The novelists of the 1740s, Richardson, Smollett, Fielding, and a host of lesser contemporaries, regularly incorporated the social issues of their time into their novels, as Jerry Beasley recently has so persuasively shown us in *Novels of the 1740s*. In chapter one, I examined the remarkable precision of Fielding's descriptions of current concerns in *Amelia*. *Amelia*, published in 1751, brings us to the 1750s; the 1760s and 1770s are represented by *The Fool of Quality* and *Evelina*, and *Sandford and Merton* brings us to the 1780s. The second half of my book looks at the novelists of the 1790s. Beasley's thesis, that the novel grew up as a form shaped by its ties to contemporary events, illuminates the entire span. Each of the novels I discuss responds to specific social stimuli.

The novels' early interest is economic issues; in the 1790s, the center shifts to politics. Only Inchbald of these novelists really combines the two perspectives, and, interestingly, hers is structurally the least satisfying of the novels of the 1790s. In this last decade, it is clear enough why politics would be in the forefront—the offshoots of the French Revolution and the English Treason Trials, for example, were much on people's minds. The 1760s through the 1780s were decades of immense economic change in England, and the novels of this time reflect society's attempts to learn to deal with these new conditions. Part of the response to the economic conditions of the second half of the eighteenth century is the creation of a body of children's liter-
ature, that is, literature written specifically for children, that itself makes reference to social issues.

*The Fool of Quality* and *Sandford and Merton* are children's books and take children as their heroes. Both authors see their work as educational and want their novels to be used in the teaching of children and the shaping of their moral perceptions. The element of social protest is as strong in *The Fool of Quality* and *Sandford and Merton* as it is in *Amelia*, although the emphasis is different: it is not institutions so much that are to blame as it is men—specifically, aristocrats. It is not society, or the legal system, or the prison system that angers Brooke and Day, it is the rich parasitic idler who takes what the poor work to produce, squanders it, and leaves both himself and the poor man whose produce he has consumed no better off. Brooke and Day never stop to consider any larger forces that can disrupt ideal relationships among men. They assume that the individual is the guiding force and that, through proper education, he can be helped to develop into a productive and benevolent member of society. Education is central to this process, and once such people are created, society will prosper. Brooke and Day do not set out to change the basic inequities in social relationships; they are not going to do away with poverty, for example, but they are going to make the "supporting" of "that condition of life" more bearable "for those who must support it always" (*Sandford*, vol. II, p. 207). It is a realistic, in some senses very humane vision: since the individual can be shaped, he must be made as benevolent and as societally useful as humanly possible. The means to that improvement is education, and education, therefore, becomes one of society's most sacred duties. The books are tools in this sacred process.

Both stories show in detail the education of a child, or, more specifically, the education of a pair of children. The children in *The Fool of Quality* are the sons of the aristocrat Richard Moreland. We see little of the older son, also named Richard. His is not the preferred plan of education: he is kept at home through his childhood and quite thoroughly spoiled there; as a young man, he goes abroad to finish his education and dies
there of the pox (!). The younger son, Harry, is separated early from the pernicious influences of an aristocratic education. As an infant, he is put out to nurse and does not even visit the paternal mansion until he is five years old. Soon after, he is taken away from his nurse by Mr. Fenton, his father's (long-lost) brother, who raises him to adulthood. Mr. Fenton, a second son, is a successful merchant—in Brooke's terms, he produces rather than consumes. He teaches Harry to be a useful member of society. Social usefulness, the quality most applauded in the book, implies both benevolence towards others and self-sufficiency for oneself. Aristocratic values, which imply almost total dependence on others combined with a disdainful, frivolous outlook are condemned. The pattern is virtually identical in Thomas Day's *Sandford and Merton*. Again, aristocratic and wholesome educations are contrasted, and the aristocratic child is removed from his family in order to be properly educated—that is, raised to be a benevolent and productive member of society. Tommy Merton, the spoiled rich child, is sent to the house of Farmer Sandford to be educated with the farmer's son Harry. As in *The Fool of Quality*, the education is carefully plotted for the reader, and during its presentation, Day repeatedly finds the opportunity to attack the values of the upper classes and to praise the less artificial values exemplified by Farmer Sandford and his son Harry. In both books, disapproval of the upper classes is always sharp and sometimes even shrill.

Brooke's criticism begins on the first page. The description of Richard Moreland, the father of Henry, sets the tone for most of the comments on the aristocracy. Richard returns to England from his "grand tour" shortly before the Restoration, and being too gay and too dissolute for the plodding and hypocrisy of Cromwell... he withdrew to the mansion house of his forefathers.

In the country, he amused himself with his bottle, hounds, hawks, race-horses... But, on the restoration of his majesty, of pleasurable memory, he hastened to court, where he rolled away and shone as in his native sphere. He was always of the party of the
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... where virtue was laughed out of countenance, and where all manner of dissoluteness became amiable and recommendable by the bursts of merriment and zest of wit. But toward the latter end of this droll reign, Earl Richard, being advanced in age, and being still older in constitution than years, began to think of providing an heir to his estate; and, as he had taken vast pains to impair it, he married a citizen's daughter who wanted a title, and with her got a portion of one hundred thousand pounds, which was equally wanting on his part. (Fool, vol. I, pp. 34–35)

It is not a flattering picture, certainly, and part of its bite is that the earl is not the exception but the rule of the man of inherited wealth. As we become better acquainted with Richard Moreland, we realize that he is not an evil man nor even an unduly profligate one. Rather, he acts in conformity with the general order of his class.

When Brooke describes “a brilliant concourse of the neighboring gentry” which takes place at the Moreland mansion some years after Richard’s marriage, he is obviously much influenced by the grosser comic naming devices of Restoration comedy (e.g., The Way of the World). Aristocratic society has a most inflated sense of its own importance and a singularly deficient degree of worth and intelligence:

There was Sir Christopher Cloudy, who knew much but said nothing; with his very conversable lady, who scarce knew by halves, but spoke by wholesale. In the same range was Sir Standish Stately, who in all companies held the first place, in his own esteem. Next to him sat Lady Childish; it was at least thirty years since those follies might have become her, which appeared so very ridiculous at the age of fifty-five. By her side were the two Stiltons; a blind man would swear that the one was a clown and the other a gentleman, by the tones of their voices. Next to these were two pair of very ill mated turtles; Mr. Gentle, who sacrificed his fine sense and affluent fortune to the vanity and bad temper of a silly and turbulent wife; and Squire Sulky, a brutal fool, who tyrannized over the most sensible and most amiable of her sex.

On the opposite side was Lord Prim, who evidently laboured hard to be easy in conversation; and next to him was Lord Flippant, who spoke nonsense with great facility. By his side sat the fair but dejected Miss Willow; she had lately discovered what a misfortune
it was to be born to wit, beauty, and affluence, the three capital qualifications that lead the sex to calamity. Next to her was Colonel Jolly. . . . Had he known how to time his fits, the laugh might have grown catching. Below him was seated Mrs. Mirror, a widow lady, industriously accomplished in the faults of people of fashion. And below her sat the beloved and respected Mr. Meekly, who always sought to hide behind the merits of the company. Next to him was Major Settle—no one spoke with more importance on things of no signification.

These were the principal characters. The rest could not be said to be of any character at all. (Fool, vol. I, pp. 37–39)

The assembly lacks values, though it is prodigiously supplied with affectations. The few characters in this brief survey who might claim our respect are tyrannized by convention into giving up their good sense and blending in with their peers. And this society molds the children who inherit aristocratic position and power. Brooke finds the prospect of continuing traditions of shallowness and frivolity unacceptable, and his book is, in large part, directed at the education of the parents so that they can properly educate the children. Richard Moreland is not a bad man: he is rather insufficiently influenced by appropriate values. Even his wife, who seems to us a very frivolous, even silly person, reflects her society's values rather than a personal, deliberate evil.

Such people raise children who are callous, unthinking, and ungenerous. The children reflect their parents' values as they interact with each other and, even more, as they interact with someone like Harry, who is not guided by aristocratic values but who reacts guilelessly and humanely to any overture. When Harry is introduced to the company of his brother Richard and Richard's friends, the little aristocrats play several cruel tricks on him—most of the tricks, we should note, proposed by the lady of the house. The children taunt and even assault Harry; he bears with a great deal and only retaliates when he is maliciously injured. The other children and his mother see him as a simpleton; to the reader, however, it is clear that Harry behaves far better than his peers.

Typical of the tests given Harry, and of the difference in
values shown by the aristocrats and the simpleton, is the following game set up by Harry’s mother:

My lady . . . told the earl that she resolved . . . to prove the wits of the youngster . . . and, whispering to Dicky, he immediately went out and took with him his companions. Soon after, Dick returns without his shoes, and with a pitiful face, cries, Brother Harry, I want a pair of shoes sadly, will you give me yours? Yes, I will, said Harry, and instantly strips and presents them to him. Then entered another boy and demanded his stockings in the like petitioning manner; another begged his hat, another his coat, another his waistcoat, all of which he bestowed without hesitation; but, when the last boy came in and petitioned for his shirt, No, I won’t, said Harry, a little moody, I want a shirt myself. My lady then exclaimed, Upon my conscience, there is but the thickness of a bit of linen between this child and a downright fool. But my lord rose up, took Harry in his arms, and having tenderly embraced him, God bless thee, my boy, he cried, and make thee an honour to Old England! (Fool, vol. I, pp. 64–65)

Harry’s generosity is tempered only by his good sense. His father recognizes that Harry’s behavior is exemplary, but the constraints of society are so strong that even such recognition does not allow the father actually to change the behavior within his house.³ Harry’s mother, mistaking his strength of character for deficiency of wit, considers that he is “a stock of a child . . . a statue” (Fool, vol. I, p. 67). The last of her tests is the entrance of a ghost; all the other children are terrified of the ghoulish figure which comes through the door. Only Harry stands unafraid. Brooke’s description of the incident is a pointed comment on the character of the “better classes”: “The panic grew instantly contagious, and all this host of little gentry who were, thereafter, to form our senates, and to lead our armies, ran, shrinking and shivering, to hide themselves in holes and to tremble in corners” (Fool, vol. I, p. 71).

Children such as these, for Brooke, require a better education not just for their own sakes but for that of society. In Brooke’s perspective, such children grow into selfish, cowardly, unmotivated adults whose only societal function is to consume the fruits of other men’s labor and whose personal satisfactions
are momentary and, upon any kind of introspective examination, not very satisfying at all. Richard Moreland, for example, is educated to be an oldest son. Too late he realizes that the values he had always accepted are productive neither of social nor of personal satisfaction. He laments the fact that he “had the misfortune to be born to a title and a vast estate” because, continually beset by “sychophants and deceivers,” he was “trained from . . . infancy to . . . prejudices, errors, and false estimates of everything” (Fool, vol. I, p. 93)—just as his son would be if Harry were to be educated at home.

Aristocratic education results in a lack of discrimination, a snobbery so intense that it leads Richard as a young man to reject his own brother, merely because the brother has been apprenticed to a trader. This is not just the conditioned reflex of a callow youth, for years later when he meets his brother again, he makes the same mistake. When he is introduced to the man whom he later discovers to be his lost brother, Richard is struck by the stranger’s dignity and grace. The man has come to Richard as the representative of a group of citizens who seek redress for certain infringements on their charter. Richard does not even wait to hear the arguments; it is enough for him that the advocate’s appearance is impressive. But when he hears that the man is a merchant, he is as quick to dismiss him as he had been to accept him when he thought the man was an aristocrat. Richard is angry that he was “deceived by the dignity of his appearance” and makes it clear that he finds it objectionable that those of the “lower ranks” should “confound . . . themselves with gentlemen” (Fool, vol. I, pp. 95–96).

Aristocratic education places inordinate value on appearance and rank. Brooke wants to teach his young readers that such values are wrong, that a man’s contribution to society rather than his appearance or his hereditary rank must be judged. Part of what comes into play here is the contemporary debate about what place trade should assume (had assumed, in fact) in the conduct of the nation’s affairs. Responding to Richard’s patronizing remarks, his brother the merchant gives him—and the reader—a lecture on the producers in society. While Rich-
ard continues to insist that it is all well and good to use the services of those of lesser rank—the “baker, barber, brewer, butcher, hatter, hosier, and taylor” (Fool, vol. I, p. 97)—as long as he need not have anything personally to do with them, the brother explains that those who produce goods and services are of inestimable value to society and should be respected accordingly. In fact, he makes it clear, in the visit of the trader to the peer, it is the peer who is honored. Richard is told that he should not “despise some, merely for being of use to others,” for

the wealth, prosperity, and importance of every thing upon earth, arises from the TILLER, the MANUFACTURER, and the MERCHANT; and that, as nothing is truly estimable, save in proportion to its utility, these are, consequently, very far from being contemptible characters. The tiller supplies the manufacturer, the manufacturer supplies the merchant, and the merchant supplies the world with all its wealth. It is thus that industry is promoted, arts invented and improved, commerce extended, superfluities mutually vended, wants mutually supplied; that each man becomes a useful member of society; that societies become further of advantage to each other, and that states are enabled to pay and dignify their upper servants with titles, rich revenues, principalities, and crowns. (Fool, vol. I, pp. 96–98)

A lively debate follows, with Richard trying very hard to put the merchant “in his place”; the merchant, however, rather obviously has the better of the argument. The exchange helps Brooke to expose the pretensions and social irresponsibilities of the hereditary rich while it underlines the positive role of the newly powerful merchant classes. It begins with Richard taunting the merchant that he would

have no quarrel . . . to the high and mighty my lords the merchants, if each could be humbly content with the profits of his profession, without forming themselves into companies, exclusive of their brethren, our itinerant merchants and pedlars. I confess myself an enemy to the monopolies of your chartered companies and city corporations; and I can perceive no evil consequence to the public or the state, if all such associations were this instant dissolved.
The merchant retorts:

I am sensible that the gentlemen of large landed properties are apt to look upon themselves as the pillars of the state, and to consider their interests and the interests of the nation, as very little beholden to or dependent on trade; tho' the fact is, that those very gentlemen would lose nine parts in ten of their returns, and the nation nine tenths of her yearly revenues, if industry and the arts (promoted as I said by commerce) did not raise the products of lands to tenfold their natural value.  

The manufacturer, on the other hand, depends on the landed interest for nothing save the materials of his craft; and the merchant is wholly independent of all lands, or, rather, he is the general patron thereof. I must further observe to your lordship, that this beneficent profession is by no means confined to individuals, as you would have it. Large societies of men, nay, mighty nations, may and have been merchants. When societies incorporate for such a worthy purpose, they are formed as a foetus within the womb of the mother, a constitution within the general state or constitution; their particular laws and regulations ought, always, to be conformable to those of the national system, and, in that case, such corporations greatly conduce to the peace and good order of cities and large towns, and to the general power and prosperity of the nation.

A nation that is a merchant has no need of an extent of lands, as it can derive to itself subsistence from all parts of the globe.

Should England ever open her eyes to her own interest, she will follow the same prosperous and ennobling profession; she will conform to the consequences of her situation. She will see that, without a naval pre-eminence, she cannot be safe; and that, without trade, her naval power cannot be supported. Her glory will also flow from this source of her interests. . . . She will then find that a single triumph of her flag will be more available for her prosperity, than the conquest of the four continents; that her pre-eminence by sea will carry and diffuse her influence over all lands; and, that universal influence is universal dominion.

Avarice . . . may pile; robbery may plunder; new mines may be opened . . . conquerors may win kingdoms; but all such means of acquiring riches are transient and determinable; while industry and commerce are the natural, the living, the never-failing fountain, from whence the wealth of this world can alone be taught to flow. (Fool, vol. I, pp. 99–102)

Richard, still unable to get beyond his own prejudices of rank,
wonders that the merchant “can have the effrontery to insin­uate a preference of [himself] and [his] fellow-cits, to our British nobles and princes, who derive their powers and dignities from the stedfast extent of their landed possessions” (*Fool*, vol. I, p. 102). With obvious contempt, he directs the merchant to seek elsewhere for redress of his grievances. The merchant, having finally had enough, drops the hint that he is the long-lost More­land brother—and stalks out. Too late, Richard realizes that his initial valuation of the man, based on bearing and conduct, had been correct and that only his prejudice had kept him from acknowledging the merchant’s obvious worth.

Kingsley’s statement of the subject of the book, that it is about the education of an ideal nobleman by an ideal merchant prince, gives us some indication of how to read these passages. Brooke is clearly on the side of the merchant prince, but he is not against the aristocrats. He is, rather, against propagation of a class that frivolously consumes but never produces—exactly the complaint of the radicals such as Inchbald thirty years later. Brooke’s perspective is that all members of society, aristocrat and laborer, have contributions to make and that, in the case of the upper classes, people must be educated to their duties. Although their exchange reads against the aristocrat, it should be borne in mind that Brooke makes the point that the king, the chief aristocrat, recognizes the merchant’s worth and honors him accordingly.

The book unmistakably admires the TILLER, the MANU­FACTURER, and the MERCHANT, especially the merchant. Fascination with the power and potential of trade already had been voiced fifty years earlier by Addison and Steele, who in their character Sir Andrew Freeport describe a merchant of great eminence in the city of London. A person of indefatigable industry, strong reason, and great experience. His notions of trade are noble and generous. . . . [He] will tell you that it is a stupid and barbarous way to extend dominion by arms; for true power is to be got by arts and industry. . . . A general trader of good sense is pleasanter company than a general scholar; . . . having a natural unaffected eloquence, the perspicuity of his discourse gives the same pleasure that wit would be in another man.
Britain had always been a trading nation, and during the eighteenth century, trade absorbed an ever-increasing share of the British consciousness, as economic movement was accompanied by growing awareness of the social implications of that expansion. Donald Greene notes that by midcentury “with Britain’s technological superiority over the rest of the world, it seemed reasonable to many (such as Adam Smith and his disciple, the younger Pitt) for her to put all her economic eggs in the one basket of unrestrained commercial and industrial expansion, buying raw materials from the outside, manufacturing them cheaply, and selling the finished product back to the rest of the world at a profit sufficient to enable her to buy food for her population.” Brooke’s fascination with the role of the merchant, and with the concept of the merchant state, reflects contemporary events and attitudes. In a novel concerned as his is with the appropriate education of a child, the discussion between the aristocrat Moreland and the merchant Moreland is presented as a lesson in a (vastly) simplified economics. The social bias of the whole book is that “nothing is truly estimable save in proportion to its utility,” and Brooke explains that “each man becomes a useful member of society” by being part of the commercial system, which he sees as a chain stretching from tiller to manufacturer to merchant. In the same way, nations are useful to each other, and relations among nations are improved. Brooke has, essentially, redefined the great chain of being; it no longer stretches from god to man and beyond, but instead is a continuous cycle of commercial interaction.

Isaac Kramnick shows that the economic changes in England were largely responsible for the development of children’s literature as a separate genre in England, and further he ties the growth of children’s literature to the new bourgeois ideology that he sees as defining much of English consciousness in the later eighteenth century. Until the industrial revolution created a middle class with both the leisure and the economic means to provide a special culture for and of the child, children had been merely small adults; the development of a literature designed specifically for children had to wait until they were perceived as beings different from adults. Naturally, Kramnick suggests, the
books written for children stressed the values of their parents, and the parents buying books were essentially middle class. Such children's books as The History of Little Goody Two-Shoes (1765), Sarah Trimmer's Fabulous Histories Designed for the Amusement and Instruction of Young People (1786), Maria Edgeworth's The Purple Jar, The Little Merchants, and, especially, Harry and Lucy all stress for Kramnick the values and concerns of the new bourgeois age. From The History of Sandford and Merton, to which I shall turn shortly, he quotes the “catalogue and summary” of these values: “I don't know that there is upon the face of the earth a more useless, more contemptible, and more miserable animal than a wealthy, luxurious man without business or profession, arts, sciences, or exercises.” Kramnick's point, which is valid for The Fool of Quality as well as for the novels he discusses, is that these books are precise expressions of contemporary preoccupations. With their instructive little tableaux, they teach the same values of self-reliance, responsibility, prudence, resourcefulness, and thrift that were at the very center of the bourgeois society they reflect.

The values expounded in these children's novels are the values of the producers; the businessmen and scientists whose methods were changing the economy were also responsible for shaping the English view of morality. When Josiah Wedgwood speaks to his workers in 1783, he sounds precisely like a character in The Fool of Quality: “From where and from what cause did this happy change take place? The truth is clear to all. Industry and the machine have been the parent of this happy change. A well directed and long continued series of industrious exertions, has so changed, for the better, the face of our country, its buildings, lands, roads and the manners and deportment of its inhabitants, too.” As Kramnick points out, “Industry had changed manners and deportment.... The new economic order required a new ethic....” Science, of course, is very much part of industry, and as a contemporary scientist, Thomas Cooper, insisted, “It is to science, chemical and mechanical, that England is indebted for having made her island the storehouse of the world, for having compelled the nations
of the earth to pour into her lap their superfluous wealth; for having acquired the undisputed command of the sea her merchants are as princes.”

In *The Fool of Quality* these values are expressed with the same enthusiasm. And, as I have shown, joined with the enthusiasm for the producers is a marked disrespect for those who do not produce. For Brooke, as for Wedgwood and Cooper, productivity and morality are tied together, and this idea is perhaps the major lesson of his book. It is the merchant “who furnishes every comfort, convenience, and elegance of life; who carries off every redundancy, who fills up every want; who ties country to country, and clime to clime, and brings the remotest regions to neighborhood and converse; who makes man to be literally the lord of the creation, and gives him an interest in whatever is done upon earth; who furnishes to each the product of all lands, and the labours of all nations; and thus knits into one family, and weaves into one web, the affinity and brotherhood of all mankind” (*Fool*, vol. I, p. 98). Even more telling, however, is his appraisal of “gentlemen of large landed properties” who, he says, like to see themselves as standing above, and separate from, the rest of the economy but who are in fact more dependent on trade than any other class. The merchant does not need land to trade, but the landowner depends on the trader to raise the value of his land.

What is the function, then, of the large landowner, of the rich man whose riches are not connected to his own production? For Brooke, that man’s social function is to ameliorate unfortunate social conditions through the judicious application of his wealth. The education of the child who will grow up to have that power is paramount, for the child must be taught to revere true human, rather than artificial, values; he must be taught to be responsible and compassionate. Harry, having been removed from his parents for just this purpose of education, approaches the ideal. Brooke is concerned with practical rather than utopian solutions, and the education he gives to Harry can be provided for any child.

Harry’s education comes in a series of specific lessons, each
designated to teach human virtue. Mr. Fenton, Harry’s preceptor, does not assume that Harry will be responsible, compassionate, or serious-minded; he teaches him to be these things. Mr. Fenton’s note to Harry’s parents promises to return to them “the most accomplished and most perfect of all human beings” (Fool, vol. I, p. 166). The period of Harry’s education—that is, his abduction by Mr. Fenton and his subsequent training—follows closely on the “social necessity” passages about merchants, making the connection between social utility and education clear.

Harry’s education, a judicious mix of instruction and action, is intended to create a socially sensitive, self-sufficient man who appreciates individual merit rather than social station. Thus, one of the first lessons to which the child is exposed upon his arrival at Mr. Fenton’s house is one in human equality. After Harry and the family have eaten, Mr. Fenton proposes that Harry and the family serve the servants, “for God made us all to be servants to each other: one man is not born a bit better than another; and he is the best and greatest of all who serves and attends the most, and requires least to be served and attended upon. And . . . he that is a king today . . . may become a beggar tomorrow and it is good that people should be prepared against all that may happen” (Fool, vol. I, pp. 171–72). Harry enters wholeheartedly into the spirit of the reversal and learns that human interaction like this between upper and lower classes is indeed natural and only made unnatural by imposed restrictions between men. Similarly, Harry finds his greatest pleasure in searching out objects of need and in applying his own resources to their aid. To encourage the development of Harry’s benevolent instincts, Mr. Fenton on several occasions deliberately provides Harry with opportunities to exercise his generosity. He sets Harry up with a collection of simple but presentable clothes, and it is Harry’s work and pleasure to give them away; he sends Harry to aid the deserving unfortunates in a debtor’s prison, where, again, Harry finds tremendous satisfaction in distributing his largesse. A conscious commitment to the systematic aiding of one’s fellows is for
Brooke an inherent part of being human and, especially, of being upper class.

Brooke does not imply, as Fielding does before him and as the novelists of the 1790s will later on, that the institutions of society need changing. Unconcerned with social institutions as such, he sees them simply as given aspects of the human condition. Help for the poor or afflicted must come from individuals who are better off, and it must come on a personal level. Brooke seems convinced that personal benevolence is effective in ameliorating the condition of the unfortunate, whether the action is on the small scale of little Harry's distribution of clothing or on the only slightly larger scale of the adult Mr. Fenton's regular program of alms and dinner for the deserving poor.

Every Sunday Mr. Fenton invites to dinner the heads of deserving local families. In addition to a fine dinner, they are treated to the warmth and good fellowship of the family and servants, as well as "a crown in silver" (Fool, vol. I, p. 176) to take home. The results of this benevolence are truly heartwarming:

after a saturating meal and an enlivening cup, they departed, with elevated spirits, with humanized manners, and with hearts warmed in affection toward every member of this extraordinary house.

By the means of this weekly bounty, these reviving families were soon enabled to clear their little debts to the chandlers, which had compelled them to take up every thing at the dearest hand. They were also further enabled to purchase wheels and other implements, with the materials of flax and wool, for employing the late idle hands of their household. They now appeared decently clad, and with happy countenances; their wealth increased with their industry; and the product of the employment of so many late useless members became a real accession of wealth to the public. So true it is that the prosperity of this world, and of every nation and society therein, depends solely on the industry or manufactures of the individuals. And so much more nobly did this private patron act, than all ancient legislators, or modern patrons, and landlords; whose selfishness, if they had but common cunning, or common-sense, might instruct them to increase their proper rents, and enrich their native country, by supplying the hands of all the poor,
within their influence, with the implements and materials of the prosperity of each. (*Fool*, vol. I, pp. 176-77)

To speak of social protest is not necessarily to speak of revolutionary ideas and social violence. For Brooke, protest is an immensely comfortable exercise in repeating what seems very obvious: those who are well-off in society are in no way responsible for the ill luck of others; however, they do have the duty to provide some succor to the less fortunate. The social dividends earned by such actions seem to Brooke almost limitless. A very small investment of advice and material help can set the poor on the road not only to happiness but to financial prosperity. They became MANUFACTURERS, and not only is the problem of poverty solved, but the very economy—and therefore the strength—of the nation is enhanced as these initial burdens become contributing members of society. All of this, for Brooke, can be accomplished "by the means of this weekly bounty."

Brooke implies that the England of his day provides adequate economic potential for anyone who wishes to avail himself of the opportunities (the poor, somehow set apart from such potential, are ignored within this context). The traditional role of the aristocracy, that of consumer, must change, and each man, regardless of rank, must develop socially useful skills. When that happens, the result is a man like the productive and happy Mr. Fenton; when it does not, we get the sad Mr. Clement.

*Harry*, ever on the watch for "poor travellers" (*Fool*, vol. I, p. 179), finds Mr. Clement sitting on the ground. His clothes seemed, from head to foot, as the tattered remainder of better days. Through a squalid wig, and beard, his pale face appeared just tinctured with a faint and sickly red. And his hollow eyes were fixed upon the face of a woman, whose head he held on his knees; and who looked to be dead, or dying, though without any apparent agony; while a male infant, about four years of age, was half stretched on the ground, and half across the woman’s lap, with its little nose pinched by famine, and its eyes staring about, wildly, though without attention to any thing.
Distress seemed to have expended its utmost bitterness on these objects, and the last sigh and tear to have been already exhausted. (*Fool*, vol. I, pp. 179–80)

Mr. Clement’s misfortune is due entirely to his faulty education. The son of a wealthy man, he was educated to be a gentleman; that is, his education was in classical languages and philosophy. He studied nothing practical and, in fact, looked down on his ungentlemanly father—"a trader, a mechanick, I sighed for his reptile state..." (*Fool*, vol. I, p. 218).

When the trader and mechanic disowns the gentleman, the gentleman is lost. Mr. Clement has no skills that will enable him to earn a living; there is call for a bookkeeper, an engineer, or a navigator, but not a gentleman. He sinks lower and lower into poverty, until finally he finds his metier; he will sell his ideas: he will write pamphlets! Clement has some success at this game, but unwittingly he offends a minister of the government and is jailed. His young wife and her widowed mother exhaust all their resources to bail him out, and from that point they fall ever deeper into poverty until they are left with nothing. In desperation, he “disguises” himself as a poor man and hires himself out as a porter. This attempt to eke out a subsistence comes to an abrupt halt when he is assaulted by four men, porters, who beat him because, they tell him, he is a “gentleman” and “yet, thief as you are, you must steal into our business, and glean away the few pence by which we get our daily bread...” (*Fool*, vol. II, pp. 40–41). Finally, Mr. Clement is reduced to staging robberies in the street to steal money to buy food for his wife and child. Such, as Brooke sees it, is the evil of a misdirected education!

The concept of “the gentleman” is one that bothers Brooke a great deal.

In the habits, manners, and characters, of old Sparta and Old Rome, we find an antipathy to all the elements of modern gentility. Among those rude and unpolished people, you read of philosophers, of orators, patriots, heroes, and demigods; but you never hear of any character so elegant as that of—a pretty Gentleman.
When those nations, however, became refined into what their ancestors would have called corruption; when luxury introduced, and fashion gave a sanction to certain sciences, which Cynics would have branded with the ill-mannered appellations of debauchery, drunkenness, whoredom, gambling, cheating, lying, &c, the practitioners assumed the new title of Gentlemen, till such Gentlemen became as plenteous as stars in the milky-way, and lost distinction merely by the confluence of their lustre. \textit{(Fool, vol. II, pp. 76–77)}^{14}

Brooke continually emphasizes that individuals must question society’s determination of distinction; further, he demands that children be educated to revere value rather than show. If Mr. Clement had had his head filled with ideals of usefulness rather than those of gentlemanly grandeur, he would have been of service to his community and of value to himself and his family. Children have no inherent regard for finery and frippery, Brooke insists, but misdirected adults instill those false values. Little Harry, having been educated by Mr. Fenton, disdains the trappings of the gentleman and is happier for it.

The perversion of real needs into artificial social and institutional formuli causes much of the distress men suffer. Mr. Clement’s misfortunes are largely caused by his misplaced values, which have institutional correlative notables as well. Brooke, like so many others (Fielding, Holcroft, Inchbald, Godwin), focuses particularly on the grossly distended legal system, a monstrous apparatus that consumes those who come into contact with it, sending people into bankruptcy long before it settles their claims against one another. Brooke, if he could, seems ready to tear it apart, as Harry did his fancy lace-covered coat, to get at the bare, useful garment underneath. The legal process makes justice virtually impossible for a poor man to come by \textit{(Fool, vol. II, p. 116)}, and it ruins any who come to it with money. The only people who benefit from the legal process are the lawyers: “English property, when once debated, is merely a carcase of contention, upon which interposing lawyers fall as customary prize, and prey during the combat of the claimants. While any flesh remains on a bone, it continues a bone of contention; but so soon as the learned practitioners have picked it quite clean,
the battle is over, and all again is peace and settled neighborhood” (Fool, vol. II, p. 115).

We must be careful to define Brooke’s anger at certain institutions of his society. It is not, in any case, the basic structures of English society that he is attacking, for in fact the book is virtually a celebration of the English and their society. For Brooke, the basic structures are perfectly sound; in the section on the judiciary, for example, Brooke emphasizes that the jury system itself is a fair, efficient, praiseworthy institution, only the apparatus that has grown up around it and too often replaces it is to be blamed. Similarly, although he is angered by specific faults in government, the constitutional system itself is treated to an elaborate and very positive examination (Fool, vol. III, p. 245 ff.). Brooke directs his ire at corruptions of sound institutions, not at the institutions themselves. He wants his book to help create gentlemen—real gentlemen—and thus he must teach his young readers and their parents what is valuable. Just as Mr. Clement’s perception of his role as gentleman needed redefinition, so do some social institutions need reordering. But just as Mr. Clement is regarded as a worthwhile human being, so the institutions that need reform are in themselves good. Brooke wants to repair, not to destroy.

Brooke’s approach, and his lessons, were highly esteemed in his own time. Thomas Day found Brooke’s work so significant that he rewrote it in slightly simplified form so that it would be the more readily available to children. In the rewriting, he sharpened the social comment markedly, so that while the spirit of rebuke remained the same, the tone became more acerbic. Day’s The History of Sandford and Merton, like The Fool of Quality, is primarily concerned with educating middle and upper-class children so that they grow up to be sensitive, contributing adults. A principal point in their education must be the breaking down of the child’s concept of his role as gentleman, and to this end the book contains repeated and lengthy discussion of what that role really implies. Even more emphatically than Brooke, Day insists that the social definition of a gentleman as one who dresses with care and does no useful work is per-
nicious not only to society in general but to the well-being of the child himself.

Tommy, the aristocratic child, is six years old at the beginning of the book. He has none of the mental and physical accomplishments to be expected of a child his age because he has been raised as a gentleman and has therefore never been required to do anything for himself. Servants carry him about; he is so “delicately” brought up that “the least wind or rain gave him a cold, and the least sun was sure to throw him into a fever” (Sandford, vol. I, p. 14). He isn’t required to learn to read, write, or do arithmetic because it makes his head ache. “By this kind of education . . . Master Merton . . . could neither write, nor read, nor cypher; he could use none of his limbs with ease, nor bear any degree of fatigue; but he was very proud, fretful, and impatient” (Sandford, vol. I, p. 14).

Little Tommy’s father realizes that his child must receive another kind of education if he is to grow into a worthwhile adult, and he puts Tommy into the hands of Mr. Barlow, the clergyman of the parish, who also has the care of Harry Sandford, a local farmer’s son. Harry, having been “simply” brought up, has none of the handicaps of Tommy: he is physically fit, mentally alert, and morally well developed. Tommy, the aristocrat, continually must learn from Harry, the farmer’s son. The social lesson of the book is summed up in their relationship. Tommy indeed learns a great deal, and slowly he develops into a benevolent, responsible child. Day emphasizes that education can counter the malicious influences of a society that worships false values. About halfway through the book, Tommy is reintroduced to his aristocratic society. The impressionable child reverts to the worst mannerisms of his class and ignores Harry and Mr. Barlow in favor of the young gentlemen of rank he meets in society. He is led into malicious, rowdy behavior and grows crass and ungenerous toward his former friends. But slowly his better education—acting on a nature that, Day repeatedly assures us, is essentially (naturally) kind and good—reasserts itself, and he moves away from the misplaced values
of his peers to a renewed, and this time unshakeable, inclination toward the simple and the humanly valuable.

Antiaristocratic remarks are constant throughout The History of Sandford and Merton. The first page analysis of Tommy's education is contrasted almost immediately with the description of the wholesomeness of the young farm boy's upbringing. Day uses juxtaposition to show his reader true values as opposed to aristocratic ones. When Harry Sandford, having saved the life of the helpless aristocrat Tommy, is invited to dinner at the Mertons', Mrs. Merton expects him to be awed by the luxury he sees and impressed by the quality of the artifacts and the company. When she tries to make him a present of a silver goblet, however, Harry declines, insisting that he has a better one at home. It is better, he says, because it is made of bone and is not valuable, so it serves the purpose without making him nervous about loss or breakage. Mrs. Merton thinks he's an idiot, for as she says, "he makes such strange observations."

Always when Day places Harry in aristocratic company, the aristocrats show up badly. In this instance, Harry's values of simplicity and utility are clearly more praiseworthy than Mrs. Merton's ostentation. As the conversation continues, ostentation comes to symbolize the value system of the rich who live their lives with much consumption but little productivity. Tommy has been raised to believe that he should not work because he is a gentleman, and repeated lessons are required before he learns that all human beings should be prepared to produce as well as to consumes. This primary theme of the book is announced early when the two children are asked what they want to be when they grow up. Tommy wants to be king, because the king "has nothing to do, and every body waits upon him, and is afraid of him" (Sandford, vol. I, p. 25). Harry's response to the question is rather different: "I hope I shall soon be big enough to go to plough, and get my own living; and then I shall want nobody to wait upon me." Mrs. Merton, "looking rather contemptuously upon Harry," remarks on "what a difference there is between the children of farmers and gentlemen" (Sand-
ford, vol. I, pp. 25–26)! Her husband, to give him due credit, isn’t too sure the advantage goes to his son.

When Tommy goes from his home to the tutelage of Mr. Barlow, one of the first lessons he learns is that if he has the same needs as other people, he must work like them.

The day after Tommy came to Mr. Barlow’s, as soon as breakfast was over, he took him and Harry into the garden: when he was there, he took a spade into his own hand, and giving Harry an hoe, they both began to work with great eagerness. Every body that eats, says Mr. Barlow, ought to assist in procuring food; and therefore little Harry and I begin our daily work; this is my bed, and that other is his; we work upon it every day, and he that raises the most out of it, will deserve to fare the best. Now, Tommy, if you chuse to join us, I will mark you out a piece of ground, which you shall have to yourself, and all the produce shall be your own. No, indeed, said Tommy, very sulkily, I am a gentleman, and don’t chuse to slave like a ploughboy. Just as you please, Mr. Gentleman, said Mr. Barlow; but Harry and I, who are not above being useful, will mind our work. In about two hours Mr. Barlow said it was time to leave off, and, taking Harry by the hand, he led him into a very pleasant summer-house, where they sat down, and Mr. Barlow, taking out a plate of very fine ripe cherries, divided them between Harry and himself. (Sandford, vol. I, pp. 53–54)

Tommy is shocked that anyone could expect him to work; the next day, naturally, Tommy is most eager to do his part—not because he is starving, for kind Harry had given him food from his own share, but because he feels that he too should, literally, earn his bread. Such lessons are reinforced by precept (“So you see now that if nobody chose to work, or do any thing for himself, we should have no bread to eat. But you could not even have the corn to make it of without a great deal of pains and labour” [Sandford, vol. I, p. 121]) and by example.

The lessons in the book for children are for the most part wholesome and rational, but Day, like Brooke, occasionally inserts a passage that in its implications seems directed more at the parents of his young readers than at the children themselves. Such, I think, is the case when Day continues a discussion about the making of bread and turns it into a polemic
against the rich who take goods and services but return nothing to their producers—money having no intrinsic value of its own:

What then, answered Mr. Barlow, must not gentlemen eat as well as others, and therefore is it not for their interest to know how to procure food as well as other people? Yes, sir, answered Tommy, but they can have other people to raise it for them, so that they are not obliged to work themselves.

How does that happen, said Mr. Barlow? T. Why sir, they pay other people to work for them, or buy bread when it is made, as much as they want. Mr. B. Then they pay for it with money. T. Yes, sir. (Sandford, vol. I, pp. 123–24)

But what is that money with which the rich buy the work of the poor? When Mr. Barlow asks the question of Tommy, the child responds, logically enough, that “Money, sir, money is—I believe little pieces of silver and gold, with an head upon them (Sandford, vol. III, p. 86). The dialogue that follows is, in its social implications, one of the most cutting in the book and, although couched in a child’s language, fully as revolutionary as anything Godwin or any of the other radicals of the latter part of the century were to write:

Mr. Barlow: And what is the use of these little pieces of silver and gold?
Tommy: Indeed, I do not know that they are of any use. But everybody has agreed to take them, and therefore you may buy with them whatever you want.
Mr. Barlow: Then, according to your last account, the goodness of the rich consists in taking from the poor houses, cloaths, and food, and giving them in return little bits of silver and gold, which are really good for nothing.
Tommy: Yes, sir; but then the poor can take these pieces of money, and purchase every thing which they want.
Mr. Barlow: You mean, that, if a poor man has money in his pocket, he can always exchange it for cloaths, or food, or any other necessary.
Tommy: Indeed I do, sir.
Mr. Barlow: But who must he buy them of?—For, according to your account, the rich never produce any of these things: therefore the poor, if they want to purchase them, can only do it of each other.
Tommy: But, sir, I cannot think that is always the case; for, I have been along with my mamma to shops, where there were fine powdered gentlemen and ladies that sold things to other people.

Mr. Barlow: But... do you imagine that these fine powdered gentlemen and ladies made the things which they sold?

Tommy: That, sir, I cannot tell, but I should rather imagine not; for all the fine people I have ever seen are too much afraid of spoiling their cloaths to work.

Mr. Barlow: All that they do, then, is to employ poorer persons to work for them, while they only sell what is produced by their labour. So that still you see we reach no farther than this; the rich do nothing and produce nothing, and the poor every thing that is really useful. (Sandford, vol. III, pp. 86–89)

Tommy, like his peers, has always taken privilege and uselessness as his prerogative. He has to be taught that he must use his means for the betterment of society, thereby improving his own character as well. Neither Brooke nor Day suggests that the wealth itself should be redistributed, nor even that it is to be hoped that poverty might be eliminated. Rather, they take as a condition of life that there are rich men and poor men—Day even goes so far as to assert that poverty is a natural condition of life (Sandford, vol. I, p. 36)—and the responsibility of the rich toward the poor is simply to make poverty as bearable as possible. The line between sanctimonious self-congratulation and genuine benevolence is perhaps difficult to define, but certainly Day skirts it rather narrowly when he describes, with a tone of total approbation (this, he implies, is surely how things should be), Mr. Barlow’s annual dinner for the local poor; Mr. Fenton, in The Fool of Quality, at least made it a weekly affair!

He had a large hall, which was almost filled with men, women, and children; a cheerful fire blazed in the chimney, and a prodigious table was placed in the middle for the company to dine upon. Mr. Barlow himself received his guests, and conversed with them about the state of their families and their affairs. Those, that were industrious and brought their children up to labour, instructing them in the knowledge of their duty and preserving them from bad impressions, were sure to meet with his encouragement and commendations. (Sandford, vol. II, pp. 205–6)
It is hard for a modern reader to swallow Mr. Barlow’s presumption in generously “commending and encouraging” on the basis of people being “deserving poor,” although the rhetoric of our own time and place often seems not too far removed from Mr. Barlow’s. The passage continues:

Those, that had been ill, he assisted with such little necessaries, as tended to alleviate their pains, and diffuse a gleam of cheerfulness over their sufferings. How hard, he would say, is the lot of the poor, when they are afflicted with sickness! How intolerable do we find the least bodily disorder, even though we possess every convenience that can mitigate its violence! Not all the dainties which can be collected from all the elements, the warmth of downy beds and silken couches, the attendance of obsequious dependents, are capable of making us bear with common patience the commonest disease. How pitiable then must be the state of a fellow creature, who is at once tortured by bodily suffering and destitute of every circumstance which can alleviate it; who sees around him a family that are not only incapable of assisting their parent, but destined to want the common necessaries of life, the moment he intermits his daily labours! How indispensable then is the obligation, which should continually impel the rich to exert themselves in assisting their fellow creatures, and rendering that condition of life which we all avoid, less dreadful to those who must support it always? (Sandford, vol. II, pp. 206-7)

In addition to an annual dinner and occasional help during sickness (which the poor should surely appreciate),

there is yet a duty, which he thought of more importance than the mere distribution of property to the needy, the encouragement of industry and virtue among the poor, and giving them juster notions of morals and religion.

If we have a dog, he would say, we refuse neither pains nor expense to train him up to hunting; if we have an horse, we send him to an experienced rider to be bitted; but our own species seems to be the only animal which is entirely exempted from our care. (Sandford, vol. II, pp. 207-8)

As I have suggested, the modern reader finds it difficult to accept Day’s formula for social justice in quite the same spirit he offers it. Part of the problem is that without realizing it, Brooke
and Day implicitly assume that one of the functions of the poor is to provide objects of benevolence for the rich.

Both Brooke and Day criticize society, and often the criticism is strong indeed. To say, in so many words, that the rich take goods and services from the poor and give in return only useless bits of metal is not a gentle criticism. But neither Brooke nor Day wants to change anything basic in society. They assume that things will—and indeed should—remain as they are.¹⁵ The protest, then, no matter how strongly made, demands largely cosmetic changes. Neither Brooke nor Day asks that the rich give up their privilege and their wealth to the poor; rather, they ask merely that the rich be considerate of the poor and, as long as the poor are “deserving,” that the rich give of their largesse to ameliorate individual suffering whenever possible. Both books emphasize the improvement of the rich person’s character through the development of social responsibility and personal benevolence, an incredibly comfortable kind of social protest. Within the constructs of their perspective, Brooke and Day can look realistically at the world and see all the suffering and inequity in it. They do not have to ignore all that, for it forms a necessary part of their whole vision. If there is no need, there can be no benevolence; the suffering of the poor serves to give the rich a purpose. This view is not the anger at corruption that we found in Fielding and that we will see again in the novelists of the 1790s. But it is a form of social protest, a comment that some things—in this case a major reeducation of the upper classes—must be changed. If this, in perspective, does not seem like much of a protest, we should turn to a contemporary of Day’s, Fanny Burney, who sees very little wrong with society at all and whose major concern is “the entrance of a young lady into the world.” Of the novels I discuss, hers has the least social criticism to make. I include it to help put into perspective the strains of criticism that we have seen in some of the novels that precede *Evelina* and the increasingly strident demands for change which we shall find in many of the novelists who follow Burney in the turbulent nineties.


3. As I noted in an earlier discussion of these two novels, “the families from which the children are taken are almost identically drawn in each book. The father is intelligent and fair-minded; the mother is far less admirable intellectually, and, in fact, seems to be impressed only by the frivolous and the gaudy. In both homes the fault is always with the mother. It is the female parent whose misplaced values threaten to ruin the child, and it is in each case the male parent who sees beneath the surface of aristocratic ‘graces’ to the truer values. In each book, the mother even makes sport of the child who shows such traits of character as benevolence, simplicity of taste, and innocence, while the fathers appreciate these finer qualities but raise much less forceful voices in praise than their wives do in blame.” “More Than A Few Passages: Henry Brooke’s The Fool of Quality as the Source for Thomas Day’s The History of Sandford and Merton,” Durham University Journal, 75 (June 1983), p. 58.

4. The struggle to bring respectability and political power to the merchant was an ongoing one. Compare Brooke’s statement with this pronouncement (in capital letters) of Bolingbroke’s which John Sekora calls to our attention: “THE LANDED MEN ARE THE TRUE OWNERS OF OUR POLITICAL VESSEL; THE MONEYED MEN, AS SUCH, ARE NO MORE THAN PASSENGERS IN IT.” Luxury: The Concept in Western Thought, Eden to Smollett (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), p. 70.


6. See, for example, my discussion of Nature and Art in chapter seven.


8. I will discuss these social implications in some detail in the next chapter.

9. Greene, p. 46.


14. John Sekora, pp. 107–8, has shown that the indictment of aristocrats for wastefulness and excessive consumption—for luxury—as it begins to appear in novels of the late 1760s and the 1770s is actually a reversal of target. Earlier, he suggests, it had been the poor who were accused of moral degradation caused by an excessive fascination with luxury. Fielding in his Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers accounts for the increase by claiming that the poor have set themselves to crime in order to satisfy their aspirations “to a Degree beyond that which belongs to them.”

15. In Day’s The History of Little Jack, 1778, this sense is even more pronounced. The young hero, orphaned in earliest childhood, rises through the exertion of his own energy and intelligence to become “one of the most respectable manufacturers in the country” (Little Jack [New York: Garland Publishing, 1977], p. 111), and all his success is due to the strength and goodness of his character. Surely a society which affords a young man such a possibility has much to recommend it. Naturally, in his success our hero does not become haughty or proud and “to all his poor neighbours he was kind and liberal, relieving them in their distress . . . (pp. 112–13).