *Charlotte and Lucy Temple* (Philadelphia: 1881), Preface, p. vi. (First published 1790.)
- 4. The Happy-Unfortunate or the Female Page (1732) (New York: Garland, 1972), Preface.
 - 5. The Happy-Unfortunate, p. 125.
- 6. Sarah Fielding, The Adventures of David Simple (London, 1904), p. 110. (First published 1744.)
- 7. A Patch-Work Screen for the Ladies (1723) (New York: Garland, 1973), p. 79.
 - 8. Boyd, The Happy-Unfortunate, p. 87. From a familiar male point of

Notes to pages 60-69

- view, of course, exemplified by the literary metaphors of procreation in such writers as Gibbon and Sterne, pregnancy is power.
- 9. See, for example, Penelope Aubin, The Life and Adventures of the Lady Lucy (1726) (New York: Garland, 1973), p. 108.
- 10. Eliza Haywood, The Rash Resolve (1724) (New York: Garland, 1973), p. 124.
 - 11. Charlotte Temple, p. 27.
- 12. Entertaining Novels of Mrs. Jane Barker, 3rd ed., 2 vols. (London, 1736), I, 140.
- 13. "The Story of Louisa," Novellettes, Selected for the Use of Young Ladies and Gentlemen (London, 1780), p. 116.
- 14. I have discussed the implications of this idea more fully in "Ev'ry Woman Is at Heart a Rake,' "Eighteenth-Century Studies, 8 (1974), 27-46.
 - 15. "Conjugal Fidelity: Or, Female Fortitude," Novellettes, p. 186.
- 16. Clara Thompson, "Cultural Pressures in the Psychology of Women," in *Psychoanalysis and Women*, ed. Jean Baker Miller (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1973), p. 76.
- 17. Mary Davys, Familiar Letters Betwixt a Gentleman and a Lady (1725), Augustan Reprint Society Pub. no. 54 (Los Angeles: Clark Library, 1955), p. 297.
- 18. As in Rowson, Charlotte Temple. In The Hermit of Snowden, the existence of unconsummated passion in a woman is punished by death; her lover only becomes a hermit. [Elizabeth Ryves], The Hermit of Snowden: Or Memoirs of Albert and Lavinia (London, 1793).
 - 19. Entertaining Novels, II, 70.
- 20. Ernest Baker, calling the novel an example of "earnest domestic fiction," comments that "all is righted at the end, except that Euphemia has to resign herself never to enjoy married bliss." The History of the English Novel: The Novel of Sentiment and the Gothic Romance (London: Witherby, 1942), p. 43. Charlotte Lennox may consciously have intended such a point, but her tone suggests quite another interpretation.
- 21. Little is known of Jane Barker. John Richetti paraphrases G. S. Gibbons as saying "that she was a Catholic spinster who spent some time at the Court of St. Germain." Popular Fiction Before Richardson: Narrative Patterns 1700-1739 (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1969), n. 1, p. 230. Richetti see A Patch-Work Screen as a conventional pious tale (pp. 237 ff.), thus echoing Baker's judgment that Jane Barker produced nothing but "improving tales." The History of the English Novel: The Later Romances and the Establishment of Realism (London: Witherby, 1942), p. 124. About Miss Barker's life, Baker comments that she "is said to have been a young associate of the Orinda circle, and to have belonged to a similar coterie of literary aspirants at Cambridge" (p. 124).
- 22. Barker, A Patch-Work Screen, p. 90. Subsequent references to this edition will be incorporated in the text.
- 23. Mary, A Fiction (London, 1788), pp. 7-8. Subsequent references to this edition will be incorporated in the text.

- 24. Strangely, Mary Wollstonecraft's most recent biographer says that Mary "differs only in brevity and pretension" from the conventional sentimental romances of its period. Emily W. Sunstein, A Different Face: The Life of Mary Wollstonecraft (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), p. 153.
 - 25. Maria or The Wrongs of Woman (New York: Norton, 1975), p. 27.
- 26. Sigmund Freud, "Femininity," Women and Analysis, ed. Jean Strouse (New York: Grossman, 1974), p. 76.
- 27. See Donald A. Stauffer, The Art of Biography in Eighteenth Century England: Bibliographical Supplement (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), a 278-page listing of eighteenth-century biographies and autobiographies with an impressive number of titles by women.
- 28. Thraliana: The Diary of Mrs. Hester Lynch Thrale, 1776-1809, ed. Katherine Balderston, 2 vols. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1942), p. 309. Subsequent references to this edition will be incorporated in the text.
- 29. Thraliana, p. 448. A few pages later (p. 520), Mrs. Thrale repeats the comment. Katherine Balderston speculates (in a note on p. 448) that the rumor circulated by Baretti—that Mrs. Thrale believed Piozzi to be her own half brother, her father's illegitimate son—originated in such remarks as this.
- 30. I have treated Mrs. Thrale's ambiguous relationship with her mother at greater length in *The Female Imagination* (New York: Knopf, 1975), pp. 197-207.
- 31. A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Charlotte Charke, ed. Leonard R. N. Ashley (Gainesville, Fla.: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1969), p. 50. Subsequent references to this edition will be incorporated in the text.
- 32. Memoirs of Mrs. Laetitia Pilkington, 2 vols. (Dublin, 1748, 1749), I, 13. Subsequent references to this edition will be incorporated in the text.
- 33. To Wortley, 17 July [1748], The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, ed. Robert Halsband, 3 vols. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1965), II, 406.
 - 34. To Wortley [25 April 1710], Complete Letters, I, 30.
- 35. For a fuller discussion of her attitudes toward her own writing and thinking, see my essay, "Scrapbook of a Self: Mrs. Piozzi's Late Journals," *Harvard Library Bulletin*, 18 (1970), 221-247.
 - 36. To Lady Bute, 28 Jan. [1753], Complete Letters, III, 22.
 - 37. To Lady Bute [Jan. 1750], Complete Letters, II, 450.
- 38. Donald A. Stauffer, The Art of Biography in Eighteenth Century England (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), p. 109.
- 39. She was, in fact, generally perceived as at least faintly ridiculous. Fanny Burney reports the Queen's comment on reading Mrs. Piozzi's account of her tour of Italy: "How like herself, how characteristic is every line!—Wild, entertaining, flighty, inconsistent, and clever!" Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay, ed. Austin Dobson, 6 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1904), IV, 300. The patronizing tone of the Queen's remark is characteristic of contemporary commentators.
 - 40. To Wortley [20 Aug. 1710], Complete Letters, I, 53-4.
 - 41. To Philippa Munday, 12 Dec. [1711], Complete Letters, I, 112.

Notes to pages 85-94

- 42. See *The Life of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 153.
 - 43. To Algarotti (translated) [Aug. 1736], Complete Letters, II, 500-501.
 - 44. To Algarotti (translated) [10 Sept. 1736], Complete Letters, II, 502.
 - 45. To Algarotti (translated) [Sept. 1736], Complete Letters, II, 501.
 - 46. Life of Lady Mary, p. 160.
 - 47. Quoted by Stauffer, The Art of Biography, p. 103.

Chapter 4 / The Defenses of Form

- 1. The Art of Biography in Eighteenth Century England (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), p. 377.
- 2. Design and Truth in Autobiography (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 188.
- 3. The Autobiographies of Edward Gibbon, ed. John Murray (New York, 1907), p. 296. Subsequent references will be incorporated in the text.
- 4. Letter #867, 11/11/93, The Letters of Edward Gibbon, ed. J. E. Norton, 3 vols. (London: Cassell, 1956), III, 359.
- 5. Cotter Morison reports that "twenty hours before his death Mr. Gibbon happened to fall into a conversation not uncommon with him, on the probable duration of his life. He said that he thought himself a good life for ten, twelve, or perhaps twenty years." Gibbon (London, 1878), p. 173. His denial, in other words, was by no means a matter only of literary self-presentation. His hydrocele, however, achieved for him an unexpected form of immortality: a particular variety of hydrocele accompanied by a hernia, I learn from a medical dictionary, is now known as "Gibbon's hydrocele."
- 6. Gibbon's style, Walter Bagehot flatly asserted, is not one "in which you can tell the truth." Quoted in J. M. Robertson, Gibbon (London: Watts, 1925), p. 48. I would argue, on the contrary, that it is the *only* style for telling Gibbon's kind of truth.
- 7. His first unambiguous reference, in the letters, to the project of writing his own life does not occur until 1791, when he had already attempted five drafts. To Lord Sheffield he confesses, "I have much revolved the plan of the Memoirs I once mentioned, and as you do not think it ridiculous I believe I shall make the attempt: if I can please myself I am confident of not displeasing: but let this be a profound secret between us: people must not be prepared to laugh: they must be taken by suprize." (Letter #791, 28/12/91, Letters, III, 240.)
- 8. Lord Sheffield's version appeared in 1796. Precisely one hundred years later, John Murray's edition of *The Autobiographies* first made available the six separate texts. Twentieth-century versions of the text have been, like Lord Sheffield's, composites. The most recent and scholarly is Edward Gibbon, *Memoirs of My Life*, ed. Georges A. Bonnard (London: Nelson, 1966).
 - 9. Thus Wayne Shumaker, for example, remarks that "the really signifi-

cant fact about the *Memoirs* is that for the first time the extended autobiography of a celebrated Englishman, intimate but not bearing upon religious experience, was printed and widely disseminated within a few years of his death," but he ignores the also significant fact that the autobiography was "extended" by Sheffield's labors rather than the author's. *English Autobiography: Its Emergence, Materials, and Form* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954), p. 27. Even Roger Porter, in a brilliant essay that acknowledges the importance of the six separate versions, speaks of the *Autobiography* as though it were a unified whole, referring to its "outset" with reference to a passage that Gibbon himself never included in any of the six versions and to its "concluding words," which belong to a sequence from the next-to-last version. "Gibbon's *Autobiography:* Filling Up the Silent Vacancy," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 8 (1974), 1-26. The only consistent attempt to differentiate the individual texts is Barrett John Mandel, "The Problem of Narrative in Edward Gibbon's *Autobiography,*" *Studies in Philology*, 67 (1970), 550-64.

- 10. Edward Gibbon, The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, ed. J. B. Bury, 7 vols (London, 1896), I, 77. Cf. Dr. Samuel Johnson, who points out the analogy between public and private memory: "What is recollection but a revival of vexations, or history but a record of wars, treasons, and calamities?" Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland, ed. R. W. Chapman (London: Oxford University Press, 1930), p. 98.
- 11. Gibbon's Journal to January 28th, 1763, ed. D. M. Low (London: Chatto & Windus, 1929), entry for 17 Nov. 1762, p. 183.
- 12. John Morris, speaking of Gibbon's autobiography, perceptively remarks on "the historian's professional assumption that the true nature of events can only be understood in retrospect." Versions of the Self: Studies in English Autobiography from John Bunyan to John Stuart Mill (New York: Basic Books, 1966), p. 85.
- 13. "Child and Adult: Historical Perspective in Gibbon's Memoirs," Studies in Burke and His Time, 15 (1973), 39, n. 26. It must be added that Gibbon apparently had equal trouble deciding how to describe other elements in his experience—notably those involving his relationship with his father.
- 14. D. M. Low, on the other hand, points out that apparently Mlle. Curchod herself never "doubted the sincerity and even fervour of Gibbon's attachment." *Edward Gibbon*, 1737-1794 (London: Chatto & Windus, 1937), p. 90.
- 15. "My mind seems to have become a kind of machine for grinding general laws out of large collections of facts, but why this should have caused the atrophy of that part of the brain alone, on which the higher tastes depend, I cannot conceive . . . The loss of these tastes is a loss of happiness, and may possibly be injurious to the intellect, and more probably to the moral character, by enfeebling the emotional part of our nature." The Autobiography of Charles Darwin and Selected Letters, ed. Francis Darwin (New York: Dover, 1958), p. 54.
- 16. "The Dark Continent of Literature: Autobiography," Comparative Literature Studies, 5 (1969), 426.

- 17. "Confessions and Autobiography," *The Making of a Poem* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1955), p. 64.
- 18. Leo Braudy, in a brief note on Gibbon's Autobiography, emphasizes the importance of the idea of role to Gibbon's concept of history. He sees the autobiographer—accurately enough—as presenting himself in various roles. I would argue, though, that the role defined by his vocation has overriding importance. See Braudy, Narrative Form in History and Fiction: Hume, Fielding & Gibbon (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), pp. 269-71.
 - 19. "Swift's 'I,' " The Yale Review, 62 (1973), 384.
- 20. Commentators have described in many different ways the literary effect of the famous epigrammatic formulation, "I sighed as a lover, I obeyed as a son." See, for example, Folkenflik, "Child and Adult," p. 31 (summarizing other views), pp. 39-40; Porter, "Gibbon's Autobiography," p. 10; Braudy, Narrative Form, p. 271.
- 21. D. M. Low advances the theory of infantile rheumatism (Edward Gibbon, p. 26), although he offers no substantiation for it.
- 22. "Compare the Anabasis with the Cyropaedia; and feel the difference between truth and fiction; between the lively and copious variety of the one, and the elegant poverty of the other." Letter #196, to Richard Hurd [c. Aug. 1772], Letters, I, 336-7. Again, "The Cyropaedia is vague and languid; the Anabasis circumstantial and animated. Such is the eternal difference between fiction and truth." Decline and Fall, ch. xxiv, n. 115, quoted Letters, I, 337, n. 8.
- 23. "Autobiography As Narrative," Michigan Quarterly Review, 3 (1964), 212.
- 24. Mandel argues that Gibbon's successive attempts at autobiography issue from his uncertainty about what identity he will declare. (e.g., "The Problem of Narrative," p. 552.) Acknowledging the importance of identity, I would yet insist that the nature of these autobiographical efforts suggests a greater preoccupation with story than with self.
- 25. Peter Quennell, The Profane Virtues: Four Studies of the Eighteenth Century (New York: Viking, 1945), pp. 73-4.
 - 26. R. B. Mowat, Gibbon (London: Arthur Barker Ltd., 1936), p. 277.
- 27. See, for example, his letter to Lord Thurlow in mid-July, 1782: Letter #546, Letters, II, 303.
 - 28. John Murray's description: Autobiographies, p. 1.
- 29. Mandel unaccountably describes Memoir F as resembling A "in content, structure, and tone." He adds that "Gibbon was not satisfied with the approach of F, as he had not been satisfied with A." "The Problem of Narrative," p. 553. Although the historian expressed to Lord Sheffield a general lack of satisfaction with his accomplishment as a memoirist, the best evidence suggests that he was still working on F at the time of his death. See Bonnard, ed., Memoirs, Introduction, p. xxx.
- 30. A page of manuscript notes for the autobiography describes his subsequent stay in Lausanne as his "mental puberty," thus emphasizing the sense

Notes to pages 124-136

of freedom and new growth associated with the aftermath of his conversion. Reproduced in Low, *Edward Gibbon*, after p. 340.

- 31. Letter #826, 6/1/93, Letters, III, 312.
- 32. "The Dark Continent of Literature," p. 449.

Chapter 5 / The Beautiful Oblique

- 1. Laurence Sterne, The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman, ed. James A. Work (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1940), p. 525. Subsequent references to this edition will be incorporated in the text.
- 2. The relation between Tristram Shandy and the conventional novel has been suggestively treated by Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding (London: Chatto and Windus, 1957), pp. 302-308, and touched upon by B. J. Lehman, "Of Time, Personality, and the Author," Essays on the Eighteenth-Century Novel, ed. Robert Donald Spector (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965), pp. 165-166.
- 3. J. M. Stedmond believes the creation of an identity to be the central function of this novel. See "Genre and Tristram Shandy," Philological Quarterly, 38 (1959), 48-49.
- 4. Stedmond explores those affinities and reviews previous investigations of the subject: "Genre and Tristram Shandy," pp. 37-38.
- 5. "Tristram Shandy and the Tradition of Learned Wit," Scholia Satyrica, 1 (1975), 17. This essay is reprinted from Essays in Criticism, 1 (1951), 225-248.
- 6. Character and the Novel (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968), p. 120.
- 7. Michael V. DePorte, Nightmares and Hobbyhorses: Swift, Sterne, and Augustan Ideas of Madness (San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1974), p. 115. DePorte goes on to argue that "the real point about Walter and Toby is not so much that Sterne thinks them mad, or even that most contemporary readers would have thought them mad; the point is rather that given the psychiatric criteria of the day they are mad" (p. 116). Tristram himself is less distinctly so, if only because he struggles more against his own imagination.
- 8. Letter #47, Letters of Laurence Sterne, ed. Lewis Perry Curtis (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1935), p. 88.
 - 9. "He Said, She Said," Commentary, 56 (March 1972), 58.
- 10. "Typography, Tristram Shandy, The Aposiopesis, Etc.," The Winged Skull: Papers from the Laurence Sterne Bicentenary Conference, ed. Arthur H. Cash and John M. Stedmond (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1971), p. 252.
- 11. The Created Self: The Reader's Role in Eighteenth-Century Fiction (London: Heinemann, 1970), p. 167. My italics.
- 12. "Psychoanalysis and Historical Biography," Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association, 19 (1971), 154.
 - 13. Laurence Sterne: From Tristram to Yorick, translated and abridged

- by Barbara Bray (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 136.
- 14. Howard Anderson elaborates this point in his fine essay, "Tristram Shandy and the Reader's Imagination," PMLA, 86 (1971), 966-973. "It is quickly established," he observes, "that Tristram has set out to educate and train our imaginations, rather than allow us the simpler pleasures of giving free rein to our own conceptions or passively relying on his" (p. 967).
- 15. B. L. Reid has sketched one view of the relation between tragic potentiality and comic treatment in the novel. "Sterne and the Absurd Homunculus," *The Long Boy and Others* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1969), p. 102.
- 16. Wild Excursions: The Life and Fiction of Laurence Sterne (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972), p. 66. J. Paul Hunter adds that the protagonist of Tristram Shandy can be argued to be the reader, "helping design the work for himself," although Sterne's control over this process is more comprehensive than he claims. "Response As Reformation: Tristram Shandy and the Art of Interruption," Novel, 4 (1970), 137.
 - 17. Letter #96, To Lady D_____, 9 July 1763, Letters, p. 179.
- 18. To the Palace of Wisdom: Studies in Order and Energy from Dryden to Blake (Garden City: Doubleday, 1964), p. 320.
- 19. Andrew Wright, "The Artifice of Failure in *Tristram Shandy*," *Novel*, 2 (1969), 217.
- 20. "The Comic Mask," Soliloquies in England and Later Soliloquies (New York: Scribner's, 1923), p. 138.
- 21. "Laurence Sterne," Laurence Sterne: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. John Traugott (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1968), p. 118.
- 22. Printed in John Hall-Stevenson, *Crazy Tales* (London, 1762), pp. 17-18. Quoted by Thomson, *Wild Excursions*, p. 22.
- 23. It is usually taken to emphasize—as it certainly does—the degree to which listeners (and, by implication, readers) interpret every utterance in relation to their own predilections. Trim and Walter, for example, "both make the sermon answer the needs of their hobbyhorses while the sermon's subject and aims remain unregarded." Hunter, "Response As Reformation," p. 135.
- 24. Wilbur L. Cross, The Life and Times of Laurence Sterne, 3rd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1929), pp. 291-292. With a later use of material from the novel as biographical evidence, Cross does offer some qualification. "By abating [Sterne's] extravagance here and there, perhaps we may tell the story somewhat as it was, though the narrative will be scant and never quite trustworthy" (p. 320). Critics have often suggested a simple identity between Yorick and Sterne as well as between Tristram and Sterne. David Thomson, for example, maintains that one important source of pleasure for Sterne in writing Tristram Shandy was that "it allowed him the opportunity of reinventing himself in Yorick" (Wild Excursions, p. 157). John Preston offers a particularly penetrating comment on the implications of this invention. "Tristram, the fictional author, turns real life, real books, real people (John Hall-Stevenson, for instance, or Dr. Burton) into fictions. He invents them, in just

Notes to pages 154-162

the way that he invents his own family, to populate his fictional world. What is more, Tristram, invented to be the author of Sterne's novel, turns Sterne himself into the fictional Yorick. Sterne invents the conditions in which he can invent himself" (*The Created Self*, p. 188).

- 25. Letter #64, To Mary Macartney [June 1760], Letters, p. 117. The same phrasing recurs in Letter #66, To Mrs. Jane Fenton [?], 3 Aug. 1760, p. 120.
 - 26. Letter #79, To Lady _____, 21 Sept. 1761, Letters, p. 143.
- 27. See James Olney, Metaphors of Self: The Meaning of Autobiography (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972). "One creates from moment to moment and continuously the reality to which one gives a metaphoric name and shape, and that shape is one's own shape" (p. 34).
- 28. For a strong statement of this view, see Alfred Kazin, "Autobiography As Narrative," Michigan Quarterly Review, 3 (1964), 210-216.
- 29. Letter #63, To the Bishop of Gloucester [William Warburton], 19 June 1760, Letters, p. 116.
- 30. Granted, what Sterne chooses to say to Warburton is not necessarily identical with what he believes. He is, among other things, currying favor in offering the view of himself as Sancho Panza. Yet the very possibility of this kind of self-justification, not readily available to Tristram, underlines the difference between character and author.

Chapter 6 / Dynamics of Fear

- 1. The History of the English Novel: The Novel of Sentiment and the Gothic Romance (London: Witherby, 1942), p. 156.
- 2. "Fanny Burney's Evelina," The Age of Johnson: Essays Presented to Chauncey Brewster Tinker (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949), p. 172.
- 3. The Early Diary of Frances Burney, 1768-1778, ed. Annie Raine Ellis, 2 vols. (London, 1889); Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay, ed. Austin Dobson (from the edition of Charlotte Barrett), 6 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1904). The new edition of The Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney thus far includes Vol. I (1791-1792), ed. Joyce Hemlow with Curtis D. Cecil and Althea Douglas (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1972); Vol. II (1793), ed. Joyce Hemlow and Althea Douglas (1972); Vol. III (1793-1797), ed. Joyce Hemlow with Patricia Boutilier and Althea Douglas (1973); Vol. IV (1797-1801), ed. Joyce Hemlow (1973).
- 4. Diary and Letters, VI, 363. Subsequent references to this edition will be incorporated into the text.
- 5. The Wanderer: or, Female Difficulties, 5 vols. (London, 1814), dedication, I, xx-xxi.
 - 6. Early Diary, I, 18.
- 7. Early Diary, I, 7. Years later, Richard Owen Cambridge, telling Fanny of his daughter's approaching death, urges her, as he has urged her friend Sally Baker, "to be cheerful." "You two," added he, 'and my two girls,

Notes to pages 162-181

have, among you all four but one fault,—and that is too much feeling. You must repress that, therefore, as much as you can' "(Diary and Letters, II, 245; 1783).

- 8. Francis R. Hart, "Notes for an Anatomy of Modern Autobiography," New Literary History, 1 (1970), 497.
- 9. Barrett John Mandel, "The Autobiographer's Art," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, 27 (1968), 222.
 - 10. As in the case of Sophie Streatfield: see Diary and Letters, II, 39.
- 11. To Mrs. Phillips, #17, 29 Aug. 1797; Journals, III, 352. Sarah subsequently eloped with her married half brother, twenty-two years her senior, thus confirming Miss Burney's dark suspicions of her.
- 12. She describes her first social encounter with the King in a vivid passage beginning "It seemed to me we were acting a play" (*Diary and Letters*, II, 319). Although her later references are more discreet, her entire account of court life emphasizes the extreme artificiality of its customs and the prescribed nature of all activity.
 - 13. #8, To Mrs. Phillips and Mrs. Locke, Oct. 1791; Journals, I, 73.
- 14. #23, Journal-letter to Mrs. Phillips and Mrs. Locke, May 1792; Journals, I, 160.
 - 15. #61, To Mrs. Phillips, [2-3] April [1793]; Journals, II, 42.
 - 16. #82, To Mrs. Phillips, 8 May 1793; Journals, II, 116-17.
- 17. Maria Rishton to Susan Phillips, quoted by Joyce Hemlow, *The History of Fanny Burney* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1958), p. 239.
 - 18. #120, To Mrs. Waddington, 2 Aug. [1793]; Journals, II, 179.
 - 19. #124, To Mrs. Waddington [19 Sept.] 1793; Journals, III, 9.
 - 20. #154, 16 Oct. 1794; Journals, III, 84.
 - 21. #169, To Dr. Burney, 13 June 1795; Journals, III, 113.
- 22. A Writer's Diary, ed. Leonard Woolf (London: The Hogarth Press, 1954), entry for 20 April 1919, pp. 13-14.
- 23. The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding (London: Chatto and Windus, 1957), p. 310.
- 24. Kemp Malone, "Evelina Revisited," Papers on Language and Literature, 1 (1965), 3-19.
 - 25. The History of Fanny Burney, pp. 91-95.
- 26. See Evelina, or the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World, ed. Edward A. Bloom (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), preface, pp. 7-8. Subsequent references to this edition will be incorporated in the text.
- 27. The introduction to Bloom's edition of *Evelina* argues the importance of prudence as a lesson the heroine must learn, pp. xix-xxiii.
- 28. Michael Adelstein enunciates a commonly accepted view in suggesting that Evelina learns nothing of importance, having "merely exchanged snobbery for sweetness, and sympathy for indifference," and demonstrating "that social education is all." Fanny Burney (New York: Twayne, 1968) p. 38. It will be clear that I disagree.
 - 29. Cecilia: Or, Memoirs of an Heiress, 2 vols. (London, 1914), I, 244.

- 30. Camilla: Or, A Picture of Youth, 5 vols. (London, 1796), I, 322. Subsequent references to this edition will be incorporated in the text.
- 31. The Rights of Women (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1955), p. 68. Subsequent references to this edition will be incorporated in the text. The book was first printed as A Vindication of the Rights of Women, 1792.
- 32. The Wanderer, I, 403. Subsequent references to the edition cited in note 5, above, will be incorporated in the text.
- 33. See *The Wanderer*, III, 175, where Miss Burney writes directly from her own emotional experience. Compare: "There is something, after all, in money, by itself money, that I can never take possession of it without a secret feeling of something like a degradation: money in its effects, and its produce, creates far different and more pleasant sensations" (*Diary and Letters*, III, 142).
 - 34. Fanny Burney, p. 129.
 - 35. The History of Fanny Burney, p. 342.
 - 36. #198, To Dr. Burney [for 6 July 1796]; Journals, III, 186.
 - 37. #410, To Mrs. Waddington, 4 April 1801; Journals, IV, 483.

Chapter 7 / The Sense of Audience

- 1. Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding (London: Chatto and Windus, 1957), p. 199.
- 2. "Justice to Pamela," The Long Boy and Others (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1969), p. 33.
 - 3. Richardson (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1928), p. 95.
- 4. "Richardson's Pamela: The Aesthetic Case," Samuel Richardson: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. John Carroll (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1969), p. 37.
 - 5. "A Room of Pamela's Own," ELH, 39 (1972), 585.
- 6. Joseph Andrews, ed. Martin C. Battestin (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1967), p. 8.
- 7. Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded, 4 vols., Shakespeare Head Edition (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1929), I, xxi-xxii. Subsequent reference to this edition will be incorporated in the text.
- 8. Seduction and Betrayal: Women and Literature (New York: Random House, 1974), p. 198.
- 9. An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber, 2d ed. (London, 1740), pp. 3-4. Subsequent references to this edition will be incorporated in the text.
- 10. F. Dorothy Senior, The Life and Times of Colley Cibber (London: Constable, 1928), p. 46.
- 11. "Cibber regarded his growing family as a somewhat sinister joke, and was fond of saying, after he had lost every shilling of his week's salary at hazard or cards: 'Now I must go home and eat a Child!' "Senior, p. 25; she cites Davies' Dramatic Miscellanies as her source. The Apology affords no evidence of Cibber's capacity for such black humor as this perhaps apocryphal

quotation reflects.

- 12. "Freud and Dora: Story, History, Case History," Partisan Review, 41 (1974), 91.
- 13. I do not mean to imply, of course, that Cibber's story would necessarily meet Freud's criteria for mental health. Marcus's summary makes clear how demanding Freud was about the nature of acceptable narrative. Dora's story, which accounted for everything to her satisfaction, by no means satisfied him.
- 14. James Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, ed. G. B. Hill, rev. by L. F. Powell, 6 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934), entry for 15 May 1776, III, 72.
- 15. James Boswell, *The Ominous Years*, 1774-1776, ed. Charles Ryskamp and Frederick A. Pottle (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963), entry for 16 March 1776, p. 259. Also in Boswell's *Life*, II, 433.
- 16. Richardson's Characters (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1963), p. 159.
- 17. "Samuel Richardson's Novels and the Theatre: A Theory Sketched," Philological Quarterly, 41 (1962), 329.
- 18. Sherburn notes this point too. "'Writing to the Moment': One Aspect," Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Literature, ed. Carroll Camden (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 201.
- 19. The Shaping Vision: Imagination in the English Novel from Defoe to Dickens (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966), p. 58.
- 20. "Pamela's Clothes," Twentieth-Century Interpretations of Pamela, ed. Rosemary Cowler (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1969), pp. 89-96.
- 21. Leon M. Guilhamet, "From Pamela to Grandison: Richardson's Moral Revolution in the Novel," Studies in Change and Revolution, ed. Paul Korshin (Scolar Press, 1972), p. 197.
 - 22. Joseph Andrews, p. 18.
 - 23. Ioseph Andrews, p. 19.
- 24. David Hunt, Parents and Children in History (New York: Basic Books, 1970), p. 108, quoted by Bogna W. Lorence, "Parents and Children in Eighteenth-Century Europe," History of Childhood Quarterly, 2 (1974), note 64, p. 28. Lorence points out, on the other hand, that by the mid-eighteenth century "moralists and churchmen had long inveighed against the evils of wet-nursing." P. 3.

Chapter 8 / Young Men's Fancies

- 1. Life of Johnson, ed. G. B. Hill, rev. L. F. Powell, 6 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934), entry for 31 March 1778, III, 228.
- 2. Versions of the Self: Studies in English Autobiography from John Bunyan to John Stuart Mill (New York: Basic Books, 1966), pp. 182-183.
- 3. "The Confessional Increment: A New Look at the I-Narrator," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, 28 (1969), 16.
- 4. "The Plot of Tom Jones," Essays on the Eighteenth-Century Novel, ed. Robert Donald Spector (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965),

- pp. 96, 97, 99.
- 5. The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), pp. 72-3.
- 6. Boswell's London Journal, 1762-1763, ed. Frederick A. Pottle (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1950), entry for 27 Feb. 1763, p. 206. Subsequent references to this edition will be incorporated in the text.
- 7. Ronald Primeau has explored some implications of Boswell's attitude toward imagination in the London Journal, pointing out that "Boswell is fascinated by the powers of the human mind to alter or create new realities for itself through the dynamics of imagination." "Boswell's 'Romantic Imagination' in the London Journal," Papers on Language and Literature, 9 (1973), 19.
- 8. Richard J. Jaarsma, "Boswell the Novelist: Structural Rhythm in the London Journal," North Dakota Quarterly (Spring, 1966), pp. 51-60, has commented on "Boswell's tendency to see his life in terms of an actor of the stage" (p. 52) and to view himself as a literary hero. Frederick Pottle also emphasizes the dramatic quality of the journal as summing up its "distinguishing structural features." James Boswell: The Earlier Years, 1740-1769 (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), p. 90.
- 9. Martin Price, who sees Boswell as "a good example of the deliberate artist working upon the materials of his own feelings," points out that he "illustrates the distinctive excitement of his age in the 'pleasures of imagination.' "To the Palace of Wisdom: Studies in Order and Energy from Dryden to Blake (Garden City: Doubleday, 1964), p. 343. Pottle also stresses his imaginative gifts, e.g. James Boswell: The Earlier Years, pp. 87-8.
- 10. The Hypochondriack, ed. Margery Bailey, 2 vols. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1928), no. LXVII, April 1783, "On Memory," II, 273.
 - 11. The Hypochondriack, no. LXVI, March 1783, "On Diaries," II, 259.
- 12. Frederick S. Kiely points out that London represented for Boswell a new sort of bondage. "To assert his independence from a tyrannical father, he leaves home and ironically submits to the new bondage of London society. Here, hostile social forces shatter his illusions of freedom and independence, and he endures mental and physical anguish." "Boswell's Literary Art in the London Journal," College English, 23 (1962), 629.
 - 13. Versions of the Self, p. 209.
- 14. W. K. Wimsatt comments on the striking analogy between Boswell and the fictional "rake with the heart of gold," adding that Boswell, unlike the novelist, does not take pains to glorify his hero. "James Boswell: The Man and the Journal," Yale Review, 49 (1959), pp. 91, 92. I would argue, rather, that Boswell alternates between elaborate self-glorification and its opposite.
- 15. His "identification with fictional figures arose from his recognition, and sometimes his creation, of fictive qualities in his own life." Anthony Tillinghast, "Boswell Playing a Part," Renaissance and Modern Studies, 9 (1965), 90.
- 16. Primeau maintains that in later parts of the London Journal, "Boswell's interest in the creative workings of an imaginative mind began to decline," "Boswell's 'Romantic Imagination,' "p. 24. Although it is true that

Notes to pages 242-254

Boswell dwells less obsessively on the subject, it seems to me that he loses little or none of his faith in the value of imagination.

- 17. The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling, The Complete Works of Henry Fielding, Esq., ed. William Ernest Henley, vols. III-V (New York, 1902), Bk. VIII, ch. 5; IV, 81. Subsequent references to this edition, with book and chapter citations preceding volume and page, will be incorporated in the text. In the passage quoted the narrator is not speaking explicitly of his novel as a construct but of the falsifications in Tom's account of his experiences to Partridge.
- 18. Henry Fielding: Mask and Feast (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), p. 34.
- 19. Introduction to Fielding, The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961), p. xv.
- 20. F. Kaplan has argued that the novel contains a second plot outlined by the series of introductory chapters. "Fielding's Novel about Novels: The 'Prefaces' and the 'Plot' of Tom Jones," Studies in English Literature, 13 (1973), 536. He does not demonstrate the sense in which this series can properly be called a plot.
- 21. In Amelia Booth comes close, functioning successfully for a time—though only for a time—as a farmer. The farm, however, is in effect given him by a benevolent friend.
- 22. Critics have begun to comment on the special importance of the reader's involvement in this novel. Thus, John Preston believes that *Tom Jones* "presents life as a fortuitous sequence of events . . . and traces the ways in which we come to see these events as a pattern." He sees the novel's structure as dependent upon "the structure of successive responses to the novel." The Created Self: The Reader's Role in Eighteenth-Century Fiction (London: Heinemann, 1970), p. 114. Leo Braudy, whose view is closer to my own, remarks that "the process of reading Tom Jones is a learning process for the reader, he is led and sometimes pushed by the narrator into the narrator's created world, for the purposes of entertainment and the growth of his perceptions." Narrative Form in History and Fiction: Hume, Fielding & Gibbon (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), p. 146. He says even more emphatically, "Its artificial form, involuted plot, and freight of meditation have been constructed to make us perceptive readers of novels and therefore perceptive experiencers of life" (p. 178).
- 23. Kaplan points out that Fielding explicitly values genius, humanity, learning, and experience as virtues. Tom and Sophia need humanity and experience, Allworthy adds a modicum of learning, Fielding as author must rely on all four qualities. "Fielding's Novel about Novels," p. 545.
- 24. I am paraphrasing Goldknopf, "The Confessional Increment," who finds it "almost hair-raising" that someone inside a novel should talk to someone outside (p. 17).
- 25. Boswell on the Grand Tour: Italy, Corsica and France, 1765-1766, ed. Frank Brady and Frederick A. Pottle (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1955), entry for 19 July 1765, p. 110. Subsequent references to this edition, incorpor-

ated in the text, will be identified as GT II.

- 26. "Such is the constitution of the world that if we speculate too much about it we shall see all human pursuits in insipid or ridiculous views. But let us once heartily engage in some course of action and all these imaginations vanish." Letter to Temple, 25 Sept. 1763, Boswell in Holland, 1763-1764, ed. Frederick A. Pottle (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1952), p. 32. Subsequent references to this edition, incorporated in the text, will be identified as BH.
- 27. Northrop Frye links Pamela and Boswell as "process-writers," keeping "the emotion at a continuous present." He considers the "view of literature as process" to be a vital aspect of the late eighteenth century—a point that supports my argument that the diary has special links with the fiction of this period. See "Towards Defining an Age of Sensibility," Fables of Identity: Studies in Poetic Mythology (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963), pp. 131-132.
- 28. Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland, 1764, ed. Frederick A. Pottle (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1953), entry for 9 Aug. 1764, p. 52. Italicized sentence, my italics. On the 20th of July, Boswell had congratulated himself on being "an original character" and had resolved, "let me then be Boswell and render him as fine a fellow as possible" (p. 28). Subsequent references to this edition, incorporated in the text, will be identified as GT I.
- 29. See, for example, GT I, 15 ("My thoughts were horrid, yet my manners were cheerful . . . How strange is the mind of man! How are our ideas lodged? How are they formed? How little do they depend upon realities!") and GT I, 18 ("I was in despair. Yet without any change in the external world I suddenly became perfectly happy. My imagination was gay . . . I was pleased with the romantic idea of making love to a Turk").
 - 30. Boswelliana, ed. Charles Rogers (1874), p. 328. Quoted GT II, 219.

Chapter 9 / Laws of Time

- 1. James Boswell, Life of Johnson, ed. G. B. Hill, rev. L. F. Powell, 6 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934), I, 47.
- 2. The Hypochondriack, ed. Margery Bailey, 2 vols. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1928), # LXIV, Jan. 1783, "On Change," II, 245.
- 3. English Autobiography: Its Emergence, Materials, and Form (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954), p. 114.
- 4. For a particularly interesting treatment of this point, see Marie Bonaparte, "Time and the Unconscious," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 21 (1940), 427-468.
- 5. Boswell for the Defence, 1769-1774, ed. William K. Wimsatt, Jr. and Frederick A. Pottle (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959), entry for 14 March 1772, p. 29. Subsequent references will be incorporated in the text.
 - 6. Hypochondriack # LXV, Feb. 1783, "On Time," II, 248.
- 7. "Boswellian Time," Studies in Burke and His Time, 14 (1793), 239-256.

- 8. "Time in Autobiography," unpublished paper.
- 9. Letters of Sigmund Freud, ed. Ernest L. Freud, tr. Tania and James Stern (New York: Basic Books, 1960), #244, To Edward Bernays, 10 Aug. 1929, p. 391.
- 10. For other examples of such comparison, mostly stressing his great moral improvement, see particularly *Boswell for the Defence*, pp. 33, 44, 76, 80, 160, 176.
- 11. Time in Literature (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955), p. 48.
- 12. Time in Literature, p. 27. The abstract nouns in parentheses allude specifically to the title of Goethe's autobiographical Dichtung und Wahrheit.
- 13. See the description of the type in Andrew Wright, Henry Fielding: Mask and Feast (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), p. 157.
- 14. Boswell in Extremes: 1776-1778, ed. Charles McC. Weis and Frederick A. Pottle (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970), entry for 7 July 1776, p. 12.
- 15. Amelia, The Complete Works of Henry Fielding, Esq., ed. William Ernest Henley, vols. VI-VII (New York, 1902), Bk. XI, ch. ii; VII, 249. Subsequent references to this edition, citing book and chapter as well as volume and page, will be incorporated in the text.
 - 16. Time and the Novel (New York: Humanities Press, 1972), p. 63.
- 17. Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon, in Miscellaneous Writings, The Complete Works of Henry Fielding, Esq., ed. William Ernest Henley (New York, 1902), XVI, 183-184.
- 18. For the relation of Amelia to the Aeneid, see, for example, George Sherburn, "Fielding's Amelia: An Interpretation," Fielding: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Ronald Paulson (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1962), pp. 146-157, and Maurice Johnson, Fielding's Art of Fiction (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1961), pp. 139-156. Johnson comments, "By borrowing its structure from the Aeneid, Fielding in Amelia interprets life in terms of literature as well as interpreting literature in terms of life" (p. 171).
- 19. See, for example, Michael Irwin, Henry Fielding, The Tentative Realist (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 122.
- 20. Robert Alter, Fielding and the Nature of the Novel, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 156. Compare Leo Braudy, Narrative Form in History and Fiction: Hume, Fielding & Gibbon (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), p. 202.
- 21. J. Paul Hunter comments on Amelia's shrewdness in avoiding "the masquerade where loss of public identity might easily offer additional incentive to fall." "The Lesson of Amelia," Quick Springs of Sense: Studies in the Eighteenth Century, ed. Larry S. Champion (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1974), p. 162. Robert Alter, more generally, remarks that "it is almost inevitable that the central rite of such a society should be a masquerade." Fielding and the Nature of the Novel, p. 155.
- 22. J. Paul Hunter refers to this timelessness and also alludes in passing to "the insistent time of the later books." "The Lesson of Amelia," p. 158.

- 23. Letter from Anne Donnellen to Samuel Richardson, 11 Feb. 1752, Henry Fielding: The Critical Heritage, ed. Ronald Paulson and Thomas Lockwood (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 319.
- 24. Letter from Lady Orrery to Lord Orrery, 6 Jan. 1752, Henry Fielding: The Critical Heritage, p. 311.
 - 25. "Fielding's Amelia," p. 151.
- 26. "The comic writer leans upon the conviction that character is static." Wright, Henry Fielding: Mask and Feast, p. 158.
- 27. Andrew Wright sees Fielding's retreat from the aesthetic as an index of his relative novelistic failure in *Amelia*, which Wright describes as "the work of a Christian fatalist who was losing his faith in art." *Henry Fielding: Mask and Feast*, p. 50. Later (pp. 108-109) he remarks that by giving up the introductory chapters of commentary characteristic of *Tom Jones*, Fielding "has made the status of this novel as a work of art uneasy, uncertain, and even ambiguous." The matter seems to me a good deal more complicated than these statements suggest.
- 28. Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature (New York: Doubleday, 1957), p. 434.
- 29. Robert Alter points out that "marriage is conceived as the basic institution of both private life and Christian society . . . so that the prevalent neglect, violation, and loveless manipulation of marriage become measures of the failure of Christian values in society at large." Fielding and the Nature of the Novel, p. 150. C. J. Rawson notes the pervasive feeling in Amelia "of a cruel divorce between social institutions and the human purposes which they theoretically serve." "Nature's Dance of Death," Eighteenth-Century Studies, 3 (1970), 497. Other commentators, noting the new, serious importance of society in this novel, have remarked also the confusion of responsibility between society and the individual. See, for example, Hunter, "The Lesson of Amelia," p. 173, and Irwin, Henry Fielding, The Tentative Realist, p. 119.
 - 30. The Hypochondriack, no. XLIII, April 1781, "On Marriage"; II, 69.
 - 31. Braudy, Narrative Form, p. 201.
- 32. "The Memorable Scenes of Mr. Boswell," Encounter, 28 (May, 1967), 77.

Chapter 10 / Selfhood, Given and Formed

- 1. "Mode in Narrative Poetry," To Tell a Story: Narrative Theory and Practice (Los Angeles: Clark Library, 1973), p. 29.
- 2. Frederick Lewis Allen, "One Day in History," quoted by Wayne Shumaker, English Autobiography: Its Emergence, Materials, and Form (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954), p. 45.
- 3. "Defoe, Richardson, Joyce, and the Concept of Form in the Novel," in William Matthews and Ralph Rader, Autobiography, Biography, and the Novel (Los Angeles: Clark Library, 1973), p. 34.

Titles of literary works are indexed under the names of their authors. Major treatments of authors or texts are indicated by italic page references.

Addison, Joseph, 231, 239, 240, 241; quoted, 29
Adelstein, Michael, 187
Algarotti, Francesco, 85, 86
Alkon, Paul, 267
Alpers, Paul, quoted, 300
Auerbach, Erich, quoted, 284
Austen, Jane, 7, 61, 89, 175, 176;
Emma, 7

Baker, Ernest, quoted, 159 Barker, Jane, 66, 90, 176, 177; quoted, 59, 63; A Patch-Work Screen for the Ladies, 66-69, 70, 71 Barlow, Thomas, 164 Barrett, Charlotte, 159 Berkeley, George, 3; quoted, 2, 21 Boswell, James, 247, 303, 309, 310, 314; quoted, 13, 16; concern with inner life, 24, 308; self-invention, 20-21, 213, 243, 306 Hypochondriack, The, 257, 265 Journals, 227-242, 254-263, 264-274, 285-289, 293-299; control as theme in Boswell in Holland, 255-257; imagination in Boswell for the Defence, 270-272; imagination in

260; imagination in Boswell on the Grand Tour, II, 261-262; imagination in Boswell's London Journal, 231-232; law in Boswell for the Defence, 292-296; marriage in Boswell for the Defence, 286-289; "plot" in the journals, 228-230; sense of self in Boswell on the Grand Tour, I, 260-261; success and failure in Boswell for the Defence, 296-299; time in Boswell for the Defence, 265-270 Life of Johnson, 265 Boyd, Elizabeth, quoted, 58, 59 Braudy, Leo, quoted, 288 Brown, Homer, quoted, 38 Buffon, Georges, 117, 118 Burney, Charles, 164, 166, 170, 173-174 Burney, Fanny, 16, 23, 158-192, 219; conflict with society as theme, 89; interest in external, 24, 314; on fiction, 7, 310; relation of fiction and autobiography, 189-192; reveals feminine strategies, 25, 168-169 Camilla, 181-182, 184, 191

Cecilia, 176, 181, 184, 190

Boswell on the Grand Tour, I. 258-

Diary and Letters, 160-175; dependency as subject, 173-174; form in, 174-175; identity in, 169-170, 173; importance of fear in, 158-160, 162-166, 167-168; marriage as subject, 170-173; virtue as theme, 161-162, 166-167, 227, 228

Evelina, 1, 165, 176-181, 188, 303, 307; as autobiography, 180-181; choices of fear in, 179-180; identity in, 11; prudence as theme, 178; realism of, 7; social position as issue, 9

The Wanderer, 176, 183-188, 189; obstacles to independence in, 185-186; relation of individual to society in, 183-184

Burney, Sarah, 165-166

Charke, Charlotte, 87, 88, 174, 303: as daughter, 15, 75-76; lack of accomplishment, 73, 81-83; marriage, 84 Charlotte, Queen, 166, 167, 168, 171 Cibber, Colley, 20, 232, 300, 309, 312; glorification of follies, 15, 25, 301, 308; resemblance to Boswell, 257; sense of necessity, 213

Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber, 194, 199-208, 218-223, 224-226; autobiography as defense, 17; hidden weakness in, 224-225; incoherence as ordering principle of, 203-204; lack of reference to feeling, 24, 310; sense of audience in, 140, 218-223; "truth" of, 199-201; vanity as theme, 201-203, 206-207

Cowper, William, 20, 88, 109, 193, 233, 308

Memoir, 40-55; conventions of spiritual autobiography, 29, 40-41, 91, 92; depression and isolation as themes, 44-46, 264; first suicide attempt described, 48-51; passivity as theme, 52-54, 72, 99, 305; problem of control in, 41-43; relation to God as theme, 17, 47, 78, 301; structure of narrative, 24, 54-55

Crane, Ronald, quoted, 228-229 Crisp, Samuel, 161, 164 Curchod, Suzanne, 115, 119, 121; Gibbon's accounts of, 103, 105, 111, 113; Gibbon's love for, 98

D'Arblay, Alexandre-Jean-Baptiste, 160, 171-172, 189 Darwin, Charles, 24, 98 · Defoe, Daniel, 26, 57, 310, 311 Moll Flanders, 1, 9, 10, 11, 20 Robinson Crusoe, 11, 28-39, 127, 193, 303, 312; as spiritual autobiography, 28-29, 38-39, 44, 53, 92, 305; fear as subject, 33-35, 88; imagination in, 29-33, 37-38, 41-43, 49, 55, 233; love as subject, 35-36; relation to reality, 36-37, 46-47, 61, 248, 307; self and others in, 45, 50, 51, 309 Deutsch, Helene, quoted, 19 Digges, West, 213, 239, 240 Donovan, Robert Alan, quoted, 215 Downs, Brian W., quoted, 194

Eliot, George, 24, 25; *Middlemarch*, 8-9
Elliott, Robert C., quoted, 100

Farber, Leslie, quoted, 131
Fielding, Henry, 12, 23, 57, 89, 302, 314; asserts stability, 16; attitude toward external, 24; attitude toward readers, 304, 310; on artifice, 6, 11, 195; on Cibber, 232, 301

Amelia, 270, 274-293, 296-299, 305, 307, 309; law in, 289-293; marriage in, 286-289; novelist's role in, 283-285; success and failure in, 296-299; time and memory in, 264-265, 275-282

Joseph Andrews, 1; quoted, 195, 218, 223

Tom Jones, 10, 90, 154, 242-254, 309, 314; author's thematic involvement, 250-252, 261; comic perspective of, 285; concentration on youth, 230; identity in, 1, 8, 20, 289; imagination as source of value in, 248-250, 262-263; imagination making characters ridiculous, 247-248, 306; imagination of money, 244-246; importance of events in, 303; involvement of reader, 250; life and art in, 253-254; realism of, 6, 7; unchangeability in, 7, 9

Fluchère, Henri, quoted, 136 Folkenflik, Robert, quoted, 98, 194

Fontenelle, Bernard, 117, 118 Freud, Sigmund, 22, 72, 203, 254; quoted, 71, 268 Frye, Northrop, 21; quoted, 18 Fussell, Paul, quoted, 294

Gibbon, Edward, 24, 91, 128, 129, 303, 304; belief in logic, 148; desire for admiration, 155; need for directness, 149

Autobiographies, 92-126; as expression of selfhood, 312, 313-314; attitude toward father in, 25, 96-97, 98-99, 105, 219; fact and fiction in, 1, 2, 93-94, 109-110, 150, 154, 301; freedom as issue in, 105-109, 114-117; identity through vocation in, 17-18, 21, 101-104, 134, 309; Memoir A, 95-96; Memoir B, 96-104; Memoir C, 104-109; Memoir D, 111-113; Memoir E, 113-119; Memoir F, 119-125; metaphor of procreation in, 145; struggle for form in, 26, 92-93, 94-95, 125-126, 127, 310

Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, 103, 106, 108, 111-112, 113, 116

Gilman, Richard, quoted, 18 Goffman, Erving, quoted, 100 Golden, Morris, quoted, 209 Goldknopf, David, quoted, 228 Gosse, Edmund, 24 Graves, Robert, 24 Gray, Thomas, 123 Guiffardière, Charles de, 160, 168-169

Halsband, Robert, 85; quoted, 86 Hardwick, Elizabeth, quoted, 197 Hart, Francis, quoted, 54 Hartley, David, 11, 12, 21; quoted, 4, 5 Harvey, W. J., guoted, 129 Hellman, Lillian, 24 Hemlow, Joyce, 159, 176, 188 Holland, Norman, quoted, 42 Holz, William, quoted, 133 Hume, David, 11, 17, 303; deathbed interview, 274; Gibbon's resemblance to, 118; on identity, 3-4; on memory and imagination, 3-4; quoted, 2, 10 Autobiography, 13-15, 19, 20-21,

24, 193; claim of necessity in, 213; explanations in, 313; imagined readership, 219

Jefferson, D. W., quoted, 128 Johnson, Samuel, quoted, 5, 204; Boswell's ideal, 213, 242; Boswell's rendition of, 231, 234, 314; denies original genius, 99; on fancy, 12; on fiction, 11; on objective world, 11; relation with Boswell, 237, 241, 262, 271, 272; to Mrs. Thrale, 73

Kazin, Alfred, quoted, 43, 110 Kearney, A. M., quoted, 194

Leavis, F. R., 24, 25; quoted, 23 Lennox, Charlotte, 90; quoted, 58, 64; Euphemia, 64-65, 72, 88 Locke, John, 3, 42; quoted, 2, 21

Mack, John E., quoted, 135 Mack, Maynard, quoted, 243 Macpherson, James, 239 Mandel, Barrett John, quoted, 40 Marcus, Steven, quoted, 203 Mayoux, Jean-Jacques, quoted, 146-147 McCarthy, Mary, 19 Mendilow, A. A., quoted, 10, 275 Meyerhoff, Hans, quoted, 269 Mill, John Stuart, 24 Montagu, Lady Mary Wortley, 83, 88, 89, 90, 313; attitude toward learning, 79-80, 82; attitude toward passion, 84-86; identity through relationship, 73-74, 77-78 Montague, Edwine, and Louis Martz, quoted, 159

Morris, John, quoted, 47

Nabokov, Vladimir, 19

Pascal, Roy, quoted, 13, 15, 44, 93 Phillips, Susanna, 167, 190 Pike, Burton, 268 Pilkington, Laetitia, 17, 73, 78, 83, 90, 314

Memoir, attitude toward learning in, 80-81, 82; fictional aspect of, 2, 303, 311; prose creating significance.

16, 86-87; relation to husband, 15, 88; relation to parents, 75, 77, 84; unmastered conflict in, 174
Pope, Alexander, 96, 301; quoted, 207
Preston, John, quoted, 134
Price, Martin, quoted, 142-143

Rader, Ralph, quoted, 302 Reid, B. L., quoted, 194 Reid, John, 273-274, 293, 294, 295 Reid, Thomas, quoted, 3 Reynolds, Sir Joshua, 99 Richardson, Samuel, 12, 16, 23, 57, 89, 314

Clarissa, 1, 8, 11, 16, 73 Pamela, 24, 154, 193-199, 208-218, 223-226, 314; clothing in, 216-218; concerned with moments, 16; form of, 225-226, 313; hidden aggression in, 224-225; identity in, 11, 18, 20, 28, 227; imagination in, 306-307; novelist's imagination in, 243; relation of individual to society in, 9, 213-216, 310; sense of audience, 208-210, 218; sense of story, 13, 197-199, 257, 261; use of language in, 196-197, 210-213; wish-fulfillment in, 303 Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, 260-261, 262 Rowson, Susannah, quoted, 60; Charlotte Temple, 90

Santayana, George, quoted, 146
Schafer, Roy, quoted, 12
Schliemann, Heinrich, 18
Shapiro, Steven, quoted, 99-100, 125
Sheffield, John Holroyd, Lord, 94, 124
Sherburn, George, 281; quoted, 209
Shumaker, Wayne, quoted, 265
Smollett, Tobias, 9, 12; Humphry
Clinker, 11; Peregrine Pickle, 1
Spender, Stephen, quoted, 100

Stauffer, Donald, quoted, 26, 93
Steele, Sir Richard, 239, 240
Sterne, Laurence, 23, 57, 89, 314

Tristram Shandy, 127-157, 158, 268, 300, 309, 312; history as subject, 146-151; imagination as subject, 129-131, 134-135, 307; language as subject, 143-146; problem of control in, 126, 127-129; 133-134, 227, 305; reader of, 139-143, 304; selfhood in, 10-11, 82, 151-153, 193; sexuality as theme, 103, 131-133; struggle for form in, 26, 92, 135-139, 153-157, 303; unchangeability of character in, 7, 8

Thomson, David, quoted, 139
Thrale, Hester, 16, 73, 83, 174, 303; quoted, 74, 75; and Fanny Burney, 165, 191; desire to assert importance, 21; on life of mind, 78-79; on women's power, 87; relation with parents, 73-75, 84, 219; resentment, 82, 88, 308
Trillian Lineal guarded, 18

Trilling, Lionel, quoted, 18 Tuveson, Ernest, quoted, 31

Voltaire, 261

Watt, Ian, 35; quoted, 175
Wollstonecraft, Mary, 88, 183; as feminist, 66; attitude toward marriage, 69, 71, 90; passivity of heroines, 76
Maria, or The Wrongs of Women, 71

Mary: A Fiction, 66, 69-71 Vindication of the Rights of Women, 66; quoted, 183 Woolf, Virginia, quoted, 174-175 Wright, Andrew, quoted, 243