INTRODUCTION

> When a Nation is divided into two opposite Political Parties … the generality of the people, consisting of unlearned and undesigning persons, are very liable to be imposed upon by the pretences and practices of the most eminent in those Parties.
>
> *Grub-Street Journal*, 22 April 1736

Fielding failed to articulate any straightforward statement of his political beliefs *in propria persona*. Perhaps the nearest he came to doing so was in pamphlets such as *A Serious Address To the People of Great Britain* in which he explained how the doctrine of 'an indefeasible Right to the Crown hath been justly exploded' because 'the Legislature of the Kingdom have unanimously declared against any such Principle'. 'The Reverse of it is Law', he went on, 'a Law as firmly established as any other in this Kingdom; nay, it is the Foundation, the Corner-Stone of all our Laws, and of this Constitution itself; nor is the Declaration and Confirmation of this great Right of the People one of the least of those Blessings, which we owe to the Revolution'. This not only appears to make his sentiments on the subject of parliamentary sovereignty perfectly clear – supreme power lies in 'the people' as represented in Parliament – it also strongly suggests that he firmly adhered to the range of 'Revolution Principles' upon which the Hanoverian Succession was established because, as he painstakingly explained, whatever 'tends to the Shaking of this fundamental Right, doth of itself introduce an opposite System of Government, and *changes not only the King, but the Constitution*'.[1] When in *Tom Jones*, therefore, he describes Tom as 'a hearty Well-wisher to the glorious Cause of Liberty, and of the Protestant Religion',[2] we would be justified in assuming that these predilections were shared by Fielding himself.

In Fielding's lifetime, those who subscribed to Revolution Principles were usually called Whigs. However, existing accounts of Fielding's politics are insufficiently aware, it seems to me, not only of the structure of British politics in the first half of the eighteenth century, but of the ways in which the various strands of Whig political ideology developed during the sixty years following the Revolution of 1688. Partly this is to do with historiographical developments which have taken place over the past fifty years. When Martin C. Battestin published his

Copyright

seminal essay on 'Fielding's Changing Politics and *Joseph Andrews*' at the beginning of the 1960s,[3] the influence of Sir Lewis Namier's monumental *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III* (2nd edn, 1957) still held sway not only over approaches to the politics of the 1750s and 1760s, but to eighteenth-century British politics *tout court*. Three years earlier, in his highly Namierite study of the Pelham administration, John B. Owen had explained that

> there was in the eighteenth century, as Sir Lewis Namier has shown, a complete absence of 'party' as we know it to-day, or even as it existed in the nineteenth century. The Opposition, like the Administration, was a thing of shreds and patches. In a House of Commons composed for the most part of independent self-returning country gentlemen it could hardly be otherwise. 'Administration' and 'Opposition' then served merely to distinguish between those members who for the time being gave a general support to the measures of the existing ministry, and those who for various reasons saw fit to maintain a reasonably consistent attitude of disapproval towards those same measures. In neither case was there anything of the clear-cut unity and discipline that characterizes the modern descendents of these highly amorphous groups.[4]

The assumption that there was 'a complete absence of "party"' in the first half of the eighteenth century was challenged head-on in 1965 by J. H. Plumb in his Ford lectures, subsequently published as *The Growth of Political Stability in England, 1675–1725* (1967), by Geoffrey Holmes in *British Politics in the Age of Anne* (1967), by W. A. Speck in *Tory and Whig: The Struggle in the Constituencies 1701–1715* (1970) and, most pertinently for my purposes, by Romney Sedgwick in his Introduction to *The House of Commons 1715–1754* (1970), the opening sentence of which reads: 'Between the Revolution and the Hanoverian accession a two-party system developed'.[5]

Copyright

That Namierite interpretations of mid-eighteenth-century British politics continue to inform studies of Fielding's politics right down to the present day can perhaps best be appreciated simply by quoting from the work of such recent commentators as W. B. Coley and Thomas R. Cleary. In questioning the validity of Battestin's account of Fielding's changing politics in 'Henry Fielding and the Two Walpoles', Coley drew attention to the '[r]ecent historical approaches into the party structure of the period' represented by Owen's *The Rise of the Pelhams* and Archibald S. Foord's *His Majesty's Opposition 1714 to 1830* (1964). 'A more modern reckoning [than Battestin's]', he continued, 'would have us discriminate among the Pulteney-Carteret bloc of Whig malcontents, the coterie still centering around the Prince of Wales, Argyll and his Scots, Shippen and his Tories, "the Boys" of the Cobhamite alignment, and mercurial, almost centripetal figures like Chesterfield and Bolingbroke'.[6] Coley repeated this thesis, with only minor modifications, in 2002 in the Introduction to his Wesleyan edition of Fielding's *Contributions to The Champion and Related Writings*, which includes that key text for any consideration of his politics, *The Opposition. A Vision*.[7] Cleary's thesis about Fielding

and the 'Broad-Bottoms',[8] on the other hand, seems to have sprung virtually fully-formed from Foord's outdated and (to use a favourite term of Fielding's) 'exploded' Namierite study, and more especially from Foord's various confusing, misleading and anachronistic references to 'Bolingbroke and the "broad-bottoms"'.[9]

As far as Fielding's politics are concerned, two principal distortions have resulted from the uncritical application to the first half of the eighteenth century of Namier's conclusions about the politics of the 1750s and 1760s. First, in assuming that during Fielding's lifetime 'the basic political unit was the group or connection, often called a party, formed under the leadership of a successful politician',[10] critics writing under the influence of Namierite historians are always in danger of downplaying, if not discounting altogether, the importance of Whig and Tory to an understanding not only of the everyday working of Parliament, but of politics nationally. Not only is it the case that 'the ideological stereotypes and suspicions which underpinned Whig and Tory party divisions lived on into the 1750s',[11] surviving division lists convincingly bear out Linda Colley's contention that between 1715 and 1760

> the tory parliamentary party retained ideological identity, a capacity for concerted political action, and considerable economic power during its proscription; and that consequently the current orthodoxies about pre-1715 political instability, about political stability between 1715 and 1760, and about the rapidity and novelty of political change after 1760 need to be substantially modified.[12]

Copyright

After 1715, the Tory party remained a unified political grouping at Westminster and in the constituencies. It was, in fact, the failure of the Tories to cooperate *en bloc* with the various groups of disaffected Whigs in the House of Commons until after the General Election of 1741 which meant that Walpole's position was never seriously threatened, even in the aftermath of the Excise Crisis of 1733, because the government was able to count on the support of independent Whigs to secure an overall majority. Conversely, despite the best efforts of opposition propagandists to argue that because '*Liberty* and *Property* are neither *Whig*, nor *Tory*', 'the Names of *Whig* and *Tory* have been happily laid aside',[13] the mere existence of deep fault-lines between the principles of Whigs and the principles of Tories was sufficient to allow Walpole, in turn, to demand 'whether the present contention for power is between Whigs and Whigs, or between Whigs and Jacobites'.[14]

Second, by depending on outmoded notions about parliamentary, let alone extra-parliamentary politics, during the years Walpole was *de facto* Prime Minister and Fielding was writing his plays and political journalism, critics have not only failed to appreciate the extent to which party divisions continued to dictate political activity, they have also overstated the importance, especially to Fielding's own politics, of 'the group or connection, often called a party, formed under the leadership of a successful politician'. Thus, while it is true that at vari-

ous periods of his life Fielding was indebted to or connected with not only fellow old Etonians such as George Lyttelton and William Pitt, but also wealthy peers such as the Earl of Chesterfield and the Duke of Bedford, it does not necessarily follow that he was privy to their policies, let alone that he wrote to their orders. Yet in the case of *Pasquin* and *The Historical Register* in particular that is what some critics have suggested,[15] even though documentary evidence of Fielding's relations with either Chesterfield or Cobham and his 'cubs' in the middle of the 1730s has yet to be presented. It would be unwise to place too much weight on the dedications of *The Miser*, *Don Quixote in England*, and *The Universal Gallant* to the Duke of Richmond, the Earl of Chesterfield, and the Duke of Marlborough, respectively. As Trapwit observes in *Pasquin*: 'I have dedicated so many Plays, and received nothing for them, that I am resolved to trust no more'.[16] Playwrights tended to dedicate plays to prominent men in hopes of financial reward, not necessarily because they were already personally connected to them, let alone that they shared their political opinions, and of course Fielding, notoriously, dedicated *The Modern Husband* to Walpole.

A further consequence of applying Namier's thesis about the structure of politics at the accession of George III to the politics of Fielding's lifetime is that, in addition to discounting the significance of party, it virtually rules principle out of court also. As Namier and his disciples believed that, above all, politics were about power, they paid little attention to political ideas in describing 'a world in which issues and principles were subordinated to manœuvre and tactics'.[17] Critics tend to take differences in contemporary political ideologies insufficiently into consideration in discussing Fielding's politics. Namier's lingering influence can even be detected, it seems to me, in the recent insistence that Fielding 'was certainly no political thinker', and that he did not 'write often or even very well about "straight" or serious politics'.[18] On the contrary, it can be argued that from his identification in 1737 of 'a general Corruption' as 'one of the greatest Evils … our Constitution is subject to',[19] right through to *An Enquiry Into the Causes of the late Increase in Robbers, &c.* (1751) and beyond, Fielding paid more attention to constitutional issues than any other major writer of the period.

While a good deal of attention has been paid to his outspoken criticism of Walpole and the government in his plays and early political journalism, those who have written about Fielding's politics have had comparatively little to say about the burden of the Preface to *An Enquiry Into the Causes of the late Increase in Robbers*, even though it opens by considering the very meaning of 'this Word, *The Constitution*', and concludes by arguing 'that the Constitution of this Country is altered from its antient State'.[20] Fielding's explanation of the way this alteration had taken place seems to be fundamental to any attempt to describe his political ideology. First, it is imperative to recognize that his insistence that 'From the Original of the Lower House of Parliament to this Day, the Supreme

Copyright

Power hath been vested in the King and the Two Houses of Parliament'[21] is not only perfectly in line with Revolution Principles, it is also in accordance with the more radical views articulated by Locke in *Two Treatises of Government*. Arguing that 'the first and fundamental positive Law of all Commonwealths, is the establishing of the Legislative Power', Locke insisted that: 'This Legislative is not only the supream power of the Commonwealth, but sacred and unalterable in the hands where the Community have once placed it'.[22]

Judging not only from what he has to say in the *Enquiry*, but in his earlier political writings, it is unlikely that Fielding would have had any trouble subscribing to Locke's political opinions. On the contrary, the version of Whiggism apparent in his *Champion* essays and *A Serious Address To the People of Great Britain* appears so extreme that some critics have questioned his authorship of some of the essays which have been attributed to him. They feel uncomfortable about passages such as the following:

> The Government of *England* is limited; and therefore limited, because the People have a Reserve of Power, which they execute by their Representatives.
>
> The Government is a Mixture of the Monarchical, Aristocratical, and Democratical ... That the original Power is in the People hath been so often and so well proved, and is of itself so clear to the Eye of Reason, that I might well take it for granted ... To omit Recognitions, and other Examples, I come to that Period when, by the Abdication of *James* II. the Throne became vacant, and the whole legal Power devolved to the People, who then disposed the same to the Prince of *Orange* and the Princess *Mary* jointly for Life, with successive Remainders in Tail to the Princess *Mary*, the Princess *Ann*, and the Prince of *Orange*.
>
> Now that the whole Power is originally in the People, must appear from the following Considerations ... Whence I draw the following Conclusions.
>
> *First*, As the People have the whole Power, they have the only Right of disposing it.
>
> *Secondly*, They may dispose of it under what Limitations, that is to say, create what Particular Estate in it, they please.
>
> *Thirdly*, When that Estate expires, or ceases, it naturally reverts to the People.
>
> *Fourthly*, That by the Abdication of King *James*, this Estate in it ceased, and the whole devolved to the People.
>
> *Fifthly*, That they had a Right to dispose of it again, in what Manner pleased them, and, consequently, that the Entails above-mentioned, and that afterwards, to the Princess *Sophia*, as Heir of whose Body his present Majesty claims, were as just and lawful Conveyances as were ever executed between Man and Man.[23]

Not only is this a clear statement of Revolution Principles, it appears almost to echo the conclusion of Locke's *Two Treatises*, which explained that if the 'Supreme Power, in any Person, or Assembly ... is forfeited; upon the Forfeiture of their Rulers ... it reverts to the Society, and the People have a Right to act as Supreme, and continue the Legislative in themselves, or place it in a new Form, or new hands, as they think good'.[24]

Copyright

By the 1730s, it was perfectly orthodox Whiggism to argue that power lay in the people. This was regarded as axiomatic even by Walpole's journalists. When during the aftermath of the Excise Crisis the *London Journal* devoted an essay to the consideration '*Of Rights, Natural and Civil*', it acknowledged that '*all Right* comes from the *People*; that there is no *just Power* but what is derived from *them*, and ought in *every Instance* to be exercised for their *Good*'. As the London Journalist went on to exemplify, however, differences of opinion arose over the nature and extent of the people's power: 'it does not follow, that when a Government is settled even by *Consent*, that the *People* have a *Right* (while the Constitution is preserved) to exercise *Authority* and *Power* over the *Government* by Threatning, Ordering, *&c.*'.[25] While Walpole's journalists sought to articulate a version of Whiggism according to which 'the Crown's influence over Parliament was the best guarantee that the balanced constitution would be preserved',[26] the more radical Whig view was that, on the contrary, in order to safeguard the free proceedings of the House of Commons from overweening ministerial corruption, it was essential that 'the *Represented* ought to have an *Influence*, *Power*, and *Authority* over their *Representatives*'. And it was this version of Whiggism that the London Journalist was at pains to contradict. 'This new *Democracy*, or *Government of the People*', he maintained, 'may, if encouraged, come to Tumults, Insurrections, and open *Rebellion*'.[27] The large question with regard to Fielding's politics is whether he subscribed to the version of Whiggism Walpole's journalists were eager to propound, or whether he was more in sympathy with the radical Whiggism usually associated with writers such as 'that founding father among Commonwealthmen', John Trenchard.[28] Some recent commentators have found Fielding's complimentary references to James Harrington's *Oceana* and Algernon Sidney's posthumously-published *Discourses Concerning Government* (which had not yet been sanitized for mainstream Whig consumption) difficult to accept, and have therefore questioned his authorship of *An Address to the Electors of Great Britain* (1740). Yet when Fielding refers to Sidney, as he does on several occasions in his other writings, it is invariably with approval. Thus he not only lists Sidney among 'the Champions of Liberty and of the Protestant Religion',[29] he cites him as an example of a patriot who had sacrificed his life attempting to defend the nation from the consequences of the excesses of the Stuarts: 'It was *James* Duke of *York*, who whetted the Axe which beheaded *Algernon Sidney*, for writing a Book in Defence of our Liberties'.[30]

In this context, critics have not always appreciated that, despite the apparent influence of Harrington on their political thought, in some important respects the 'Old Whigs' or 'Real Whigs' as epitomized by Trenchard were more reactionary than their mainstream counterparts. As their privileging of the rights of the nobility and gentry over those of 'men bred behind counters' clearly insinuates, the authors of *Cato's Letters* sought to uphold a society in which 'the first

Copyright

principle of all power is property'. They had absolutely no intention of either levelling men's estates or empowering the unpropertied. On the contrary, among the reasons put forward in *Cato's Letters* for believing it 'certain, that the distribution of property in England is adapted to our present establishment', was that the 'birth and fortunes' of the gentry 'procure them easy admittance into the legislature; and their near approach to the throne gives them pretences to honourable and profitable employments, which create a dependence from the inferior part of mankind; and the nature of many of their estates, and particularly of their manors, adds to that dependence'.[31]

Not only does this correspond with Fielding's notoriously 'conservative social outlook' – according to which what is expected from 'the inferiour Part of Mankind'[32] is simply the sort of 'absolute Submission to our Superiors'[33] recommended in conduct books like *The Whole Duty of Man* – it also goes a long way towards explaining those reactionary aspects of his social pamphlets which modern liberal commentators find so unsettling. 'One looks in vain for any sign of dissatisfaction with the traditional structures of society', bewails Malvin R. Zirker. 'What one finds is acceptance of fixed social roles, of class privilege and class inequalities, and approval of an antiquated and often brutal criminal code, a code which Fielding, unlike many of his contemporaries, wished to apply vigorously'.[34] It would be misleading to transfer our own political prejudices on to Fielding, however, especially as a significant number of his contemporaries, including those who are still confusingly described as 'the Tory satirists', appear to have subscribed to very similar political opinions.

Copyright

In considering 'that territory in which the opposition of court and country has to be interwoven with that of Whig and Tory, and to which the historiographical catchphrase "the rage of party" is peculiarly applicable', J. G. A. Pocock perceptively notes that this is also the territory 'in which the categories Old Whig and Tory begin to penetrate one another'.[35] Even though, as far as I can gather, Pocock does not apply this interpenetration to the political opinions of the so-called 'Tory satirists', it is potentially of great significance as far as Fielding's politics are concerned. First, given Fielding's outspoken denunciation of 'a general Corruption' as 'one of the greatest Evils ... our Constitution is subject to',[36] it is interesting that, as Trenchard demonstrated in *Cato's Letters*, '[t]his polemic could be Old Whig as easily as it could be Tory'.[37] As Fielding himself put it in the Prologue to *Pasquin*

> ... our Author, rumaging his Brain,
> By various Methods try to entertain;
> Brings a strange Groupe of Characters before you,
> And shews you here at once both *Whig* and *Tory*;
> Or, *Court* and *Country* Party you may call 'em:
> But, without fear and favour he will maul 'em.[38]

Second, the printed versions of *The Author's Farce* and *Tom Thumb* were attributed on their respective title-pages to 'Scriblerus Secundus', and the annotations to *The Tragedy of Tragedies* to 'H. Scriblerus Secundus'.[39] This strongly suggests that, for whatever reason, Fielding was hoping to imply a broad solidarity of target with the Scriblerian satirists, Swift, Pope and Gay. Finally, as Pocock also points out, a significant proportion of Trenchard's later writing 'was directed against the alliance of Whig politicians with the established church and was anticlerical'.[40]

Apparently because he believes there was 'a significant overlap' between the ideas of latitudinarians and deists, Ronald Paulson has recently argued that 'Fielding had both libertine and, with it, deist leanings'. It is certainly true that, as Paulson puts it: 'The agency of reason was the premise of both Latitude Men within the Church of England and deists without'.[41] As the latitudinarians defined Christianity as 'a largely moral religion based on reason', it is scarcely surprising that, as Isabel Rivers explains, 'to its opponents it was subversive, dangerous, and opened the way to Socinianism, deism and atheism'.[42] However, that did not – and does not – mean that latitudinarians discounted revelation. On the contrary, 'there was a profound if elusive difference between a "rational religion," however undogmatic, that supported the Whig latitudinarian ideal of a rational piety practiced within society and amenable to its authority, and a "religion of reason," or worse still "of nature," that offered to make the bold spirit master of its thinking in this world and denied the separateness of the next. The latter smacked of republicanism ... and of enthusiasm'.[43]

Copyright

While Fielding's latitudinarianism was undoubtedly based on reason, he was most certainly neither a deist, nor a Socinian, nor an atheist. On the contrary, he not only believed in revealed religion, he ridiculed 'that Man ... who, by dipping in a Tindal and Bolingbroke, feels himself animated by a strong Impulse to subvert the Religion of his Country'.[44] In deriding the writings of deists, such as Matthew Tindal's *Christianity as Old as the Creation* (1730), or Henry Dodwell's *Christianity Not Founded on Argument* (1741), he stated unequivocally that 'Christianity has taught us something beyond what the Religion of Nature and Philosophy could arrive at; and consequently, that it is not *as old as the Creation*, nor is Revelation useless with Regard to Morality'.[45] At the heart of Fielding's latitudinarianism was the doctrine of good nature which runs through his writings, especially *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*, and he maintained that 'this excellent Doctrine ... if generally followed, would make Mankind much happier, as well as better, than they are'. He even opened the series of essays which he entitled '*The Apology for the* CLERGY' by referring to the 'Awe which the wiser and better Part of Mankind have of the Supreme Being, and consequently of every Thing which seems more immediately to belong to his Service'.[46]

Given that he goes out of his way to insist on his belief in the central tenets of Christianity, even in the very essays from the *Champion* used by Paulson to suggest he had 'deist leanings', the argument that what has hitherto been recognized as a latitudinarian strain in Fielding's thought actually smacks of deism seems difficult to sustain. Were we to explore the link between Fielding's alleged anti-clericalism and the republican strain in his political thinking, however, it might lead us to question not his Christianity so much as what has always been assumed to be his mainstream Whiggism. Critics have neglected to explore this implicit linking of radical Whiggism and anti-clericalism, even though, as Dickinson explains: 'The most Erastian and anti-clerical literature of the age emanated from radical Country Whigs, most notably John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon'.[47] In these circumstances, what we should be trying to do is explain – rather than explain away – those troublesome references to Hampden, Harrington and Sidney which are to be found scattered throughout his writings.

In interrogating Fielding's political ideas, it is neither desirable nor necessary to impose upon them an implausible consistency which cannot be documented. As Swift put it: 'If a Man would register all his Opinions upon Love, Politicks, Religion, Learning and the Like; beginning from his Youth, and so go on to old Age, What a Bundle of Inconsistencies and Contradictions would appear at last?'[48] In seeking to account for the numerous attacks on Fielding's integrity, Brian McCrea regards his 'rapid changes in political allegiances during the 1730s' not only as an indication of his profound 'political uncertainty', but also as the reason he was charged with 'political equivocation' by his contemporaries – 'a charge which recent scholarly works have echoed, and with which any study of Fielding's politics must deal'.[49] There are two major problems with this approach, however. First, it simply assumes, rather than demonstrates, that Fielding actually did change his political allegiances in the 1730s. Second, it fails to interrogate the reasons why his contemporaries might wish to charge him with apostasy. In approaching Fielding's political journalism and pamphleteering in particular, we should keep in mind the important distinction made by John Brewer between what an argument *is*, and what it *does*.[50] It was clearly in the interests of Fielding's journalistic adversaries to besmirch his character, and one of the readiest and easiest ways of doing this was to impugn his integrity.

Copyright

While McCrea's monograph purports to chart Fielding's progress from the 'political uncertainty' of the 1730s to the point at which he committed himself with certainty to 'the Whig establishment',[51] Thomas R. Cleary has discovered to his own satisfaction that the key to Fielding's politics lies in his recruitment in 1735 to 'the faction he would support for the rest of his life' – 'the Broad-Bottom (or Cobhamite or Young Patriot) faction'.[52] Unfortunately, a number of Fielding heavyweights appear to have been persuaded by Cleary's thesis. 'One of the most helpful contributions of Cleary's book is his persuasive argument that

the apparent inconsistencies in Fielding's political career can be accounted for as the effects of his unswerving loyalty to George Lyttelton, his boyhood friend at Eton and, after 1735 presumably, his patron', Battestin has written. 'Cleary is doubtless right in seeing the "Boy Patriots," and particularly Lyttelton, as the key to understanding Fielding's political loyalties for years to come, and their presence among the ranks of the Opposition helps to explain his continued association with the *Craftsman*'.[53] While we have Fielding's own testimony in the Dedication to *Tom Jones* not only that Lyttelton was his 'Patron' but also that 'I partly owe to you my Existence during great Part of the Time which I have been employed in composing it',[54] documentary evidence has yet to be produced to demonstrate that Lyttelton's patronage stretches back before this period of his life. Recently, Thomas Lockwood has convincingly argued against Fielding's involvement in the *Craftsman*,[55] while it is seriously misleading to apply the term, 'Broad Bottom', to Cobham and his 'cubs' in the 1730s. 'Broad Bottom' was in fact 'a cant word … adapted from the concluding sentence of the Duke of Argyll's speech'[56] at 'a great Meeting of Noblemen and Gentlemen, Members of both Houses of Parliament to the Number of 300, at the *Fountain* Tavern, in the *Strand*', held on 12 February 1742 in the immediate aftermath of Walpole's resignation 'to consider of what was expedient to be done in the present critical Conjuncture'.[57] As Horace Walpole remarked a few days later: 'now one hears of nothing but the *Broad Bottom*; it is the reigning cant word, and means, the taking of all parties and people, indifferently, into the ministry'.[58]

Copyright

By this point, as we now know, after reaching an arrangement with Walpole 'upon very advantageous Terms',[59] Fielding had published *The Opposition. A Vision*, his swingeing satire upon the political impotence and incompetence of the very men he had hitherto been extolling as true patriots. While this might readily be viewed as yet another example of his political opportunism, it is difficult to see how it can be interpreted as evidence of his lifelong commitment to 'the Broad-Bottom (or Cobhamite or Young Patriot) faction'. On the contrary, *The Opposition. A Vision* ridiculed the very notion of what Horace Walpole described as 'Broad Bottom' – 'the taking all parties and people, indifferently, into the ministry'. 'The Whigs are the dupes of this, and those in the Opposition, affirm that Tories no longer exist', he explained. 'Notwithstanding this, they will not come into the new ministry, unless what were always reckoned Tories are admitted'.[60] Thus Cleary's insistence that, after 1735, Fielding supported 'the Broad Bottom faction' 'for the rest of his life' is demonstrably unfounded. From 1745 onwards into the 1750s, Fielding wrote on behalf of Whigs in government, whatever their complexion. He remained loyal not to the 'Broad Bottom faction', but to Whigs in power.

That Fielding should have supported successive Whig ministries after the fall of Walpole should surprise no-one. After all, throughout his career his commit-

ment to Whig ideas was unswerving. Regardless of his early attempt to associate some of his writings with the cultural agenda of the Scriblerian satirists, Swift, Pope and Gay, or the notion which some critics have entertained that he was attracted by, if not sympathetic to, the plight of the Jacobite Young Pretender, Bonnie Prince Charlie, Fielding defended Revolution Principles in no uncertain terms. According to Fielding, 'we are a free People, who have recovered our Liberties by the Revolution, and have confirmed and secured them by an Establishment of the Throne in the House of *Hanover*'.[61] During the Forty-Five itself, therefore, he explained that: 'As the preserving the present Royal Family on the Throne, is the only Way to preserve THE VERY BEING of this Nation, a true Patriot will use his most ardent Endeavours, even at the Hazard of his Life, to extinguish a Rebellion which so greatly threatens the Destruction of *Both*'.[62] While Fielding's most fundamental political principles were those of a Whig committed to the Revolution, what is less immediately apparent, as I have intimated, is the version of Whiggism to which he would have subscribed had he been left entirely to his own devices.[63] It is for this reason that, in the course of charting his career as a writer in this political biography, I propose to explain, and to illustrate, what 'being a Whig' meant to Fielding.

Copyright