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Tom Jones, Joseph Andrews, and The Canterbury Tales:
Parallels in the Comic Genius of Henry Fielding and Geoffrey Chaucer

A thesis
presented to
the faculty of the Department of Literature and Language
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts in English

by
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May 2016

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ABSTRACT

Tom Jones, Joseph Andrews, and The Canterbury Tales:

Parallels in the Comic Genius of Henry Fielding and Geoffrey Chaucer

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The parallels between the works of Geoffrey Chaucer and Henry Fielding are very striking. Both authors produced some of the greatest works in English literature, yet very little scholarly investigation has been done regarding these two in relationship with one another. In this work I explore the characters of Chaucer's Parson and Parson Adams, assessing their strengths and weaknesses through pastoral guides by Gregory the Great and George Herbert, while drawing additional conclusions from John Dryden. I examine the episodic, theatrical nature of both authors' works, along with the inclusion of fabliau throughout. Finally, I look at the shared motif of knight-errant in the works of both authors and the motion employed throughout the tales as travel narratives. By examining these authors' works, I contend that Fielding masterfully employs many of Chaucer's literary techniques in his own tales, crafting them to work specifically for the eighteenth-century novel and its audience.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	2
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	4
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	6
2. CHAUCER'S PARSON AND PARSON ADAMS.....	9
The Medieval Parish Priest.....	10
The Eighteenth-Century Parish Priest.....	14
3. THE EPISODIC NARRATIVE STRUCTURE.....	21
Parallel Lives.....	21
Narrative Voice and Theatrics.....	24
4. THE KNIGHT-ERRANT.....	35
Chivalry.....	35
The Quixotic Journey.....	41
5. CONCLUSION.....	43
WORKS CITED.....	48
VITA.....	52

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The parallels between the works of Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1343-1400) and Henry Fielding (1704-1754) are very striking. Both authors produced some of the greatest works in English literature, yet very little scholarly investigation has been done regarding these two in relationship with one another. In examining these authors' works, I contend that Fielding masterfully employed many of Chaucer's literary techniques in his own tales, crafting them to work specifically for the eighteenth-century novel. In this work, I explore the characters of Chaucer's Parson and Parson Adams, the episodic nature of *The Canterbury Tales* and *Tom Jones*, and the character of Tom Jones as knight errant.

In chapter two I explore Fielding's satirical novel, *Joseph Andrews*, and the strong connection between Parson Adams and Chaucer's Parson from the *Canterbury Tales*. First, I examine the general concept of an ideal parish priest in fourteenth and eighteenth-century England. Using Pope Gregory the Great's (c. 540-604) *Book of Pastoral Rule* and George Herbert's (1593-1633) influential instructional text, *The Country Parson*, I argue that both Chaucer's Parson and Parson Adams conform to the ideals of a good priest. In addition to Gregory and Herbert's treatises, I will also look at John Dryden's (1631-1700) poetical work, "The Character of a Good Parson, Imitated from Chaucer and Enlarged," from his *Fables Ancient and Modern*. Here, too, are striking similarities between Parson Adams and Chaucer's Parson. There also exists a conspicuous human capacity in both Parsons. Not only are they both moral men—in contrast to the frequent allusions to hypocrisy amongst the clergy in literature of both periods—but they are also pragmatic in dealing with fallen man, with whom they identify.

These traveling parsons are much like the knight-errant, frequently stopping to help those in need or battle evil, but always working towards their final goals.

In chapter three I move into Fielding's *Tom Jones* and its relationship to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. Structurally, the most obvious connection between these two texts is their episodic nature. After demonstrating the episodic nature of *Canterbury Tales*, I return to Dryden's *Fables Ancient and Modern*, and the significance of Chaucer to English literature. This transitions into a detailed look at the episodic nature of *Tom Jones*—along with *Joseph Andrews*—and an exposition of the methods employed by both authors in their narratives. In addition to an episodic structure, the inclusion of fabliau in both works is another unifying factor. While setting and characters are different, Chaucer's fabliaux—the Merchant, Reeve, Miller, and Shipman—and Fielding's fabliaux—Tom Jones and Mrs. Waters and Parson Adams's "curious Night Adventures"—add a new layer of comedy to both works, incorporating cuckoldry and incest (290).

In chapter four I look specifically at the character of Tom Jones and his function as a knight-errant. Starting with Chaucer's Knight and the medieval notion of the knight-errant as defined by scholars and medieval authorities, I expand this to include the Knight's son, the Squire, who shares many traits with Tom Jones. Like the Squire, Jones is handsome, honorable, and inexperienced. Moreover, Tom Jones specifically performs one of the most important deeds of the knight: rescuing damsels in distress (Sophia and Mrs. Waters). Like so many knights-errant in medieval romances, the hero quickly becomes the lover, yet Tom, like any good knight, is ultimately devoted to his lady and true love: Sophia. The happy ending in *Tom Jones*, thus, reflects the happy ending of the romance where the knight and his lady live happily ever after.

The parallels in the works and lives of Geoffrey Chaucer and Henry Fielding are significant, yet something that critics seldom point out. By examining Chaucer's Parson and Parson Adams as ideal members of the clergy; the episodic nature of *Canterbury Tales*, *Tom Jones*, and *Joseph Andrews*; and, the ideals of chivalry represented in these works, it is my argument that Fielding employs and transforms Chaucer's literary techniques and character types to fit the needs of the eighteenth-century English audience, demonstrating his own authorial prowess and the timelessness of these literary tropes.

CHAPTER 2

CHAUCER'S PARSON AND PARSON ADAMS

One of the most frequently satirized figures in English literature is the priest. He is often depicted as being either hypocritical, prudish, out of touch with reality, or some combination of these three. He can be seen as a predator, a philanderer, a zealous Puritan, an awkward bookworm, or a benign old man. Given the tumultuous history of the English church, these literary stereotypes are not surprising, yet there are two figures who defy these common parodies and are portrayed as being as rich and complex as any other character created by their respective authors: Geoffrey Chaucer's Parson and Henry Fielding's Parson Adams.

In order to give a proper estimation of these characters' beneficent traits, it is first necessary to have a standard by which to judge them. For Chaucer's medieval Parson, Gregory the Great's *Book of Pastoral Rule* is the seminal text on this subject for the middle ages and England in particular. For Fielding's Anglican parson, George Herbert's *The Priest to His Temple, or, The Country Parson: His Character, and Rule of Holy Life* offers much of the same advice but is particularly concerned with the duties and way of life for post-Reformation English clerics, ideas which are echoed by John Dryden and applied to Chaucer in "The Character of a Good Parson, Imitated from Chaucer and Enlarged." First, I will provide a brief exposition of the respective clerical guidebooks, followed by analyses of the characters in question, namely Chaucer's Parson and Parson Adams. By examining these characters in the light of the standards given by these religious texts, I contend that both are ideal representations of the country parson and share many traits in common despite a difference of over three-hundred years in their composition.

The Medieval Parish Priest

Gregory the Great's (c. 540-604) *Book of Pastoral Rule* is one of the most influential books of pastoral instruction in the middle ages and was especially important in the English church. James Barmby, in his preface to his translation of Gregory's work, notes that "It appears to have been taken to England by the Monk Augustine" whose missionary work led to the conversion of the isle to Christianity (xxxix). In addition to dispatching the mission to convert England to Christianity, Gregory later directed the formation of what F. M. Stenton, in *The Oxford History of England*, terms, "a code for the government of a new ecclesiastical province," including Canterbury's seat of prominence for Christian England (2.106). The work's continued influence, Barmby notes, "is asserted by Alfred the Great, who, nearly three hundred years afterwards, with the assistance of his divines, made a translation . . . of it in the West Saxon tongue, intending, as he says, to send a copy to every bishop in his Kingdom" (xxxix). The "high repute" of Gregory's treatise was virtually universal in the Western church, "it being the best of its kind, and profitable for all ages," making it the standard by which any priest or bishop would be measured (xxxix-xxxix).

Gregory the Great first emphasizes the knowledge one needs in order to execute the office of the priesthood. He asserts that "No one presumes to teach an art till he has first, with intent meditation, learnt it. What rashness is it, then, for the unskilled to assume pastoral authority, since the government of the souls is the art of arts!" (1). Just as an apprentice must first study under the master, so must a priest study before discharging his important office as the overseer of men's "souls" (1). In addition to mental preparation, the priest must be a model of the virtuous life. The influence of the parson's day-to-day actions is a powerful example for his congregation. Gregory argues passionately that "That man, therefore, ought by all means to be

drawn with cords to be an example of good living who already lives spiritually, dying to all passions of the flesh; who disregards worldly prosperity; who is afraid of no adversity; who desires only inward wealth; whose intention the body, in good accord with it, thwarts not at all by its frailness” (7). The parson’s holy living is a twofold process. Not only must he be an example of morality, eschewing the “lust of the flesh” and “the lust of the eyes,” as the apostle John contends, but he must also be aware of the threat to his testimony through the “pride of life” or worldly goods (I John 2:16). The commandment for Christians to serve the poor and avoid the temptations of wealth is a significant theme in the gospels; therefore, it is especially important that the priest be a living example for his congregation to follow (cf. Matthew 25:40, 19:24), for “The conduct of a prelate ought so far to transcend the conduct of the people as the life of a shepherd is wont to exalt him above the flock” (9). The imagery of the priest as a shepherd and overseer is important, yet he should also be empathetic towards the needs and suffering of his congregation. Again, this function as role model is emphasized by Gregory, who argues that “The ruler should be a near neighbor to everyone in sympathy, and exalted above all in contemplation” (12). He cannot simply go through the motions of the priesthood; rather, he must be devout in mind as much as in body. Before getting into the specifics of priestly admonitions for very distinct types and classes of people, Gregory explains how the parson must confront the sins of others, arguing that he

should be, through humility, a companion of good livers, and through the zeal of righteousness, rigid against the vices of evil-doers; so that in nothing he prefer himself to the good, and yet, when the fault of the bad requires it, he be at once conscious of the power of his priority; to the end that, while among his

subordinates who live well, he waves his rank and accounts them as his equals, he may not fear to execute the laws of rectitude towards the perverse. (14)

The priest is equal in station to each individual in his congregation. Whether they are rich or poor, the priest must confront the sins of the people whose souls he is accountable for to God. Moreover, as noted in part two of Gregory's discourse, each type of person (based on gender, personality, class, age, etc.) must be dealt with in a manner suitable for that individual. The priest must also be especially aware of the sin of simony, corrupting his own testimony in return for material goods from rich congregants. Church corruption is a theme repeatedly addressed during Chaucer's time by the Lollards, or followers of John Wycliffe, with whom Chaucer and his patron, John of Gaunt, were familiar (Pearsall 182-183).

Chaucer's "Parson's Tale" is unique to *The Canterbury Tales* in several respects: it is the last tale in both the narrative chronology and the manuscripts; it is not a story but a sermon; and, it is followed directly by a retraction of all works written by the author that are not pleasing to his Creator. Larry Scanlon, in his essay on Chaucer from *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Literature: 1100-1500*, notes that "the trope of pilgrimage enables Chaucer to bring together a wide variety of narrators and narrative perspectives" and "suggests a specific interest in the penitential, a suggestion reinforced by the collection's final tale, the *Parson's Tale*, a penitential manual, and the Retraction" (173). All three estates—the Church, the nobility, and the commons—are brought together through their pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Thomas á Becket, and the religious nature of the tales is never lost, even in the fabliau of the Miller. The narrator's description of the Parson in the "General Prologue" to *The Canterbury Tales* is demonstrated negatively. That is, rather than praising his virtues, the narrator lists the vices which the Parson does not practice—thereby implicating the other members of the clergy. The

narrator begins depicting the Parson by categorizing him as “a povre Persoun of a Toun,/ But riche he was of hooly thoght and werk./ He was also a lerned man, a clerk” (A 478-480). The description of the Parson immediately sets him apart from the other representatives of the clergy on the pilgrimage, such as the aristocratic and aloof Monk, the dainty and well-mannered—not to mention rich—Prioress, the fraudulent Pardoner, and the lecherous Friar. The narrator notes that the Parson is a devout teacher who is diligent, patient, and generous with his own tithes to the poor people of his parish (B 481-490). He is also no respecter of persons, braving foul weather and sickness to visit both the great and small in his “Wyd . . . parisshe” with its “houses fer asunder” (B 491-495). He clearly goes out of his way to serve each person in his parish. Yet the most profound and revealing statement about the Parson’s character is the narrator’s disclosure of the Parson’s own philosophy as a priest. He claims:

that if gold ruste, what shal iren do?

For if a preest be foul, on whom we truste,

No wonder is a lewed man to rust;

And shame it is, if a prest take keep,

A shiten shepherde and a clene sheep.

Wel oghte a preest ensample for to yive,

By his clenness, how that his sheep sholde lyve. (A 499-506)

There is a direct connection between the pastoral philosophy of the Parson and the philosophy set forth by Gregory the Great in his *Book of Pastoral Rule*. The Parson holds himself accountable as a standard of morality and charity, arguing that if his flock goes astray and becomes corrupt, the blame lies with him as the ultimate model of Christian living they have to imitate. His self-accountability is further elaborated by the narrator, who explains that he

chooses not go to London to seek a comfortable position amongst the city clergy while leaving his flock prey to “the wolf” (A 513). Instead of seeking advancement, he is faithful to his duty as caretaker of the souls he has been called to protect (A 513). And, even though he is a holy man, “he was to sinful men nat despitous,/ Ne of his speche daungerous ne digne,” drawing “folk to hevене by fairnesse,/ By good ensample” (A 516-520). He understands human nature and its weaknesses and reproves sinners by example of his own devout lifestyle rather than through public scorn or judgment—he is faithful to the gospel and the priesthood while also being pragmatic and empathetic. Then, after praising the Parson for being compassionate and unpretentious, the narrator concludes with, “A better preest I trowe that nowher noon ys” (A 524). William Kamowski, in “Chaucer and Wyclif: God’s Miracles Against the Clergy’s Magic,” observes that “Chaucer, like Wyclif, represents the greater importance and efficacy of the righteous individual’s knowledge, strength, and resolve” (20-21). For the fourteenth-century, Chaucer’s Parson is the model parish priest by which all others are judged, for his devout life emulates both the Gospel and the directions in Pope Gregory’s treatise on *Pastoral Rule*. The popularity of Gregory’s instructions would continue until the English reformation.

The Eighteenth-Century Parish Priest

One of the most influential post-Reformation texts on the nature of a good parish priest is George Herbert’s (1593-1633) *The Country Parson*. Published after Herbert’s death in 1633, *The Country Parson* resolves “to set down the Form and Character of a true Pastor” to those who dwell in the English countryside (54). Herbert, himself a rural priest in the Church of England (28), describes the ideal country parson as a man who “is exceeding exact in his Life, being holy, just, prudent, temperate, bold, grave in all his ways” (56). Like Gregory the Great, Herbert argues that a country parson must especially be able to identify and sympathize with the people

of his flock. He asserts that “because Country people live hardly, and therefore as feeling their own sweat, and consequently knowing the price of money, are offended much with any, who by hard usage increase their travail” (57). Because country people earn their living through difficult farm work, a good parson avoids “all covetousness, neither being greedy to get, nor niggardly to keep, nor troubled to lose any worldly wealth” (57). As with Chaucer’s Parson, how a priest handles his own money is important since his income is derived from parish tithes; moreover, “because Luxury is a very visible sin, the Parson is very careful to avoid all the kinds thereof, but especially that of drinking, because it is the most popular vice” (57). A pastor who indulges in the vice of drunkenness cannot be a moral example to his flock who, as Herbert suggests, struggles with this sin.

The standard of morality set by Herbert includes, above all, the parson’s honor as a man of his word. Herbert asserts that “because Country people (as indeed all honest men) do much esteem their word, it being the Life of buying, and selling, and dealing in the world; therefore the Parson is very strict in keeping his word” (57). These three ideal traits are not only based on Christian ethics, but they are also based upon the lives of the people to whom the parson ministers. Much of Herbert’s advice echoes that of *The Book of Pastoral Rule*, yet its originality is obvious in its specific rural audience, its distinct English setting, and its post-Reformation—Renaissance—worldview of significantly de-centralized church power. In addition to this, Herbert’s treatise is also more introspective than Gregory the Great’s. Of special relevance to Chaucer and Fielding is Herbert’s note on the parson’s travels. Even outside of his home, “The Country Parson, when a just occasion calleth him out of his Parish . . . leaveth not his Ministry behind him; but is himself wherever he is” (78). A Parson’s work is never done, and to act differently outside of his parish would be blatant hypocrisy at best. His true character transcends

location and is unchanging, whether he is on a pilgrimage to Canterbury or on a journey to London.

John Dryden (1631-1700), one of the great poets of the Restoration, appropriates Chaucer's description of the Parson in *Fables Ancient and Modern*, published the year of his death in 1700. Here Dryden translates the Middle English and adds his own embellishments, only heightening the Parson's righteous character. There are very few literary assessments of Chaucer in Restoration and eighteenth-century literature (and even fewer positive ones).

Dryden's work is important because it shows Chaucer's continued influence on English literature and the special place of the parson as an ideal for his profession. In "The Character of a Good Parson, Imitated from Chaucer and Enlarged," the narrator presents a detailed account of the Parson's holy way of life, claiming that

The proud he tamed, the penitent he cheered,
Nor to rebuke the rich offender feared.
His preaching much, but more his practice wrought
(A living sermon of the truths he taught). (75-78)

Chaucer's fourteenth-century Parson is no different in eighteenth-century garb. He is still a humane character—identifying with the people of his flock—whose life itself is a sermon. Additionally, the Parson's moral responsibility (of rebuke and exhortation) is not lessened, for rich and poor, strong and weak, will all face rebuke accordingly for their sins. The narrator also argues that

Now, through the land, his cure of souls he stretched,
And like a primitive apostle preached.
Still cheerful, ever constant to his call,

By many followed, loved by most, admired by all. (27-30)

The Parson is like a physician in healing souls and like an apostle in the power and simplicity of his sermons, yet he does not have a dour or mournful disposition. Instead, he exudes cheerfulness and dependability, receiving love and admiration from his parishioners. There is an innocence in the country parson's devout life and cheerful demeanor, yet he is experienced with people and their day-to-day problems in both the temporal and spiritual realms.

The generalized ideal character of a country parson is brought to life in Henry Fielding's novel *Joseph Andrews*. The novel is a fascinating work in its story, centering around the title character and the journeys and trials he faces with his friend and companion, Parson Adams. Critical to appreciating the story are the parallels that exist between the characters of Parson Adams and Chaucer's Parson. Claude Rawson's essay on Fielding from *The Cambridge Companion to the Eighteenth-Century Novel* claims that "*Joseph Andrews* in particular not only offers in the somewhat inconspicuous Fanny a counterpart to Fielding's view of Pamelaic innocence, but places its male hero in the Pamelaic and traditionally feminine role of defending his chastity against an upper-class seducer" (128). One of the key sections of Chaucer's Parson's sermon is an exposition on lechery in its place as one of the Seven Deadly Sins. While women, in these treatises, are typically singled out as vulnerable to a man's advances, the Parson discusses temptations to "men and wommen," noting that women may also play the role of seducer (X 910). Not only are innocent female virgins at risk of losing their virtue, but innocent male virgins are also vulnerable to the temptations of the opposite sex.

In a dangerous world where so much is at risk, it is important that Joseph Andrews is accompanied by Parson Adams in the face of so many moral temptations. Fielding's preface to *Joseph Andrews* concludes with a special note singling out the character of Parson Adams.

Besides playing the role of shepherd looking after a wandering lamb, Fielding asserts that “As to the character of *Adams*, as it is the most glaring in the whole, so I conceive it is not to be found in any Book now extant. It is designed a Character of perfect Simplicity; and as the goodness of his Heart will recommend him to the Good-natur’d” (9). Parson Adams is not just an ideal parson, but an ideal character—and person—in general. Fielding even apologizes to the clergy for Adams’s adventures on the road but admits that “no other Office could have given him so many Opportunities of displaying his worthy Inclinations” (9). It is only through Parson Adams’s goodness that the clergy risks being the subject of satire. Just as Chaucer’s Parson is extolled for the vices he does not practice, suggesting that this is what the other members of the clergy do, Parson Adams’s goodness is revealed in the contrast he has with his peers.

The narrator’s introduction to Parson Adams presents a cleric in complete conformity with Herbert’s ideal. He introduces “MR. *Abraham Adams*” as “an excellent Scholar” who “had applied many Years to the most severe Study, and had treasured up a Fund of Learning rarely to be met with in a University” (19). Parson Adams, though, is not a scholar locked behind the doors of his study, for “He was besides a Man of good Sense, good Parts, and good Nature; but was at the same time as entirely ignorant of the ways of this World, as an Infant just entered into it could possibly be” (19). Adams is intelligent but has not, as the narrator suggests, been corrupted by university learning.

Like Chaucer’s Parson, Parson Adams is innocent of the worldliness and corruption that plague other members of the clergy, especially those from the city. His honesty is also a striking characteristic, “As he had never any Intention to deceive, so he never suspected such a Design in others. He was generous, friendly and brave to an Excess; but Simplicity was his Characteristic” (19). While some might argue that this is a fault, this innocence only serves to paint a contrast of

the Parson with the other members of the clergy. Parson Adams's chief concern is the well-being of others, even if he himself must suffer loss. As he says later, "For tho' I am a poor Parson, I will be bold to say, I am an honest Man, and would not do an ill Thing to be made a Bishop: Nay, tho' it hath not fallen in my way to offer so noble a sacrifice, I have not been without Opportunities of suffering for the sake of my Conscience" (115). Like Chaucer's Parson, Adams will neither neglect his parishioners nor his own conscience to advance in the Church, for he is going to London only in the hopes of having his sermons published to support his large family and parish. Adams is also able to master his own strength and passions, demonstrating bravery, in defending the chastity of a young woman, and humility, by walking away from a rude and provoking clergyman, Trulliber (120-121, 146). Countless other examples could be included from the novel, which only serve to extol Adams's honorable character; and, needless to say, these virtues expounded by Herbert all reflect those outlined previously by Gregory the Great in his *Book of Pastoral Rule*: Parson Adams is a model for the eighteenth-century as well as for the fourteenth-century.

Joseph Andrews offers a distinctive view of the country parson. Rather than fitting the stereotypical molds of prude or hypocrite, Parson Adams is a sincere man of the cloth who fulfills his duty towards his flock, while recognizing the weakness of human nature—his own included. The travels of the Parson and Joseph Andrews throughout the English countryside take on another layer of significance when considered alongside the travels of Geoffrey Chaucer's pilgrims in *The Canterbury Tales*. Not only do the texts incorporate the motion of the travel narrative with the episodic nature of multiple tales or incidents, but both include a country parson as a central character. Like Parson Adams, Chaucer's Parson is upright without being moralistic and human without being licentious. Although separated by over three hundred years, the

parallels to *The Canterbury Tales* embodied in *Joseph Andrews* suggests a strong connection between both authors, both parsons, and both works.

CHAPTER 3

THE EPISODIC NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

Henry Fielding's novel *Tom Jones* offers a vivid episodic narrative, populated with diverse characters and filled with comedic instances. The travels and incidents surrounding Tom Jones throughout the English countryside take on a special layer of significance when considered alongside the travels of Geoffrey Chaucer's pilgrims in *The Canterbury Tales*. Not only do the texts incorporate the motion of the travel narrative with the episodic nature of multiple tales or incidents, but both include examples of irony and insinuating narrative gaps. To further illuminate parallels in these authors' narratives, I discuss the similarities in the lives of Geoffrey Chaucer and Henry Fielding, the episodic nature of both works, the function of the narrator, the function of irony, and parallels in the conclusions of the two works. While these major works are separated by three centuries of change in language and society, I argue that the parallels in the two works are essential to understanding Fielding's novel. In its explorations of society, class, and travel, *Tom Jones* functions as a *Canterbury Tales* for the eighteenth century. Instead of a religious pilgrimage, Tom Jones is on a pilgrimage to find his identity and, in turn, his place in society.

Parallel Lives

Despite a difference of over three hundred years, even the careers of Fielding and Chaucer seem to parallel one another in many ways. In *The Cambridge Companion to the Eighteenth Century Novel*, Claude Rawson discusses the various positions held by Fielding in public service. Rawson notes that "Although Fielding is chiefly known as a novelist, he was in his day England's leading playwright, a political journalist of considerable power, a barrister and, in his last years, a highly influential magistrate, who had a hand in shaping what eventually

developed into the Metropolitan Police” (122). While Fielding worked for the English government, his positions were always ones which kept him in close contact with the people. This official work was also balanced with his career as a novelist and prominent playwright. In “Theatrical Fielding,” Thomas Lockwood claims that “the stage taught Fielding to imagine the characters and speech he wrote into that space and would later write onto the pages of his books—and how it taught him to imagine himself in relationship to that material too” (106). Lockwood asserts that Fielding’s

playhouse beginnings left him with a certain instinct for imagining his narrative material as something stageable. That much is evident in scene after scene of *Joseph Andrews* or *Tom Jones* and has often been noted: only think of Lady Booby trying to seduce Joseph (1.8) or the discovery of Square hidden “among other female Utensils” in Molly Seagrim’s bedchamber (5.5). Beyond that natural after-effect of a career in stage comedy, however, there is something more in the provision he makes in narrative for a theatrically equivalent production or voicing of his material—especially characters and their speech—as if by means of a collaboration between represented character and representing author, who performs the part otherwise belonging to an actor. (106)

Fielding’s narratives give unique voices to his characters directly linking them to the voices of Fielding’s earlier characters on stage. The scenes of physical comedy in *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* also serve to enhance the theatrical experience of the novel reader.

In *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Literature: 1100—1500*, Larry Scanlon discusses in some detail the positions held by Geoffrey Chaucer, including Controller of the Custom, Justice of the Peace in Kent, member of the House of Commons, Clerk of the King’s

Works, and deputy forester of the royal forest of North Petherton in Somerset (167). Scanlon notes that Chaucer “continued as a public servant for the rest of his life” and claims that Chaucer, while “representing a central form of authority, the Crown,” was still “sharply differentiated” from the Royal Court in his position “as a commoner” (167). Like Fielding, whose audience, fame, and prosperity from writing increased throughout the course of his life, Chaucer’s “initial audience for his poetry was probably commoners like himself in royal service. But the social composition of his audience quickly expanded, an expansion no doubt facilitated by his own complex medial and mediating social position” (167). This, too, could be said of Fielding, who went from writing satirical plays like *Tom Thumb* to a complex and masterfully structured novel such as *Tom Jones*.

The parallels in the lives and careers of Geoffrey Chaucer and Henry Fielding are important because of the impact they have on their careers as writers. As Martin C. Battestin observes in *Henry Fielding: A Life*, as opposed to “deep” Shakespeare and “dark” Dickens, “Fielding’s is the Comic Spirit we meet in Chaucer” (331). Battestin describes “the triumph of *Joseph Andrews* . . . to its great good humor—the delight Fielding takes in the comedy of humankind” (331). It is “in this novel, as later in *Tom Jones*” that “the Comic Spirit is a genial and sociable Muse, capable of redeeming for us the mess of life” (331). Because of their shared status as commoner and high-ranking government official and representative of the Crown, both Chaucer and Fielding share a rare literary point of view, being conversant with both the upper and lower classes. This understanding of human nature regardless of class allows both authors to create works that are able to entertain and are sympathetic to both segments of society.

The nature of storytelling in the *Canterbury Tales* is of utmost importance when noting parallels between it and *Tom Jones*. Larry Scanlon discusses the novelistic qualities of Chaucer’s

work, arguing that “until the advent of the novel, there are few if any works so consistently interested in perspectives of the politically marginal, be the basis of that marginalization class, gender, or sexuality. In his frame tale, Chaucer offers representatives from each of the Three Estates of traditional medieval political theory” (173). Like Fielding, Chaucer explores a wide variety of people and classes. Moreover, Fielding also offers complex female characters whose role in the tale are as important as Chaucer’s Wife of Bath or Prioress. Regarding the geographical movement of Chaucer’s narrative, Scanlon asserts—as stated earlier—that “The trope of pilgrimage enables Chaucer to bring together a wide variety of narrators and narrative perspectives. It also gives the collection a more explicitly devotional cast than any of his other works” (173). *Tom Jones* reflects this not only through the movement of the travel narrative but also through Tom’s coming of age.

In the same manner as the *Canterbury Tales*, *Tom Jones* is episodic and masterfully divided—much like the acts and scenes of a play—into parts, books, and chapters, which function along the same lines as the different stories in Chaucer’s work, united by the narrative voice of Chaucer the pilgrim and the host (and moderator), Harry Bailly. Also of importance is the relation of both tales to inns or taverns. In *Canterbury Tales*, the pilgrims meet at Bailly’s inn and decide to go to Canterbury together and entertain one another with stories on the way. In this same mode, much of *Tom Jones* takes place at inns or taverns along the road, including Tom’s infamous (and, for a moment, incestuous) encounter with Mrs. Waters.

Narrative Voice and Theatrics

Like the *Canterbury Tales*, *Tom Jones* offers a powerful narrative voice to guide (and sometimes distract) the reader. Judith Bailey Slagle and Robert Holtzclaw, in “Narrative Voice and ‘Chorus on the Stage,’” describe Fielding’s narrator as “pseudo-objective” and argue that he

“is very *often* a tyrant, always keeping readers aware of the fact that they are reading a carefully constructed novel with a clear plan and periodically subjecting these readers to lectures on virtue, prudence, and other qualities he considers valuable and underappreciated” (192). This is reminiscent of Chaucer’s narrator (“Chaucer” the pilgrim), whose irony—as in his description of the Friar who “hadde maad ful many a mariage / Of yonge wommen at his owene cost” (A 213-214)—claims virtue but truly indicates vice—the Friar arranges marriages for these young women because he has probably gotten them pregnant. In the same vein as Slagle and Holtzclaw’s investigation of *Tom Jones* on film, Nickolas A. Haydock investigates the adaptation of Chaucer to the screen. His article, “Arthurian Melodrama, Chaucerian Spectacle, and the Waywardness of Cinematic Pastiche in *First Knight* and *A Knight’s Tale*,” asserts that

A Knight’s Tale, unlike *Shakespeare in Love* or *Elizabeth*, is a film of very few words. Its primary inspiration is not Chaucer’s language—the influence of his “The Knight’s Tale” is minimal, confined primarily to the tournament spectacles. Rather, it attempts to “translate” directly from the visual culture of the Middle Ages. The illumination of medieval texts becomes the model for the film’s cinematography and *mise en scène*. (29)

The ability for Chaucer to be visually translated suggests a visual, scenic, stage quality inherent in the work to begin with. While not as overtly ignorant as Chaucer’s narrator, Fielding’s narrator does skip over the more scandalous parts of the tale, leaving these incidents to the reader’s imagination. The meeting of Tom and Mrs. Waters in chapter five of book nine is described in the following manner:

In short, no sooner had the amorous parley ended, and the lady had unmasked the royal battery, by carelessly letting her handkerchief drop from her

neck, than the heart of Mr Jones was entirely taken, and the fair conqueror enjoyed the usual fruits of her victory.

Here the Graces think proper to end their description, and here we think proper to end the chapter. (444)

The narrator, thus, explicitly suggests that Mrs. Waters and Tom have sexual relations—“the fruits of victory”—while simultaneously ending the “description” and “the chapter” on this note (444). Claude Rawson comments on this complex facet of the novel as follows:

Tom Jones . . . represents a reversal of the typical Richardsonian plot, in the sense that the seducers tend to be female, not male, that the male profligate is a virtuous soul, that the objects of his sexual attentions are hardly paragons of defenseless chastity, that the transactions between them are persistently reported through a signposted withholding of the lubricious particularities it had become customary to impute to Richardson, and that the novel’s strongly stated ethic of the good heart is antiprudential. (140)

Tom’s many amorous encounters throughout the novel bring to mind Chaucer’s bawdiest works in the realm of the French fabliau story: The “Miller’s Tale” and the “Reeve’s Prologue and Tale.” In both of these tales, Chaucer relates stories of sexual conquest and trickery, and, like Fielding’s, these stories contain powerful female characters that willingly have (or encourage) extramarital relations with their lovers in order to make cuckolds out of their husbands (Benson 68-85).

In “What Fielding Doesn’t Say in *Tom Jones*,” Stephen B. Dobranski discusses the important function of omissions on the part of the narrator. Dobranski claims that

through the window of the novel's omissions, we . . . glimpse a reciprocal relationship between Fielding and his readers, Fielding tries to use all these sites of omission to stage his authority over the text, but he simultaneously accepts that readers can go beyond his intentions and determine how—or even whether—such gaps are filled. (636)

Like Chaucerian irony, Fielding's omissions in the text function to alert the reader to the more scandalous or inappropriate situation at hand. According to Dobranski, there is special significance in the "conspicuous" narrative gaps found in Fielding's work (634), and it is through this that "Fielding most often uses the pretense of not saying something as a way of managing the history that he claims only to report; his ironic diction at these moments subtly informs readers as to what is being suppressed" (636). Rather than briefly passing over a description or conversation, Fielding announces the omission, making it (usually) clear as to what is being omitted and why. Fielding's method of introducing a gap or silence in the narrative implies what is being said, especially when taking into account the irony set up by the narrator, very much the way Chaucer sets up the Friar in the "General Prologue." Moreover, "the narrator's meaningful use of silence in *Tom Jones* is set off against these other storytellers who end up relating what they wish to omit" (638). Fielding draws attention to an omission and, while he may imply what is missing, never really reveals the details. Dobranski argues that "the author uses even the narrative's gaps to manipulate readers and demonstrate his superb control," yet "many of the book's gaps also expose the potential power that the novel's readers possess" (643, 646). By incorporating gaps or omissions in the narrative, Fielding's narrator enjoys powerful control over the story; however, these omissions are empowering to the reader who then must fill in the gaps,

whether about a rendezvous between Tom and Mrs. Waters or a Friar and the services he provides young ladies.

The character of Jenny Jones (or Mrs. Waters) takes on even more significance when compared with Chaucer's Wife of Bath. In the "General Prologue" the narrator of the *Canterbury Tales* describes the wife of Bath, claiming that "she was somdel deaf" (A 446) but

Of clooth-makyng she hadde swich an haunt
She passed hem of Ypres and of Gaunt,
In al the parisshe wif ne was ther noon
That to the offrynge bifore hire sholde goon;
And if ther dide, certeyn so wrooth was she
That she was out of alle charitee. (A 447-452)

The Wife of Bath is an excellent seamstress whose works rival the best in Europe. Although she is wealthy, she is very generous to the church and the poor. Nevertheless, her moral character is questionable, for "Housbondes at chirche dore she hadde fyve, / Withouten oother compaignye in youthe—" (A460-461). While she may have had five husbands and even more lovers, she seems genuinely repentant in her multiple pilgrimages to Jerusalem, Italy, and France (A 462-476). She is also a genuinely strong female character. In the Prologue to her tale, she relates some of the history of her marriages and the abuse she has suffered, finally overcoming her last husband with "al the soveraynetee," being able to do as she wishes and having complete control of his estate even before his death (D 818). There is a definite connection between the Wife of Bath and Jenny Jones. In book one, the narrator recounts Jenny's pursuit of education while being the servant of the schoolmaster. She also sparked envy in the women of the parish when she "shone forth on a Sunday in a new silk gown, with a laced cap, and other proper appendages

to these” (42). After discovering the infant Tom Jones in his bed, Mr. Allworthy deduces that Jenny Jones is the mother, which she—falsely—admits and is able to then leave the parish. Later, after Tom’s amorous encounter with Jenny—now Mrs. Waters—more of her shady history is revealed, including “her reputation” with men and her love triangle with Captain Waters and Mr. Northerton, her attempted rapist (449, 450-451). Jenny’s character is further redeemed at the end of the novel when she reveals how she helped Bridget conceal that Tom was really her child (831-834). Like the Wife of Bath, Jenny’s history is shady, especially her relationships with men, yet her heart seems pure. Moreover, she is a strong female character in her dealings with Allworthy and other characters in the novel, both men and women. Both characters share uncertain pasts but are truly penitent without being weak in their final portrait by their respective authors.

The world of the theatre is never far from Fielding. Ros Ballaster, in “Satire and Embodiment: Allegorical Romance on Stage and Page in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Britain,” discusses the important scene in *Tom Jones* where Tom and Partridge are brought directly into the world of the theatre. Ballaster notes that

Tom and his tutor, the unworldly Benjamin Partridge, attend a performance of Hamlet by David Garrick on the London stage. Partridge is transfixed and moved by the sight of Garrick’s portrayal of Hamlet’s fear at the vision of the ghost. So absorbed is Partridge by the performance that he loses his sense of a distinction between the real and the performed, concluding that there is nothing especially fine in Garrick’s acting since any person encountering the ghost of his father would be expected to react in that way. (636)

While this scene literally places the characters inside the world of the theatre, it also demonstrates the power a theatrical performance can have over an audience. Not only does Fielding's work interact with the atmosphere of the theatre, it also interacts with its history (a play by William Shakespeare) and its actors (David Garrick). Along the same lines as Ballaster, Judith Frank, in "The Comic Novel and the Poor: Fielding's Preface to *Joseph Andrews*," expands on the visual nature of Fielding's work. Frank contends that "While Fielding's Preface distinguishes between various *literary* forms, the comic novel and the romance . . . its evocation of Hogarth and elaborate attention to the visual suggest that it is also crucially concerned with evoking the difference between aural/visual and literary modes of representation" (222). While *Joseph Andrews* is a written work, the theatrical aspects in the novel are a key component and essential for fully comprehending the work.

Finally, there is a significant relation in the conclusions of *Canterbury Tales* and *Tom Jones*, for both works end with a serious moral tone that contrasts somewhat to the former parts of the works. Chaucer concludes the *Canterbury Tales* with the "Parson's Tale," a sermon on the Seven Deadly Sins and penance. The narrator introduces the tale by noting the descent of the sun and the impending end of the pilgrims' journey. The innkeeper then asks for a tale from the Parson, who wishes to "shewe yow the wey, in this viage, / Of thilke parfit glorious pilgrimage / That highte Jerusalem celestial" (49-52). To this, the host and the pilgrims agree:

Upon this word we han assented soone,
For as it seemed, it was for to doone—
To enden in som vertuouse sentence,
And for to yeve hym space and audience,
And bade oure Hoost he sholde to hym seye

That alle we to telle his tale hym preye. (61-66)

While the *Canterbury Tales* have been filled with adventures, love stories, and even the bawdy works of the Miller and Reeve, the end of the journey brings about a change in the host and the pilgrims, who become more sober as their travels come to an end. Fielding, too, parallels this change in tone as he concludes his tale. After recounting the exploits and amours of the protagonist, Fielding ends his novel by telling of Tom Jones's reformation and marriage to Sophia. The narrator states:

To conclude, as there are not to be found a worthier man and woman than this fond couple, so neither can any be imagined more happy. They preserve the purest and tenderest affection for each other, an affection daily increased and confirmed by mutual endearments and mutual esteem. Nor is their conduct towards their relations and friends less amiable than towards one another. And such is their condescension, their indulgence, and their beneficence to those below them, that there is not a neighbor, a tenant, or a servant, who doth not most gratefully bless the day when Mr Jones was married to his Sophia. (871)

Not only does Fielding emphasize Tom and Sophia's love and respect for one another, but he also notes their relationships with family (their peers) and those beneath them in class. So while Tom ends up as a member of the upper class, Fielding—and the narrator—make a special point to include the lower class as well. This serious reflection at the end of a work filled with numerous comic (and not uncommon bawdy) episodes reflects back to Chaucer's "Retraction," which concludes the "Canterbury Tales."

In “‘The Glorious Lust of Doing Good’: *Tom Jones* and the Virtues of Sexuality,” Paul Kelleher offers some unique considerations of the philosophic function of the end of the novel. Kelleher claims that

Sophia’s romantic perception of Tom serves as the precondition and promise of the moral vindication that ultimately awaits him. Her certainty that her esteem should be placed with Tom, and not Blifil, is the simplest illustration of one understanding of Sophia’s function in the novel, in which she represents the philosophic wisdom (*sophia*) that Tom works toward, the reward that beckons during his irregular progress in acquiring practical wisdom (*prudentia*). (173)

Therefore, Tom’s union with Sophia is truly a reasonable ending to the story. Kelleher asserts that “Casting Sophia in the role of wisdom *itself* would follow then from Fielding’s assurance in the novel’s dedication that ‘to recommend Goodness and Innocence hath been my sincere Endeavour in this History’” (174). Thus the story not only ends happily, but fulfills the purpose outlined at the beginning of the story.

While discussing the role of the pilgrimage in *Canterbury Tales*, Scanlon observes that “it also gives the collection a more explicitly devotional cast than any of [Chaucer’s] other works, with the exception of a few lyrics” (173). The conclusion of the *Tales* is essential to understanding the whole of the work. Scanlon suggests that “a specific interest in the penitential, a suggestion reinforced by the collection’s final tale, the *Parson’s Tale*, a penitential manual, and the retraction” (173). Like Tom’s newfound piety and union with Sophia in the conclusion of *Tom Jones*, the “Parson’s Tale” offers an ending to Chaucer’s work which focuses on a higher philosophical theme: eternal life. Tom is faithful to Sophia, amiable to his relations, kind to those under his authority, and generous to the poor, all themes reminiscent of the Parson’s treatise,

which explains “what is Penitence, and whennes it is cleped Penitence, and in how manye maneres been the acciouns or werkynges of Penitence,/ and how manye spesces ther been of Penitence, and whiche thynges apertenen and bihoven to Penitence, and whiche thynges destourben Penitence” (288). The Parson fully expounds the subject of penitence in relation to the Seven Deadly Sins, ending the hopeful note that “the fruyt of penaunce . . . is the endeless blisse of hevene” which “may men purchace by poverte esprituell, and the glorie by lowenesse, the plentee of joye by hunger and thurst, and the reste by travaille, and the lyf by deeth and mortificacion of synne” (327). While the journey of life may at times be comical and fleshly lusts and sins indulged for a season, the ultimate goal is spiritual and eternal in nature, just as Tom abandons his youthful passions for fidelity to Sophia and a place of responsibility in life.

The importance of Geoffrey Chaucer and the *Canterbury Tales* to English literature in the eighteenth century was, as noted earlier, strongly affirmed by Fielding’s earlier contemporary, John Dryden. In his 1700 *Preface to the Fables*, Dryden argues that

We have our Fore-fathers and Great Grand-dames all before us, as they were in Chaucer’s days: their general Characters are still remaining in Mankind, and even in England, though they are called by other names than those of Moncks, and Fryars, and Chanons and Lady Abbesses, and Nuns: For Mankind is ever the same, and nothing lost out of Nature, though everything is alter’d. (Qtd. in Benson 5)

Like all great works of literature, Chaucer’s tales endure because of their universality and ability to capture the essentials of human nature. Fielding, too, is able to capture the nature of man, with all his faults, and relate them to his own generation in *Tom Jones*; and, like Chaucer, Fielding’s work transcends his own time and is still relevant and powerful to readers today. Not only do Fielding and Chaucer share similar life stories, their greatest works parallel one another and offer

a broad view of the human condition and the ultimate spiritual focus one's life should have. The function of narrators, irony, and omissions all suggest the influence of Chaucer's masterpiece on Fielding's.

CHAPTER 4

THE KNIGHT-ERRANT

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines “knight-errant” as “A knight of mediæval romance who wandered in search of adventures and opportunities for deeds of bravery and chivalry” (*OED Online*). While this has obvious associations with Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, not the least of which is the “Knight’s Tale,” the characters of Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones both display the traits of a knight-errantry. This is displayed through the generalized notion of chivalry and the specific qualities inherent in the Quixotic figure of the knight-errant on a quest.

Chivalry

Before examining specific traits and examples from Chaucer and Fielding’s works, it is necessary to define the terms to be examined. Maurice Keen, in *Chivalry*, the definitive work on the subject, provides a detailed definition of chivalry which is key to understanding the works of both Chaucer and Fielding. Keen states that chivalry is “an ethos in which martial, aristocratic and Christian elements were fused together” (17). More precisely,

The military aspect of chivalry is associated with skill in horsemanship specifically, a costly expertise which could be hard to acquire, for one not born to a good heritage. The aristocratic aspect is not just a matter of birth; it is connected with ideas of the function of knighthood and with a scale of virtues which implies that aristocracy is a matter of worth as much as it is of lineage. The Christian aspect is presented surprisingly free of the imprint of ecclesiastical prejudice and priorities. Chivalry, as it is described in the treatises, is a way of life in which we can discern these three essential facets, the military, the noble, and the religious.

(17)

Just because a character is not a literal knight in shining armor does not mean that chivalry is not a part of his “way of life” (17). Chivalry is something that encompasses the whole of a person (or character). In “The Societal Role of Chivalry in Romance,” Richard Kaeuper describes chivalry in its historical context, asserting that

As the practice and ideal code of the dominant strata of lay society for roughly half a millennium . . . [chivalry] became the framework for debate about how the dominant laypeople should live, love, govern, fight, and practice piety—real issues with real consequences. Romance literature, one of the major purveyors of chivalric ideals, thus becomes the locus of debate about such basic social issues. (99)

Chivalry is not just transmitted to future generations through actions, but it is also grounded in the written word. Kaeuper argues that “The knight can *do* chivalry just as he can *make* love: it has this dimension as a physical process” (102). This type of physicality appears in the actions of both Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones. Bruce Stovel, in “*Tom Jones* and the *Odyssey*,” compares Tom to Odysseus, arguing that

Like Odysseus, Tom is a man of many roles (scapegrace, lover, soldier, knight-errant, gallant, reformer, man of honour, etc.) but one single desire: to return to his home. That Tom is a returner rather than simply a wanderer is stressed by Partridge’s recurrent scheme to persuade Tom to go back home. . . . And in their wanderings both Odysseus and Tom depend upon the kindness of strangers: what hospitality is in the world of the *Odyssey*, charity is in the less ritualized and more secular world of *Tom Jones*. (268)

The Canterbury Pilgrims, Joseph Andrews, Parson Adams, and Tom Jones all share in common the movement of the travel narrative. There is a goal in sight and an ultimate reward.

Ramon Llull (1232-1316), in *The Book of the Order of Chivalry*, offers a definition of knighthood and chivalry nearly contemporary to Chaucer. Regarding a knight's moral duties, Llull argues that

It is the office of the knight to support widows, orphans and the helpless, for just as it is customary and right that the mighty help to defend the weak, and the weak take refuge with the mighty, so it is customary in the Order of Chivalry that because it is great, honourable, and powerful it comes to the succour and aid of those who are inferior to it in honour and strength. (50)

The practice of basic Christian virtues is essential to a true knight and practitioner of chivalry. In this practice class boundaries are removed and the greater is called to serve the lesser. This definition is especially applicable to Fielding's works, for both Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones are servants of the poor and downtrodden.

In Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, the figure that most obviously represents of chivalry is the Knight. In the "General Prologue," the narrator describes the "KNYGHTE" as a "worthy man," who

Fro the tyme that he first bigan
To riden out, he loved chivalrie,
Trouthe and honour, freedom and curteisie.
Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre,
And therto hadde he riden, no man ferre,
As wel in cristendom as in hethenesse,

And evere honoured for his worthynesse. (I 43-50)

Chaucer's Knight is a traditional representative of the virtues of medieval chivalry and was, as the narrator later suggests, a late crusader. The ideals that the Knight upholds define his character. The Knight's son, the Squire, is another representative of chivalry and knighthood; however, his youth and vanity are two traits emphasized by the narrator which diverge from his father's character. The narrator states that

With hym ther was his sone, a yong SQUIER,
A lovyere and a lusty bachelor,
With lokkes crulle as they were leyd in presse.
Of twenty yeer of age he was, I gesse.
Of his stature he was of evene lengthe,
And wonderly delyvere, and of greet strengthe.
And he hadde been somtyme in chyvachie
In Flaundres, in Artoys, and Pycardie,
And born hym weel, as of so litel space,
In hope to stonden in his lady grace. (79-88)

The Squire is hansom and strong and has been in battle, yet he is not as rugged or battle-scared as his father. His military exploits, too, have been closer to home. The next lines are especially telling about the Squire's character. The narrator notes:

Embrouded was he, as it were a meede
Al ful of fresshe floures, whyte and reede
Syngynge he was, or floytynge, al the day;
He was as fressh as is the month of May.

Short was his gowne, with sleeves longe and wyde.
Wel koude he sitte on hors and faire ryde.
He koude songes make and wel endite,
Juste and eek daunce, and weel purtreye and write.
So hoote he lovede that by nyghtertale
He sleep namoore than dooth a nyghtyngale.
Curteis he was, lowely, and servysable,
And carf biforn his fader at the table. (I 89-100)

While the Squire is a practitioner of chivalric virtues, he is also firmly embedded in the culture of courtly love. Singing and dancing are his greatest abilities and, unlike his father, his dress is fashionable and immaculate. Nevertheless, while the narrator suggests that he is a ladies man, he does not neglect serving his father and is a “lowely, and servysable” son (99).

Tom Jones is directly linked to the figure of a knight on more than one occasion over the course of the novel. Early in his life, Tom’s generosity and benevolence are displayed by the aid he gives to Black George and his family (124). Tom is willing to sacrifice and risk his own welfare to help the needs of others. In book six, after Sophia has been struck down by her father, the narrator states that “Jones departed instantly in quest of Sophia, whom he found just risen from the ground, where her father had left her, with the tears trickling from her eyes, and the blood running from her lips. He presently ran to her, and with a voice full at once of tenderness and terror, cried” (259). Jones is not merely rescuing his love; he is on a “quest” to rescue her from danger and uphold the virtues of chivalry towards a lady in distress (259). Sophia, though, would not be the only damsel whose aid Tom would go.

Later in the same book, Jones is brought into the company of a group of soldiers. Here, Tom is able to display the military aspect of chivalrous conduct. The narrator describes an argument amongst the men which nearly escalates into a fight:

The dispute now grew so very warm that it seemed to draw towards a military decision, when Jones, stepping forward, silenced all their clamours at once by declaring that he would pay the whole reckoning . . . This declaration procured Jones the thanks and applause of the whole company. The terms honourable, noble, and worthy gentleman, resounded through the room; nay, my landlord himself began to have a better opinion of him, and almost to disbelieve the account which the guide had given. (321)

Tom pays the debt to ensure the safety and well-being of all present, and his reputation is raised among the men to standards worthy of a knight. Tom is described as “honourable,” “noble,” “worthy,” and “gentleman,” all terms more fitting of an aristocrat than a foundling and harkening back to the narrator’s description of Chaucer’s Knight (321). Tom is, again, given the opportunity to display his chivalric qualities when informed of the Jacobite rebellion. The narrator describes Tom’s reaction, claiming that

Jones had some heroic ingredients in his composition, and was a hearty well-wisher to the glorious cause of liberty, and of the Protestant religion. It is no wonder, therefore, that in circumstances which would have warranted a much more romantic and wild undertaking, it should occur to him to serve as a volunteer in this expedition. (321-322)

Jones is an “heroic” individual who is inspired to “volunteer” as a servant to his King and “the Protestant religion” (321). This passage is significant because the military and religious virtues embodied in the medieval chivalric code are here embodied in Tom Jones.

In book nine, Tom is yet again allowed to practice his chivalric virtues. The narrator describes Tom’s rescue of Mrs. Waters, noting that

He had not entered far into the wood before he beheld a most shocking sight indeed, a woman stripped half naked, under the hands of a ruffian, who had put his garter round her neck, and was endeavouring to draw her up to a tree. Jones asked no questions at this interval, but fell instantly upon the villain, and made such good use of his trusty oaken stick that he laid him sprawling on the ground before he could defend himself. (427-428)

Tom saves Mrs. Waters—Jenny Jones—from rape. He risks his own safety to deliver an unknown woman from her attacker. This scene is significant. Tom does not delay or weigh the consequences: he sees a damsel in distress and rescues her. The old traits of knighthood are alive in Tom and govern even split-second decisions.

The Quixotic Journey

The narrative function of chivalry and knighthood are inextricably linked to the notion of the quixotic. Since *Don Quixote* was written by Cervantes after Chaucer’s lifetime (c. 1605), it would be anachronistic to apply the quixotic to *The Canterbury Tales*; however, the feudalistic traits which Cervantes satirizes do not escape the satire of Chaucer, for even Chaucer’s knight is portrayed as a relic from a past age in contrast to the courtier figure of his son. Don Quixote’s journeys are important, for while he suffers from delusions of knighthood, his character is noble and his practice of chivalric virtues unparalleled. This notion of the quixotic can be understood

as displayed not only through Tom Jones's chivalric virtues but also in the novel's function as a travel narrative. There is a constant movement in the story which is important in identifying Tom Jones as knight-errant. Furthermore, these same traits are exhibited in *Joseph Andrews* and in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. In *The Origins of the English Novel: 1600-1740*, Michael McKeon discusses Chaucer's unique contributions in laying the foundations for the English novel as follows:

Chaucer's impatience with courtly fictions amounts not so much to a critique of love as to a deidealization of it. In narrative strategy this could be expressed by the relegation of love to a relatively subsidiary role in the chain of signifiers for transformation, one figure among several of comparable value. This movement of specification or emplacement is of course very important for the origins of the novel. (147-148)

Courtly love is, by no means, discarded by Chaucer; however, there is much more to the story than a courtier wooing his lady. "Transformation" is key to understanding character development, along with the ideals inherent in each character (147). While Chaucer's pilgrims do serve as representatives for their various estates and jobs, they are anything but one-dimensional. Both the Knight and Squire display traits of individuality that go beyond allegorical everyman figures.

While *Tom Jones* displays numerous elements of the quixotic, *Joseph Andrews* fits this mold as well, perhaps to an even greater extent considering some of the absurd comedic incidents. McKeon notes this quixotic trope in the novel, claiming

An English Quixote obsessed with the rule of Apostolic charity, not of romance chivalry, Abraham Adams reminds us of both the madness of the *hidalgo*

estranged from reality and the conservative wisdom of the utopian social reformer. Traversing the circuit to London and back again, he upholds the standard of good works against a cross-section of humanity whose complacency, hypocrisy, and downright viciousness announce, again and again, the absence of charity in the modern world. (400)

Parson Adams displays traits befitting a knight-errant, yet it is his charity towards others that is most striking. McKeon asserts that “to a real degree, the Apostolic and feudal rule of charity is itself demystified in *Joseph Andrews* as a Quixotic social function” (402). Parson Adams and Andrews both descend into the more absurd aspects of the quixotic in book four. Here, their “several curious Night-Adventures” of bed-swapping and mistaken identity are reminiscent of Chaucer’s fabliau of the “Reeve’s Tale” and the “Miller’s Tale” (290-295). Parson Adams, however, differs in that, like a noble exemplar of chivalric virtue, his fidelity to his wife remains intact.

Fielding’s interactions with the quixotic are important in establishing his protagonists as representatives of the knight-errant. In “Mid-Century English Quixotism and the Defense of the Novel,” Brean S. Hammond claims that “Cervantes enabled Fielding to articulate a manifesto for prose fiction in opposition to the static, sedentary didacticism of Richardson’s *Pamela*” (252). Hammond argues that “Fielding’s preface to *Joseph Andrews* famously (or perhaps notoriously) accepts the term ‘romance’ but argues for a comic form that, though non-metrical, can be ‘referred’ (his term) to Homer’s lost comic epic, the *Margites*”; and, furthermore, “Fielding defends ‘biographical’ fiction as having greater imaginative truth than supposed history—and Cervantes is presented as the supreme example” (254). By creating fictional biographical

narratives, Fielding is able to display the virtues of chivalry in his characters without being overly moralistic.

Chivalry, as defined by scholars and medieval authorities, is a trait that encompasses the whole of a person's character. By giving portraits of the Knight and the Squire, Chaucer demonstrates the differences that can exist within the order of knighthood. Like these late medieval characters, Fielding's Tom Jones, Joseph Andrews, and Parson Adams all exemplify the traits of the chivalric knight. Moreover, these character traits are enhanced by the elements of the quixotic journey, further linking Fielding's characters to their medieval precursors as demonstrated by Chaucer and satirized by Cervantes.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

For Henry Fielding to use and imitate Chaucer to such an extent in the eighteenth-century is significant. Derek Brewer, in *Geoffrey Chaucer, the Critical Heritage*, offers numerous reactions by Fielding's contemporaries and forerunners to Chaucer's works. Joseph Addison, in 1694, argues in verse that

Long had our dull Fore-Fathers slept Supine
Nor felt the Raptures of the tuneful Nine;
'Til *Chaucer* first, a merry *Bard*, arose;
And many a Story told in Rhime and Prose.
But Age has rusted what the Poet writ,
Worn out his Language, and obscur'd his Wit:
In vain he Jests in his unpolish'd Strain,
And tries to make his Readers laugh in vain. (65)

Addison asserts that Chaucer was a good poet in his time, but he has worn out his welcome and is too "unpolish'd" for enlightened readers (65). John Dryden, who praised Chaucer's Parson and imitated his poetic style, asserts in 1700 that he would not "offend against Good Manners" by translating "the Reve, the *Miller*, the *Shipman*, the *Merchant*, the Sumner, and above all, the *Wife of Bathe*, in the Prologue to her Tale" (66). He, instead, confines his "Choice to such Tales of *Chaucer* as savour nothing of Immodesty" (66). Dryden admires the quality of Chaucer as opposed to Addison, but he deems the fabliau as unacceptable for the literary public and would rather it remain in obscurity. Daniel Defoe, in 1718, goes further than Dryden and condemns his works outright for issues of immorality, asserting that

The inimitable brightness of [Rochester's] Wit has not been able to preserve [his poems] from being thought worthy, by wise Men, to be lost, rather than remember'd; being blacken'd and eclips'd by the Lewdness of their Stile, so as not to be made fit for Modesty to read or hear. Jeffrey Chaucer is forgotten upon the same Account; and tho' that Author is excused, by the impoliteness of the Age he lived in, yet his Works are diligently buried, by most Readers, on that very Principle, that they are not fit for modest Persons to read. (69)

Like Dryden, Defoe recognizes the genius of Chaucer's works just as he recognizes the genius of Rochester's works; however, rather than exposing "modest Persons" to Chaucer's works, he prefers them to remain "buried" in obscurity, lest they cause corruption—an ironic claim for the author of *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana* (69). Alexander Pope, between 1728 and 1730, echoes Addison's argument while also taking a punch at Dryden, claiming that "Our Sons their Father's *failing Language* see, / And such as *Chaucer* is, shall *Dryden* be" (67). Again, Chaucer is terribly out of fashion as far as the intelligent reader is concerned. Samuel Johnson, in 1765, defends Chaucer as the precursor to Shakespeare and does not deny his poetic genius or creativity, yet there is a definite reserve to his praise and he sends mixed feelings when he claims "that *Homer* has fewer passages unintelligible than *Chaucer*" (79). Even for the compiler of the English dictionary, Chaucer's Middle English seems to be an insurmountable barrier to popularity or proper appreciation.

In Brewer's anthology of critical responses to Chaucer, Henry Fielding is a notably absent figure. Rather than comment on Chaucer, Henry Fielding appropriated his style and character types in his own works. This is the ultimate praise of Chaucer, for Fielding used both the morality of the Parson and the alleged immorality of the fabliau in *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom*

Jones, carrying on the tradition of Chaucer's style for a very critical and moralistic society. John H. Fisher, in *The Importance of Chaucer*, recognizes this contribution, claiming that "it has been the English novelists like Fielding, Jane Austen, and Dickens, not the poets like Pope, Keats, and Tennyson, who profited most from the realistic characterization and psychological interaction in the *Canterbury Tales* and *Troilus*" (159). The depth of Chaucer's characters is a precursor to the depth that characters reach in the mature English novel.

Both Geoffrey Chaucer and Henry Fielding created some of the most original characters and greatest works of English literature. Despite a three-hundred-year difference in the lives of these authors, the works they produced defined their respective ages. These two men, however, share more than just literary fame. Both created characters of kind, understanding, human parsons. Both employed extensive use of episodes and the motion of travel to shape their narratives. Both used the ideals of chivalry to define their main characters in their greatest works. By investigating the works of Chaucer and Fielding, I contend that Fielding masterfully employs and transforms the art Chaucer first created to bring these character types and ideals to a new generation, all of which are as strong today in their appeal to readers and critics alike.

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