

The Power Within: *Tom Jones* and the Egyptian Majesty

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I

In recent years there has been a renewal of interest in eighteenth-century novels from quite a different angle: a research pursued under the influence of New Historicism in the late 1980s.¹ John Bender, in his *Imagining the Penitentiary*, defines novels as follows: “[n]ovels as I describe them are primary historical and ideological documents; the vehicles, not the reflections, of social change.”² According to Bender, the novel should not be regarded as a simple reflection of the contemporary social background, but rather as a constructive, or productive discourse.³ From this viewpoint, Bender attempts a reevaluation of Henry Fielding. Bender shows how Fielding, both as a magistrate and as a novelist, played an important role in shaping a new social system of nineteenth-century England. After the close examination of the shift in Fielding’s narrative techniques, from *Shamela* to *Amelia*, Bender concludes that there are, in *Amelia*, signs of a gradual approach to impersonal narration, which is parallel to the reform movement and the construction of the penitentiary prisons in the nineteenth century.⁴

However, if, like Bender, we lay too much emphasis on the impersonal narration of *Amelia*, we cannot derive much significance from *Tom Jones*. Obviously, the narrator of *Tom Jones* is too omniscient to ignore. For example, in the introductory chapters prefixed to all books of the novel, the first-person narrator expounds many ideas about literature, morality, and life in general.⁵ Despite the fairly obtrusive presence of the narrator, however, it

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is difficult to regard this formal characteristic of the novel as the main vehicle representing the contrary concepts of the reform movement. For *Tom Jones* contains a reformist narrative, in which a traditional notion of authority has received important modifications. It seems to me that there is still room for further investigation concerning the relationship between its authoritative narrator and its reformist content. The episode of "the Egyptian Majesty" (Bk. XII, ch. xii) most clearly presents such a reformist narrative, where the obtrusive narrator can no longer be regarded as the contrary vehicle of reformist projects of the late eighteenth century. Thus, the reformist content of the episode can be seen as a clue to understanding how the concept of authority is modified both in literary and legal spheres.

In this paper, I intend to modify Bender's argument, and elucidate how the presence of the narrator is related to reformist ideas in the episode of "the Egyptian Majesty." Focusing on the complex correlation between the form of narration and the content of the narrative in the episode, I hope to indicate another way of reading this novel.

II

Of all the episodes of *Tom Jones*, the most mysterious is that of "the Egyptian Majesty", where Tom, Partridge, and the Post-boy as a guide took the wrong way to Coventry, and underwent a strange experience. Having strayed off into a dirty lane in a storm, they found the light of a barn near the woods, and heard the strange sound of merry-making from within. In order to take shelter from the rain for a while, Tom, together with his companions, entered the barn, where they found a band of gypsies holding a wedding ceremony. After being warmly welcomed by the king of the gypsies, Tom was informed that gypsy society constituted an ideal society under an absolute king.

Martin C. Battestin gives much attention to the meaning of this seemingly deviant episode. According to Battestin, the gypsy barn is described "as a utopia of rogues, a pleasant island of harmony and order apparently untouched by England's dark and tempestuous night of 1745."⁶ By closely referring to the contemporary political situation of England,

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Battestin concludes that the episode is a criticism of Tory-Jacobite absolutism. It is obvious that his interpretation is supported by the narrator's final comment on this episode. At the end of the scene, the narrator intrudes into the narrative, speaking to the reader as follows:

Indeed their Happiness appears to have been so compleat, that we are aware lest some Advocate for arbitrary Power should hereafter quote the Case of those People, as an Instance of the great Advantages which attend that Government above all others.⁷

From this commentary of the narrator, it might be possible to say that the gypsy of the episode is used ironically to show the danger of Tory-Jacobite absolutism; the political system that the gypsies represent cannot be regarded as an alternative to contemporary society. Although its analysis of the novel is different from Battestin's, Bender's analysis of this episode is equally based on the narrator's comment. Following the narrator's definition of the gypsies, Bender concludes that the penal system of the gypsies is far from being a real alternative to the existing judiciary of contemporary England.⁸ Given that only the omniscient narrator we meet here can furnish an adequate account of the episode, we could say that the episode is merely fantastic or unrealistic. Nevertheless, it seems to me that both Battestin and Bender lay too much emphasis on the narrator's authority. Rather they should have given more attention to the reformist narrative, which enables us to understand the meaning of the narrative authority.

First of all, we have to examine what role the authoritative narrator plays in the narrative. In the early part of the episode, the first-person narrator, breaking into the plot, discloses the identity of the extraordinary company in the barn. It is not until this narrator's explanation that the characters as well as the readers are informed of the true shape of the company. On hearing the strange sounds from within, Partridge discourages Tom from advancing towards such a weird barn: "who could be merry-making at this Time of Night, and in such a Place, and such Weather? They can be nothing but Ghosts or Witches, or some Evil Spirits or other. . ." (664). Here the narrator interrupts the advancement of the plot:

To prevent therefore any such Suspicions, so prejudicial to the Credit of an

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Historian, who professes to draw his Materials from Nature only, we shall now proceed to acquaint the Reader who these People were, whose sudden Appearance had struck such Terrors into *Partridge*. . . . (666)

In fact, this extraordinary band is not a supernatural phenomenon but “a Company of *Egyptians*, or as they are vulgarly called *Gypsies* . . . now celebrating the Wedding of one of their Society” (666). The authorial assistance might be effective in making the reader believe the truth of the episode; however, the presence of the narrator here seems unnecessary. For we have already been told that every event, if seemingly unrealistic, is based on true fact. In Bk. VIII, ch. i, the first-person narrator comments:

The only supernatural Agents which can in any Manner be allowed to us Moderns are Ghosts; but of these I would advise an Author to be extremely sparing. . . . [N]or would I advise the Introduction of them at all in those Works, or by those Authors to which, or to whom a Horse-Laugh in the Reader, would be any great Prejudice or Mortification. (399)

It is clear that the narrator’s explanation of the gypsies reflects the literary doctrine quoted above: modern writers should not bring supernatural phenomenon into their works for fear of provoking “a Horse-Laugh in the Reader.” Thus, through the repetition of the narrative rule, the narrator embodies two different aspects at the level of the narration: the narrator, putting the rule into practice, adds a touch of reality to what is narrated; at the same time, the narrator may seem too obtrusive to the reader who has already read this rule.

Then a supplementary explanation is given by this obtrusive narrator as follows:

It is impossible to conceive a happier Set of People than appeared here to be met together. The utmost Mirth indeed shewed itself in every Countenance; nor was their Ball totally void of all Order and Decorum. Perhaps it had more than a Country Assembly is sometimes conducted with: For these People are subject to a formal Government and Laws of their own, and all pay Obedience to one great Magistrate whom they call their King. (667)

The narrator’s explanation gives the reader the further knowledge concerning the gypsies, that they make up an ideal society where “all Order and Decorum” are maintained under a king. Soon after this authorial

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assistance, the narrator recedes from the foreground of the narrative. Here, we notice the important change of the narrative voice: from the obtrusive narrator to a character, the king. He warmly welcomes Tom's party, and introduces his band to them: "may be you will surprise more, when you hear de *Gypsy* be as orderly and well govern People as any upon Face of de Earth" (668). Certainly, this self-introduction by this impersonal character is tedious to the reader, for what is said here is practically the same as the narrator's explanation quoted above. Nevertheless, the repetition has another meaning. It is the king who assumes the substitute authority of the narration after the disappearance of the obtrusive narrator. At this moment, through the transposition of the authority into a character, we find the formal change of the narration of the episode. In fact, the subsequent narrative is invented by the king. Viewed in this light, the authoritative narrator makes effective use of the repetition: on the one hand, the narrator heightens the reality of what is narrated; on the other hand, the narrator transposes the authority of the narration to a character within the narrative.

Moreover, the narrative invented by the king reflects some of the reformist projects of the late eighteenth century. In the conversation between the king and Tom, the king as a magistrate urges the necessity of an effective system of punishment:

For me assure you it be ver troublesome ting to be King, and always to do Justice; me have often wish to be de private *Gypsy* when me have been forced to punish my dear Friend and Relation; for dough we never put to Death, our Punishments be ver severe. Dey make de *Gypsy* ashamed of demselves, and dat be ver terrible Punishment; me ave scarce ever known de *Gypsy* so punish do Harm any more. (669)

The king's statement shows his critical attitude toward traditional manner of executing punishment.⁹ The first important point is the issue concerning the king's prerogative of mercy: the king reveals the "ver troublesome ting" inherent in such an authoritative position. The second, which is of more importance, is the problem of the punitive means: the king adopts shame as a substitute for the death penalty. A little later, we see the king carry out the punishment of shame upon a gypsy couple. Therefore, the episode, at the level of the narrative, touches on some of the reformist projects of the late

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eighteenth century. Here, it seems possible to draw a provisional conclusion about the relationship between the narrator and the narrative: when the obtrusive narrator transposes an omniscient self into a character, the reformist narrative is to be presented by this narrator.

III

Before the examination of the meaning of authority at the level of the narrative, some historical context needs to be given to illuminate the main purpose of the reform movement in the late eighteenth-century England. Fielding's *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers* came out two years after the publication of *Tom Jones*. In this tract, Fielding, as a magistrate for Middlesex, asserts with emphasis the need to reform the traditional legal system:

To unite the Ideas of Death and Shame is not so easy as may be imagined. All Ideas of the Latter being absorbed by the Former. To prove this, I will appeal to any Man who hath seen an Execution, or a Procession to an Execution; let him tell me when he hath beheld a poor Wretch, bound in a Cart, just on the Verge of Eternity, all pale and trembling with his approaching Fate, whether the Idea of Shame hath ever intruded on his Mind? Much less will the bold daring Rogue who glories in his present Condition, inspire the Beholder with any such Sensation.¹⁰

What this passage makes clear at once is the ineffective social message of the traditional manner of carrying out an execution. To begin with, the primary aim of the punishment is to "unite the Ideas of Death and Shame," to exert a deterrent effect on the people beholding "a poor Wretch, bound in a Cart." Yet, in the public execution, it seems hard to achieve this aim. For, if the condemned criminal is unexpectedly arrogant, the people may instead feel the inadequacy of the punitive power. The absolute power to punish, then, reveals its own limitation; moreover, even worse, there is a danger of provoking antipathy among the people toward the king. For this reason, "Fielding," as Leon Radzinowicz points out, "was most anxious to abolish both the processions to Tyburn and public executions."¹¹

Michel Foucault explicates the meaning of the public execution from a singular viewpoint: the double meaning of the "body" on the scaffold.¹² Cer-

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tainly, the only body that people could see was that of the suffering criminal who was physically attacked by the executioner. Nevertheless, it is generally believed, Foucault points out, that an offense against the law was also an attack to the body of the king. In this way, the king's body emerges symbolically behind the presence of the criminal on the scaffold. Therefore, the execution could be seen as a "body-to-body struggle" between two persons. When Fielding states the difficulty of evoking "the Ideas of Shame" from the criminal, therefore, the statement recalls the crucial moment when the body of the king is beaten down in reverse. In short, one of the chief aims of the reform movement was the abolition of the public execution in order to maintain or increase the efficiency of the power to punish.

It is necessary, at this stage, to examine the trial scene in this episode. At the trial, the king blames a gypsy couple for their sexual immorality, rendering a humane judgement fit to the crime. In the previous chapter, I pointed out that the gypsy king as an impersonal narrator presented a reformist narrative. Now, I will analyze the difference between the traditional execution and the one the gypsy king carries out. This analysis will illuminate the distinguishing characteristics of the king's authority.

During the dialogue between Tom and the king, an argument suddenly breaks out in the barn: Partridge is accused of adultery. Partridge, sharing the wedding feast, is allured by a young gypsy wife into an inner part of the barn where they "were discovered in a very improper Manner by the Husband of the *Gypsy*, who . . . had kept a watchful Eye over his Wife, and had dogged her to the Place." Because of "the plain Evidence"—the husband has observed the actions of his wife since she first spoke to Partridge—it is impossible for Partridge to defend himself. As the king asks Tom: "[s]ir, you have hear what dey say, what Punishment do you tink your Man deserve?" Tom offers money to the husband on condition that "the full Forgiveness" would be given both to Partridge and the wife. Nevertheless, the king does not allow the husband to accept the offer: "[m]e be sorry to see any *Gypsy* dat have no more Honour dan to sell de Honour of his Wife for Money" (670). Then, the king sentences them to infamy:

If you had de Love for your Wife, you would have prevented dis Matter, and not

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endeavour to make her de Whore dat you might discover her. Me do order dat you have no Money given you, for you deserve Punishment not Reward; me do order derefore, dat you be de infamous *Gypsy*, and do wear Pair of Horns upon your Forehead for one Month, and dat your Wife be called de Whore, and pointed at all dat Time. . . . (671)

With this sentence, we see the appearance of a new method of punishment. For the purpose of evoking “the Idea of Shame” in the criminal, the king orders the husband to put the “Pair of Horns” on his head. Certainly, the means of execution adopted here might give a comical and ridiculous impression to the reader: the “Pair of Horns,” apparently associated with the cuckold, makes this alternative punishment seem far-fetched. Despite this unrealistic means of punishment, the execution, I think, represents the essence of the reform movement. This is because we can find in it the emergence of a new target of punishment.

What is the target of punishment? Before the reform movement, it was the body of the criminal. In the public execution, the body, as Foucault explains, had the function of a subject who avenged the sovereign on the scaffold. Even if the king’s power were great, the criminal subject could be a challenger, displaying the limits of the power to punish. In the gypsy punishment, there cannot be found such a dangerous subject who directly confronts the king’s body. For it is the soul that is the new target of the punishment. It is clear that the criminal gypsies are never physically attacked by the king. As a result of the king’s judgement that “de infamous Gypsy” must bear the mark of his crime, the husband is made to be ashamed of himself. Here we can find the emergence of the mind as an object of penalty and, at the same time, the disappearance of the body as a subject. Hence the body is no longer an important factor in punishment; it is regarded merely as a base on which to fix the punitive mark. We may note, in passing, that the bodies the criminal gypsies present here are not exactly what Foucault calls “docile bodies,” which are trained, exercised, and supervised in a program of discipline in the penitentiary régime.¹³

As a natural result of the shift in the punitive target from the body to the soul, we can see how the meaning of “example” has changed in the punishment. In the public execution, the example meant the criminal subject on

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whom physical pain was directly inscribed. In the punishment of the gypsies, the example is an impersonal medium, by which power achieves indirectly the transparent relation between the criminal act and its punishment. It is by the vehicle of the "Pair of Horns" that the other gypsy members, who observe it, can bring to mind both the nature of the committed crime and the remedy to correct it.

It follows from these observations that the concept of authority is reconstructed by the king in the process of his punitive operation. In parallel with the shift in the meaning of the body, the king cannot be regarded as the subject who directly confronts the criminal body. Rather the king is transformed into the operational "moment" which influences the criminal mind through the medium of the example. Thus, the authority of the king is something like a hinge which connects the crime with the punishment: the king does not exercise any absolute power.

IV

Having observed how the authority of the king is reformulated in his society, I will attempt to extend the argument with the help of Michel Foucault's concept of "power." Before Foucault, power was understood as a property possessed by a person or a group of people. According to Foucault, however, it is a strategic function whose effect is perceptible only within "a network of relations, constantly in tension, in activity, rather than a privilege that one might possess. . . ." ¹⁴ This new concept of power makes it possible to clarify the gypsy king as a function, and subsequently to grasp the significance of the authority of the narrator.

In gypsy society authority is not regarded as a privileged status taken by a dominant class:

About a thousand or two thousand Year ago . . . dere was a great what you call, —a Volution among de *Gypsy*; for dere was de Lord *Gypsy* in dose Days; and dese Lord did quarrel vid one anoder about de Place; but de King of de *Gypsy* did demolish dem all, and made all his Subject equal vid each oder. . . . (668–69)

As explicitly shown in this statement by the king, the political system of the gypsies is characterized by the abolition of class distinctions among the peo-

ple. Nevertheless, this does not mean that common people are entitled to authority under their political system. Only the king possesses power: at the outset of the episode, Tom received the impression that "there seemed . . . to be somewhat in his [the king's] Air which denoted Authority." However, the king cannot hold power as a property. First, there is no symbol for the authority of the king: he "was very little distinguished in Dress from his Subjects, nor had he any *Regalia* of Majesty to support his Dignity" (667). In other words, the king makes no indication of his privileged position but merely has the "Air which denoted Authority." Secondly, as we have seen, the king releases his hold of the prerogative of mercy. Furthermore, the king does not have any traditional power to punish: he simply punishes instead of taking revenge on the criminal body. Only through the effect of the punishment emerges the significance of the king. Hence the king has no privileged position as ruler but manifests a function by which the effectiveness of punishment is heightened.

This new concept of power draws attention to the authority of the narrator. At the introduction of this episode, the first-person narrator, giving a full account of gypsies, takes an authoritative attitude. A little later, the narrator transposes an omniscient authority into the king. At this stage, the king seems to have the authority of the narration; the king, assuming the role of the narrator, presents the reformist narrative which suggests Fielding's legal tract. After the trial scene, the meaning of the authority changes completely. In fact, the omniscient king no longer has any authority. The king, then, recedes from the narrative; in place of the king, the first-person narrator returns to the foreground and presents the implied meaning of the episode to the reader. This presence of the omniscient narrator might seem clamorous to the reader. However, the role of this narrator is not the same as that of the narrator who introduced the episode. Despite apparent omniscience, the narrator does not hold the same authority any longer. This is because the king, to whom the narrator transferred the omniscient self, has dismissed the traditional idea of authority as a possession.

This presence of the narrator without the authority of the narrative invites a further investigation: what is the function of the narrator? A key to the question lies in the narrator's address to the reader: the narrator here

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alerts the reader to the “truth” of the episode. Referring to the evil of an absolute monarchy, the narrator admonishes the reader against the dangers of “arbitrary Power.” However, this commentary on the narrative is off the mark, because the king, if seemingly absolute, does not have real power. In other words, the narrator, still bound by the traditional notion of power, involuntarily betrays his weakness. For, in spite of his strong emphasis on the credibility of this episode, the narrator fails to convince the reader. While adding a comment in order to stress the truthfulness of the episode, the narrator, ironically enough, perplexes the reader. In the conclusion of the episode, the narrator remarks:

Nor can the Example of the *Gypsies*, tho' possibly they may have long been happy under this Form of Government, be here urged; since we must remember the very material Respect in which they differ from all other People, and to which perhaps this their Happiness is entirely owing, namely, that they have no false Honours among them; and that they look on Shame as the most grievous Punishment in the World. (673)

The gypsy band is presented as an ideal society, but the reader who remembers the trial scene remains skeptical about this comment. For the question concerning the effectiveness of the penalty remains unsettled. That is, although the gypsies constitute a reformatory society by adopting the “Pair of Horns” as a tool of the punishment, the surveillance of this punishment is never represented. In fact, the trial scene ends as follows: “[t]he *Gypsies* immediately proceeded to execute the Sentence, and left *Jones* and *Partridge* alone with his Majesty” (671). The gypsies disappear from the view; accordingly, the results of the punishment remain ambiguous.

In this way, analysis that focuses on the narrator enables the reader to perceive what is not represented on the surface of the narrative. The narrator, who is bound by the traditional notion of power, attempts to convince the reader of the truthfulness of the narrative. However, the narrator does not have sufficient authority, and the episode ends enigmatically. Thus, the narrator embodies a contradiction and shows the limits of the reform movement. In this way, Bender’s argument, which only takes into account the omniscience of the narrator, is incomplete; even worse, there is a danger of its reinforcing traditional concepts of power. Seen from a viewpoint that

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lays too much emphasis on the narrator's authoritative power, this episode may seem unrealistic. But, if we take a viewpoint of power as a function, we can grasp the hidden meaning of the narrative and envisage the emergence of a subtler function of power.

This paper has shown that the novel's unusual framework regulated by the first-person narrator has a different kind of truth on consideration of changes in narrative authority. Thus, the episode of "the Egyptian Majesty" is essential to the understanding of the role of the narrator in the whole narrative. In addition, the examination of this episode suggests that the literary field is equally caught up within the interplay of the power. Even from Bender's point of view, therefore, *Tom Jones* deserves as much, if not more, attention as *Shamela* and *Amelia*.

NOTES

¹ See Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel 1600-1740* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1987); Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnavalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1986); Lennard J. Davis, *Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel* (New York: Columbia UP, 1983). For the reviews of these books with close connections to New Historicism, see Robert Folkenflik, "The Heirs of Ian Watt," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 25 (Winter 1991-92): 203-17; "Recent Studies in the Restoration and Eighteenth Century," *SEL* 27 (Summer 1987): 503-53.

² John Bender, *Imagining the Penitentiary: Fiction and the Architecture of Mind in Eighteenth-Century England* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987) 1. Bender argues that attitudes toward prison which were formulated in the novelistic discourse between 1719 and 1779 caused the later construction of actual penitentiary prisons. The new penitentiaries are characterized by the geometric disposition of individual cells and the rigid daily routines.

³ For the relationship between novels and social background, see Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (1957; London: Hogarth P, 1987) chap. 1. Demonstrating analogies between philosophical and literary realism, Watt argues a connection between the rise of the novel and the transformation of the social context of eighteenth-century England. For the relationship between Watt's 'formal realism' and Fielding's novels, see, Andrew Wright, *Henry Fielding: Mask and Feast* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1965); J. Paul Hunter, *Occasional Form: Henry Fielding and the Chain of Circumstance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1975).

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⁴ See Bender chap. 6, especially 180–85. For a highly useful account of the reform movement in eighteenth-century England, see Leon Radzinowicz, *The Movement for Reform* (London: Stevens & Sons, 1948–86) 165–493, vol. 1 of *A History of English Criminal Law and Its Administration from 1750*, 5 vols. (London: Stevens & Sons, 1948–86). For further details of the construction of the penitentiary prisons, see Frank McLynn, *Crime and Punishment in Eighteenth-century England* (1989; Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991) 257–98. The 1779 Penitentiary Act marked a turning point in the history of the prison. This Act recommended the building of a new kind of house of correction, to be called a penitentiary.

⁵ See Robert L. Chibka, “Taking ‘THE SERIOUS’ Seriously: The Introductory Chapters of *Tom Jones*,” *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* 31 (Spring 1990): 23–45.

⁶ Martin C. Battestin, “Tom Jones and ‘His Egyptian Majesty’: Fielding’s Parable of Government,” *PMLA* 82 (1967): 68. See also, Manuel Schonhorn, “Fielding’s Ecphrastic Moment: Tom Jones and His Egyptian Majesty,” *Studies in Philology* 78 (Summer 1981): 305–23.

⁷ Henry Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones: A Foundling*, ed. Martin C. Battestin and Fredson Bowers, 2 vols. (Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 1975) 671. Subsequent references to this edition appear parenthetically.

⁸ See Bender 184.

⁹ For a full account of the punishment before the reform movement, see J. M. Beattie, *Crime and the Courts in England 1660–1800* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1986) 450–519.

¹⁰ Fielding, *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers and Related Writings*, ed. Malvin R. Zirker (Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 1988) 168.

¹¹ Radzinowicz 208.

¹² Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1979) 32–69. See also Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton, Princeton UP, 1957).

¹³ Foucault 135–69.

¹⁴ Foucault 26.

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Of all the episodes in *Tom Jones*, the most curious is that of “the Egyptian Majesty,” where Tom and Partridge encounter a strange band of gypsies. This paper aims to examine this unique episode by focusing on its narrative authority.

Among influential critics of Henry Fielding, John Bender, in his *Imagining the Penitentiary*, attempts a reevaluation of Fielding. In examining the nature of the shifts in the narrative voices of Fielding’s novels, Bender maintains that Fielding’s practice as a novelist gradually moves towards upholding the establishment of the penitentiary régime in the nineteenth century. However, if, like Bender, we give strong emphasis to the transformations of narrative techniques among Fielding’s works, we cannot derive much significance from *Tom Jones*.

Bender brusquely treats Tom’s encounter with the gypsy as unrealistic. I claim, however, that it is precisely because of the seemingly unrealistic or irregular characteristics of this interpolated episode that we can recognize the more complex structures of the narrative and reflect further on the reform movement in the late eighteenth century.