Chapter Thirteen

"FORTUNE'S FOOT-BALL"

There are twenty-two chapters in Ferdinand and Elmira: A Russian Story (1804), by Mrs. Sarah Wood (1759-1855); of these only ten contribute to the action proper, whereas the other twelve serve to explain the genesis of the situation in which the hero and heroine find themselves. This dependence on past occurrences and off-stage happenings is a typical and unsatisfactory feature of a first group of novels of adventure. For a general heading the title of one of them, "Fortune's Football," seems rather suitable. Their heroes' and heroines' lives are governed by an unpredictable fate whose instruments may be natural cataclysms, the caprices of superiors, or the disproportionately consequential effects of events long past and only sketchily related. The protagonists themselves are therefore placed in situations from which they cannot escape by their own efforts. Neither a proper understanding of the causes out of which their predicaments arose, nor fighting the figures of authority on whose whims they depend will help. They necessarily learn to roll with the punches or resign themselves to making gestures of resistance which they know to be no more than symbolic.

Ferdinand and Elmira are handicapped by exceptional circumstances which forbid them to use all of their knowledge and the influence that by rights is theirs. Ferdinand's actions are dictated throughout by honor and idealistic beliefs reflecting the nobility of his blood and indicating what position he should occupy. The young man remains nonetheless at the mercy of a man clearly inferior to him but favored by outward rank and by chance. It takes a deus ex machina in the person of a general to save Ferdinand. The general's intervention is a stroke of fate, too, just like the hostile acts that have nearly led to Ferdinand's
death; but it must be understood in terms of providence not chance. Brunsdel may outrank Anstorm, but what is really decisive is that he is a good man overcoming a villain. As such he is among the instruments of providential guidance which operate together, even though with characteristic \textit{ritardandi}, to restore the fortunes of the houses of Ferdinand and Elmira.\textsuperscript{2}

The historical background to the young lovers' adventures is the Seven Years' War. The chaos of wartime destruction, the more or less accidental alliance of powers that may change sides as opportunity offers—such elements provide a fit environment for the selfish impulses relying on the codes of monarchical or military hierarchy to achieve their ends. Against such totalitarianism the individual, however honorable, does not stand the least chance unless helped by luck. To be sure, at the end of \textit{Ferdinand and Elmira} virtue and honor do emerge victorious, but the margin of their success provides little comfort to the believer in the possibility of contributing to the direction of one's destiny. The insistence upon providential guidance can be looked upon as expressing Mrs. Wood's orthodox New England views, and it may be argued that the modern novel-reader's interest in character, developing and asserting itself in the face of the events, is quite irrelevant to it. On the other hand it is perhaps more to the point to assume that the author was guided above all by her knowledge of the current plot devices of her day. There was a substantial novel-tradition by the end of the eighteenth century, and it suggested numerous elements that could satisfy the expectations of the readers of novels of suspense and that probably conditioned certain weaknesses of \textit{Ferdinand and Elmira}: its unsatisfactory structure, already referred to; its all too intricate patterning of events, and especially its dependence upon coincidence (meetings opportune or barely prevented); and its reliance upon clichés of romantic situations and an artificially elaborate diction.\textsuperscript{3} Before long, a theatrical Gothicism is used, but the vigorous opening of the novel might have been a prelude to better things:

\begin{quote}
Though she shut the door as easily as possible, yet the light, which she held in her hand, was extinguished by the draught of
\end{quote}
air, and she was left in absolute darkness. She looked around: not a ray of light penetrated the gloom, or cheered her harassed spirits. She would willingly have returned to the apartment she had left, but all her exertions to open the door were ineffectual. (p. 5)

Adventures of Alonso was published anonymously in London in 1775, and only in 1941 was its attribution to Thomas Atwood Digges (ca. 1741-ca. 1821) given substantial and plausible support. The correctness of the attribution granted, there still remains the fact that the book appeared outside America, and the difficulty of Digges's nationality: born in America he seems to have spent the better part of his life in Portugal and England. He apparently returned to America just before the turn of the century; this deliberate choice, or gesture, would seem to entitle Digges to be acknowledged in a survey of American fiction.

It would of course be reassuring to find Alonso rendered more positively North American by its setting and characters, but they belong to other countries. Our hero does visit the New World but never gets further north than Panama. The background required for his adventures is one of quickened mutability, emphasizing the irresponsibility of Alonso's break with the security offered by his surroundings. The advantages of an excellent education are thrown to the wind when he devotes himself to Eugenia. Alonso at first does not know that the young lady is married, but this fact is quickly rendered insignificant anyway by the couple's passion; and the reader is informed only through a kind of codicil that Eugenia is not free to love and be loved (1:19-20). The couple's flight from Lisbon is the first of Alonso's restless moves in search of a happiness that is to elude him to the end. The lovers transgress the moral precepts of their world, and their later life is governed by the retribution inseparably linked with this initial wrong decision. This seems as consistent and just as Ferdinand and Elmira's trials appear arbitrary: one couple is responsible for their errors while the other is not. In the case of Mrs. Wood's protagonists, the providential omnipotence which finally rewards them seems so remote that they can hardly be expected to believe either in its effec-

[285]
tiveness or in their own acts under its auspices, and the reader finds it hard to sympathize with them. But Alonso, however often frustrated in his undertakings, is not a Ferdinand: he is more than a figurehead for certain virtues. This is due in part to his manly willingness to face his difficulties and perhaps also to share the blame for offending against the codes of allegiance and conduct—though he does not seem to be very much aware of the imperatives of transcendent justice, but certainly clearly realizes the immediate necessity of proving his endurance and resourcefulness. Alonso is also a more real character than Ferdinand because he occasionally forgets his personal concerns and comments on human affairs in the parts of the world with which he is acquainted, expressing liberal views about democratic principles of government and the economic policies of colonial powers.

Most of the discussions of topical matters in which Alonso joins, center around aspects of Pombal's administration of Portugal. This one central subject counterbalances the narrative flights about Alonso's adventures in Spain, South America, on the seas, and during his period of slavery, and reflects his attachment to his country, his father, and the moral order which is part of their character. After Eugenia's return to Lisbon, she is largely a silent partner in Alonso's experiences, but the focusing on Portuguese affairs obliquely reminds the reader of her existence: we remember the couple's passion, and our forebodings as to its issue. Eugenia's decision to become a nun at a time when she is free to marry Alonso is her way of atoning for their common transgression (2:109-10). Perhaps Alonso's many hardships might be said to be the price he must pay for their love; but as he appears to have quite enjoyed many of his adventures, some of which were none too ethical at that, their penitential value is doubtful. Alonso is punished more harshly by Eugenia's withdrawal; he returns alone to an existence of sobriety, which is to be permanently colored with the sad memories of his mistress (2:128). The sensibility which he betrayed in the earlier stages of his love (1:46, 53) has not left him and is likely to be still intensifying his grief while he tries
to comfort his father; whether he can keep his youthful optimism (1:139) is questionable. The balance of the diversity of fortunes, and the conversational topics that reemerge, are reflected in Digges's style; from the breathless relating of adventures, or touching scenes of woe and parting, it easily recovers a sober straightforwardness in the discussions in which the hero joins. Digges refrained from any self-conscious literariness and thus preserved for his book a certain freshness; in other novels the violent to-and-fro between extremes often seems to call for an artificially heightened expression.

A case in point is Fortune's Foot-ball: or, the Adventures of Mercutio (1797-98) by James Butler (ca.1755-1842), a novel which crowds an incredible number of adventures and people into its closely printed 380 pages. The reader at first follows the author willingly enough, for Butler attacked his narrative with gusto and managed to convey a lively movement to it. But very soon our attention begins to flag, the ups and downs of the hero's adventures following in too rapid succession. Another limitation quickly reveals itself: the fact that some situations have to be reestablished through rather artificial means for the story to be given a new impetus, and the related fact of the near relations and alliances among most of the characters. Mercutio's opportunity to save Lucinda from drowning in the Hyde Park Serpentine, in the first pages of the book, connects him enduringly with her family, particularly with her brother Charles. At her death his grief drives him to seek diversion in traveling. His near-marriage to Lucinda, frustrated by the girl's death, is then paralleled by his runaway match with the Doge's daughter, a young lady who suggests a nocturnal assignation in the course of which Mercutio "found his heart powerfully assailed on all sides, by the charms of Leonora, whose movements were so rapid, that he had not time to collect his forces" (1:47); but just after having made an honest woman of Leonora he loses her and their son when pirates attack their ship. Mercutio's second marriage is more fortunate, though it also forces him to resume his travels rather abruptly and involves him in a series of further mishaps. Before his chance
meeting with Isabella, his second wife, Mercutio has just as opportunely happened to meet with Charles. He comes across George Wright in Italy after a shipwreck; is introduced to the Wilcoxes, the family of Wright’s wife; and almost inevitably, on different occasions and in different places, is later thrown together with a son and daughter of the family. While a slave, Mercutio once meets Charles, as well as the latter’s brother-in-law. Small wonder if at the close of the novel there are almost as many weddings as there are deaths in the final scene of *Tom Thumb*: they seem designed to ratify the communion and the elective affinities that have been established among the *dramatis personae* through their remarkable ubiquity.¹⁴

It is needless to say more about the range of inventiveness of our author. The reader is baffled at the rapid changes of settings and personnel which it brings about and may also be irritated by Butler’s brusqueness in managing them.¹⁵ Though one is at first grateful for such digressions as the reports offered by Mercutio’s new acquaintances and old friends reencountered, the repetitiveness of this material and the uniformity of the narrative tone and speed soon grow tiresome; with more truth than Butler realized, one of his narrators says at the beginning of his tale that it “will afford neither pleasure nor amusement” (1:186). Another kind of variety one learns positively to dread is the attempt at subtle phrasing combined with an emphatic appeal to the reader’s emotional susceptibility, in passages like this early one: “... No sooner did Lucinda, (the young lady) expand her beauteous eyes, than love, like the electrical fire, diffus’d itself through each avenue of our hero’s heart, which being tender and susceptible, retained this first impression so firmly, that it was never eradicated until the lovely orbs, by which it was communicated, were quench’d in death” (1:10).¹⁶ Such writing becomes less frequent as the story progresses, but reemerges when the characters are finally all reunited (2:176).

*Fortune’s Foot-ball* is an appropriate title if ever there was one, and suggests an idea which need not have been in the author’s mind when he picked it. The entire novel is something
in the nature of an account of a contest between "fortune" and "providence." We have noted the inscrutability of providential intervention in *Ferdinand and Elmira*. In Butler's novel it is more explicitly an excuse for the author to go on writing, and Mercutio's adventures lead him back to his starting-point, as it were, every time to begin afresh: "But alas! Fortune, that fickle Goddess, had raised her foot with a design to give him another kick" (1:72). This sounds promising from the point of view of the writer grateful for new sources and material.

Since our author, however, was careful to distinguish between two functions of the providential plan, on other occasions the perspective appears changed. Man is then seen not at the mercy of a wanton fate but consciously depending and relying on God's wisdom and justice; these he must learn to acknowledge as gratefully as does Mercutio's father, after he has been rescued: " 'Miracles! Miracles all!' exclaimed his father, 'all bounteous Providence! Unsearchable are thy ways, gracious God! But a few hours past, my life was exposed to the greedy swords of assassins—suspended by a single hair over the dreary gulph of death!' " (2:184). The God of Creation can turn His storms into instruments of chastisement (1:63-64); He singles out an individual offender for punishment (2:76), while granting His support to the cause of a wronged people, such as the Americans (1:92-93, 71).

It takes more than historical references of this kind or naval encounters described in a vein of realism (1:94) to persuade the reader that Butler could sincerely "with confidence vouch for the authenticity of the narrative" (1:iii). One puts down Butler's book regretting that his facility of invention did not leave him leisure to create more imaginatively, and to conceive, instead of footballs with human names, characters capable of thinking and feeling, and gifted among other things with a sense of humor.

Early American fiction was not conspicuous for its humor, a fact of which even contemporary readers were aware. In the *Monthly Anthology* praise was awarded to *Modern Chivalry* for its comic gusto, and this novel was contrasted favorably with
the sentimental fiction of Mrs. Rowson, Mrs. Foster, and some others. Most of the fun of *Modern Chivalry* was satirical and burlesque; so was the humorous content, slight though it was, of the American novels of the age, quite generally. With this in mind and taking *Modern Chivalry*—or better still—*Female Quixotism*—as examples of the tendency, it does indeed seem possible that *The History of Constantius and Pulchera; or Constancy rewarded* (1794) might have been conceived in a spirit of parody, as some critics have suggested. It is impossible to take either the preposterous plot or the diction seriously, and only a quotation can do this incredible tale justice. Valorus-Pulchera must die to provide food for her starving fellow outcasts, and writes a final letter to her cruel father, informing him that after having been "the sport of fortune" she is about to enter "a state of changeless retribution":

Valorus had just finished the letter, and delivered it, when one of his woeful partners took up the fatal gun, well loaded, and had got it to his face, and was just pulling the trigger in order to lodge its contents in his head, when he chanced to raise his eye a little, and discovered a bear wallowing in the snow, at about twenty yards distance—He exclaimed, "Valorus! Thank God, you may yet live!" and discharged his piece at the bear, lodging two balls in his head, of which he died instantly. (pp. 25-26)

By contrast with the fantastic versatility of Constantius and his Pulchera, *The Life of Alexander Smith* (1819) is a sober book; yet its characters, too, are time and again called upon to prove their adaptability to the unforeseen. Smith is identified as "captain of the Island of Pitcairn; one of the mutineers on board His Majesty's Ship Bounty." There is no doubt that the book draws heavily on the material of the mutiny case, though perhaps less on the facts than on some of their fictional and imaginative potential. Clearly, too, *Robinson Crusoe* or some imitation of it seems to have influenced the author, especially in the first part of *Alexander Smith*; for the second part he may have had another model. That central section, an intermezzo between Smith's years on a desert island and the social experi-

[290]
ment of Pitcairn, is much the weakest part of the book. It shows signs of hasty composition and writing, crowds too many incidents into a narrow compass, and ends unexpectedly on a didactic note of self-rebuke (p. 115); fortunately this section is comparatively brief.

The author of *Alexander Smith* insisted on his intention of offering his readers instruction of various sorts. But the Pitcairn section is rather too loosely utopian, where additions are made to the basic *Bounty* material, to quite succeed in this didactic aim. The seriousness of the Pitcairners' political organization may be evident, as is also that of Fletcher Christian's insistence on the faith they must preserve (p. 168). Yet what is most memorable about the episode is the first flush of excitement as the mutineers start on their voyage to Pitcairn and the sense of threat haunting them until they can send off the male natives among their group. Though the descriptive style of the age is often painfully overblown, here the reader is likely to regret that little background painting is attempted. It might have made the mutineers' experience and choice more real. In the opening section of *Alexander Smith*, its most lively and successful part, the author managed to achieve a certain verisimilitude. The narrator's account of his years on an island in the Indian Ocean sets forth the ways and means of his keeping alive and rendering his existence a little more comfortable; indeed, the narrator makes a point of praising the practical education his parents have given him (pp. 69-70). We share in the outcast's work, and though there is no wealth of details building up a picture as complete as that of *Robinson Crusoe*, enough material is visualized for us to accept the reality of the man's experience. Smith's rather flat and pedestrian manner here proves an advantage rather than a drawback. The story is sufficiently varied, especially with the introduction of the boat-building scheme, and mercifully short. But by the standards of this beginning, one regrets that two more sections had to be added, perhaps to make a full-size volume.

*Mr. Penrose: The Journal of Penrose, Seaman* is the latest contestant for the title of the first American novel, "that much
argued and ever elusive phenomenon." The English painter William Williams may have written this story during his thirty years' stay in Philadelphia and New York, or soon after his return to London, that is, in the late 1770s. What is beyond question is that the book has substantial merits. Williams's tale, which incorporates some of his own adventurous experiences, is about Llewellyn Penrose, a sailor accidentally abandoned off the Nicaraguan coast. After some years in complete isolation he makes friends with two natives, a young man Harry and his sister Luta. The latter bears Penrose two children but dies after the second birth, and the widower takes another Indian girl for his wife. Meanwhile, some more natives join Penrose, as well as a Dutchman Somer and a Scotsman Bell. Penrose resigns himself contentedly enough to his fate, though he sporadically fears detection by the Spaniards, and suffers many hardships and bereavements. After his death, in the twenty-eighth year of his exile, his manuscript diary finds its way to England.

Mr. Penrose makes its first impression upon the reader as a straightforward narrative free from any literary self-consciousness, using throughout a simple, often colloquially figurative vocabulary. Its spontaneity shows, for example, in the author's description of natural, particularly zoological, phenomena, which seems to derive from a personal interest in such matters rather than from an acquired compulsion to combine the narrative with some instruction. The lifelike effect of the account, supported by the narrator's use of detail closely observed, wins over the reader to accepting the reality of what he is invited to share in; from the comforting impression that nobody would take the trouble of inventing so much plausible detail, one moves to appreciate the essentially familiar nature of many strands woven into the pattern of Penrose's adventures in unfamiliar surroundings.

A closer look reveals that Mr. Penrose has more to recommend it than its seemingly unsophisticated reporting of observation. Awesome elemental powers, exotic fauna, welcome discoveries and fearful shocks, meetings and partings, births and deaths, comic incidents and solemn meditation, colorful characters,
Indian oratory, Scotch and Irish speech—this variety of ingredients reflects a sense of the diversity to be found in any life investigated closely enough and also prevents any inappropriate insistence on single topics. The narrator does repeatedly draw an edifying lesson from his adventures, but he keeps this relatively unobtrusive among his many accounts of the social development around him; and his frequent passages of zoological description are short and embedded among humorous episodes and sober narrative advances.

Robinson Crusoe is an obvious archetypal model with which to compare Mr. Penrose. In the two books (as also in the opening section of The Life of Alexander Smith), an outcast reenacts courageously man's attempt at asserting his rule over his natural environment—proceeding from mere name-giving to a true understanding of the essence of the strange new world. In the case of Crusoe's exile on an island, there are connotations of man's fall from grace and of a redemptive experience; his story is grimmer in tone and more committed to the exemplary than Penrose's. Crusoe has an initial advantage which Penrose must do without—the equipment salvaged from the wreck. Yet his assumption of command over his territory is slow and lacks confidence. Crusoe remains preoccupied with himself, looking inward whenever his life-preserving activities permit; revolving his sense of guilt from the moment he acknowledges that it is there for him to cope with, he weighs it against his hope of survival and rescue and concludes he is not fit for them yet.

Now, though Penrose starts out in miserable destitution and though his later providential finds are less generous than Crusoe's, he is soon granted the more than compensating gift of human fellowship: after having domesticated a hawk and a fawn, in his fourth year of exile he receives Harry and Luta on his territory. Thereafter, he is to be spared any obsessive concern with a confused self. His thought can turn to practical social issues, and from then on he comes to the consideration of his individual anxieties by way of a remedy for them, a rewarding community of affections. To say this is at once to lay bare a distinctive feature of Mr. Penrose. Friday, though liked by
Crusoe, can never by the white man's equal; indeed, one of the troubles of Defoe's book is that his hero, even when apparently sobered, retains a hint of arrogance in his dealings with others, just as his legitimate longing for a life among his countrymen is also a pathetic illustration of his never quite humble acceptance of the fate he affirms having deserved. Penrose, however, knows how to treat others as his partners, even while his rule over the mixed settlement growing around him remains unquestioned. Both Penrose's firmness and his closeness to his European and American associates reflect a commonsensical approach to any problem confronting him. It is at all times important to reach decisions quickly and to insure a cooperative execution of such necessary measures, whether practical or institutional.

The fact that Penrose and his companions form a family rather than a political unit depends on his religious and philosophical outlook, an outlook as enlightened, in the sense of the mid-eighteenth century, as Defoe's was conditioned by late-seventeenth-century Dissenting values. Penrose and his friends represent the family of man, in which the white man's claim to superiority, supported by his technical and organizational experience, is invalidated by his moral frailty. This lesson is brought home in two ways: by contrasting the white man's cruelty and selfishness with both the Indian's and the Negro's essential innocence and by stressing the individual white outcast's dependence on the moves of providence. The reader may feel encouraged to see in the chance connections by which Penrose's diary is finally conveyed to England less a conventional guarantee of the truth of the story than a conclusive demonstration of God's patient guidance.

The moral and practical instruction which Alexander Smith and Mr. Penrose tried to impart is discreet when compared to the insistence on exemplary human sensibility that is distinctive of Humanity in Algiers: or, The Story of Azem, a tale published anonymously in 1801. It was designed to illustrate the hardships endured by slaves, whether Americans in Algiers or Negroes in the United States. While his emancipation is delayed, Azem remains true to his innate noble qualities, which he can fall back
on when the freedom he at length obtains brings home to him a simple truth: beyond one's immediate goal, there is always another thing to be desired. The difficulties which he encounters in his quest for love reflect on the cruelty and iniquities of slavery, that is, they are not just the result of the caprice of fortune but are related to the very theme of Azem's whole existence. It is a theme that can conveniently be served by plot devices of the novels of love and of adventure—for example, the rescue of a lady; arbitrary separation from one's beloved; helping his mother before discovering her identity; the hero's love for a girl who turns out to be his sister; his fight with brigands; outwitting those about to settle his fate; his late-revealed high rank; his reward in the guise of a happy, though short-lived, marriage.

For all his generous nature and the variety of his experiences, Azem does not come to life. His qualities are mere words, just as the place-names convey nothing except the outlandishness of the setting. The narrative purports to come from the pen of a former American slave, but the author has not visualized the world he is trying to make us believe in. It has been noted that the same thing is true of another slave narrative, the second half of The Algerine Captive; or, The Life and Adventures of Doctor Updike Underhill, by Royall Tyler (1757-1826). Yet if this second volume is inferior to the first, it is still superior to Humanity in Algiers. Underhill's comments on the history of Algiers and the clashing policies in the Mediterranean are digressions; they do offer, however, just such observations as might have been made by the naïve American physician he is. There is here a variety of adventures and settings seen through the watchful eyes of a recognizable individual, the doctor, and colored with his peculiar satirical temper. Not too many passages of any length in the second volume of The Algerine Captive sustain their interest, plausibility, and concreteness; the few, to be met with at intervals, that do, reaffirm the stamp of the hero's wide-awake receptivity and wry detachment.

This is an achievement prepared in the first volume of Tyler's novel. Owing to his education and his early experiences in
teaching and in the medical profession in America, Underhill forms a rather unflattering opinion of mankind. Though the hero's voice remains satirically tolerant, this view is further darkened by sinister and depressing implications during his journey to the southern states, where he witnesses the institution and practice of slavery. He nevertheless signs up as a surgeon with a slave trader bound for Africa. As a doctor he has a share in the process of capturing and transporting the African slaves, and only then does he fully realize the inhumanity of the treatment of the blacks. And at the close of the first volume, just after reaching this lowest point in his general estimate of mankind and of slavery, he is made a slave himself. The vicissitudes of the second volume thus begin at the end of a steady process of disillusionment and sensitizing: Underhill emerges from the test which they provide without hoping any longer for the realization of his ideals. He is soberly aware of how much is yet to be done for the practical cause of liberty and equality, for even the slightest progress in that cause can be achieved only if man summons up all his frail good will and limited resources. The conclusion of the story is therefore an explicit plea confirming the flattering hints about the United States dropped here and there in the two volumes, after the second volume has been redirecting the satirical touches of the first, American, volume. Whether this is the most convincing and memorable part of the book is doubtful, though the sincerity of Tyler's patriotism need not be questioned.

The lively story of young Updike Underhill's experiences has quite a few things in common with that of Brackenridge's Captain Farrago. His range of observation, however, is wider than the captain's, whose main concern it is to assess and to further his countrymen's preparedness for the forms and practices of democracy. But there is an obvious parallel between the lack of enlightened information concerning their science among Underhill's fellow practitioners of medicine and that of Farrago's fellow citizens, those rash or recalcitrant democrats. Here again, selfish ambitions tend to crowd out the idea of public service. Neither hero finds much appreciation of classical
learning among his countrymen. Underhill seems to consider this a reflection not only on those who fail to see any value in the old languages and literatures but also on the true uses of Greek and Latin (1: chap. 7, especially p. 74). Greek demonstrably does not help him in his schoolteaching and distracts him while farming, for "poring so intensely on Homer and Virgil had so completely filled my brain with the heathen mythology, that I imagined a Hamadryade in every sapling, a Naiad in every puddle; and expected to hear the sobbings of the infant Fauns, as I turned the furrow" (1:65). Nor does his knowledge of Greek better his chances with the ladies; on the contrary, a literary allusion of his leads to a challenge to a duel. Underhill naively agrees to meet his challenger, this is thought to show great courage, and a sheriff is mobilized to prevent the encounter. The instinct of self-preservation thus sensibly prevails, as in Modern Chivalry (1: chap. 12).

The best parts of The Algerine Captive derive from Tyler's satirical inspiration. The parodying bent of the whole design, indicated in his preface, as well as individual touches of mockery, provides the novel with another continuity apart from that of the hero's development. The mock-heroic dream of his mother, in which his head serves as a football to a group of Indians, is characteristic (1: chap. 4); so are the late quick summary of the plot (2: 239-40) and Underhill's daydreaming during his captivity, nourished from memories of novels once read and reflecting the hero's experience of ideals and sober actuality:

I fancied my future master's head gardener, taking me one side, professing the warmest friendship, and telling me in confidence that he was a Spanish Don with forty noble names; that he had fallen in love with my master's fair daughter, whose mother was a christian slave; that the young lady was equally charmed with him; that she was to rob her father of a rich casket of jewels, there being no dishonour in stealing from an infidel; jump into his arms in boy's clothes that very night, and escape by a vessel, already provided, to his native country. I saw in my imagination all this accomplished. I saw the lady descend the rope ladder; heard the old man and his servants pursue; saw the lady carried

[297]
off breathless in the arms of her knight; arrive safe in Spain; was present at the lady's baptism into the catholic church, and at her marriage with her noble deliverer. I was myself almost stifled with the caresses of the noble family, for the part I had borne in this perilous adventure; and in fine married to Donna some body, the Don's beautiful sister; returned into my own country, loaded with beauty and riches; and perhaps was aroused from my reverie by a poor fellow slave, whose extreme ignorance had almost blunted the sensibility of his own wretchedness. (2:28-29)

The anonymous novel *Adventures of Jonathan Corncob, Loyal American Refugee*, published in London in 1787, is in a number of ways a close relative of *The Algerine Captive*. For its hero, too, a New-Englander like Underhill, there is an early ominous prophecy, communicated to his mother, and, much later, a glance back at a very chequered career:

Obliged to fly my country for the first little mistake I ever made in bundling; flogged by the first captain of the navy I ever saw; and p-xed by the first woman I ever intended to make my wife: surely, said I, no man was ever so ill-treated by his evil genius as I am. I have since been beat at Barbadoes; almost choked with the reed end of a clarinet; blown naked out of bed in a hurricane; p-ssed upon by the guard of a prison-ship; and to crown all, here I am with my legs and wings pinned down like a trussed pullet's. 43

Corncob also makes fun of the reading habits of strict Presbyterians (chap. 2). His picture of a Rhode Island lady is similar to Tabitha Tenney's portrait of her heroine Dorcasina: they both dispense markedly with the conventional superlatives of sentimental novel-writers (pp. 89-90). The entire book is a catchall, sprung from the author's robust if not coarse sense of comedy and his mocking turn of mind. It combines in a lively manner the varied adventures of the Old World *picaro* with the New World setting, especially features on which satirical wit may be exercised. Corncob's experiences reveal to him the rascally intentions and inclinations apparently prevalent among mankind, and he adapts himself good-humoredly to them. Indeed, so
readily does he do this that he must be suspected of letting his own bias color the view he takes of his fellow beings. Although none too scrupulous in his observance of the codes of honesty and gallantry, he occasionally forgets to extend his tolerance to others. But no one will quarrel with him when his intolerance is applied to the abuses of slavery or matters of discipline on board a British man-of-war. The author's rough talents were consistently devoted to a rendering of Corncob's adventures on land and sea, his love affairs, fights, and the quick turns of his fate, all of which are told in a straightforward and uninhibited manner. Having begun his narrative in reply to a question from a fellow traveler in an English stage coach, and perhaps to fight off the effects of the cheerless morning, Corncob pursues it with little care for the rules of composition and concludes it with a vague hint that there might be more to come. Any number of picaresque experiences and satirical thrusts could easily have been tacked on to the body of the book; they would have provided a more suitable ending than the author's final reflection on the precarious values of works scientific or "serious" in intent (pp. 212-13).

Jonathan Corncob purports to have been written by a Loyalist refugee, and there are indications that seem to support the author's American origin; but his loyalty is to himself rather than to any country or institution. Certainly there is no bitterness in his satire of New England strictness, nor does it reflect on the causes or nature of the Colonial revolution. The whimsical fate that pursues Jonathan has no political or regional prejudices. The author seems rather sympathetic toward his American background; one is reminded of pages in Samuel Peters's General History of Connecticut, where personal animosity yields momentarily to an affectionate amusement revealing the author's divided loyalties and his remaining attachment to the country he left in anger. The author of Jonathan Corncob seems to have been definitely less committed than Peters to any of the disputed issues of political and proprietary rights. He could transcend in humorous writing the painful aspect of the rupture between the colonies and Britain. Out of his familiarity with the American
setting and his sympathy with some of its cultural implications, the author created in his hero a worthy precursor of later Jonathans; his manner has nothing to do with the average didactic motivations and pretenses of fiction but is frankly, though crudely, devoted to imaginative creation.

The author of *Jonathan Corncob* seems to have carelessly selected a number of episodes and joined them to produce an entertaining narrative sequence. Mrs. Tabitha Tenney (1762-1837) announced that her *Female Quixotism* (1801) was written to instruct her readers. Her didactic aim imposed a measure of discipline on her use of the story material available to her and suggested a pattern for the narrative. Mrs. Tenney meant to expose the follies to which her heroine Dorcasina Sheldon was driven when trying to fashion her sentimental life after the plots of her favorite novels. She therefore devised a series of situations similar in the sense that they all encourage Dorcasina’s romantic dreams of love; but these situations are increasingly absurd, too, given Dorcasina’s aging, and are increasingly cruel. The reader, witnessing the tragicomedy of the heroine’s successive disillusionments, has been taken into the author’s confidence from the very beginning, rather like a spectator who shares a playwright’s knowledge while this knowledge is wholly or partly withheld from individual characters on stage. Mrs. Tenney’s explicit intention is early illustrated quite plainly through the Lysander episode, in which a serious and deserving suitor is rejected by the heroine because his courtship offends against the practices of novel-heroes. The sense of this discrepancy between real nature and artificial forms is maintained in the sequel by the presence of Dorcasina’s commonsensical, if coarse, servant Betty. Meanwhile the knowledge of Dorcasina’s unreasonable expectations encourages the men who mean to profit by her fantastic naïveté, the pranksters who amuse themselves at her expense, and the friends who attempt to shame her by ridicule into a sober view of her genuine qualities and her confused standards.

Mrs. Tenney’s literary precedents are not far to seek, and her particular indebtedness to Mrs. Charlotte Lennox’s novel *The
"FORTUNE'S FOOT-BALL"

Female Quixote (1752) is obvious. Yet she introduced a greater variety into her book through her inventive episodes, and the differences between the chief partners and antagonists of the heroine. She also used a coarser tone, to which various considerations inevitably led: the very importance of the gap between Dorcasina's artificial ideals and the down-to-earth standards of her surroundings; the crude back-country setting; the measures of deceit and disillusionment employed against her; and the character of the people playing up to her, many of whom are lower-class characters, while others deliberately cast off their gentle nature and politeness. Particular mention should perhaps be made of the part played in parts of the comedy of misleading and misunderstanding by Dorcasina's servant Scipio, apparently the first Negro character given a distinct role in an American work of fiction. The obviousness of the whole design of Female Quixotism has its advantages; there is a lively pace to the story, rapid changes of mood, yet with a continuous reverberation of contrasting responses. The burlesque nature of the situations and of specific elements of the vocabulary, especially that of the heroine, quite effectively support the concept of ridiculous exaggeration which governs Mrs. Tenney's novel.

1. The foreground action is advanced in chapters 1-3, 13, 17-22. Chapters 4-12 paint the past experiences of the elder generation; chapters 14-16 give an account of Ferdinand's military career and his difficulties with Colonel Anstorm. References are to Ferdinand and Elmira (1804).

2. An accident initiates the process of their rehabilitation. A Russian officer loses his way near Warsaw, where he finds shelter with Elmira's parents, exiled by the vindictive Czarin Elizabeth. After the latter's death the exiles can therefore be sent for without delay and given back their former position and wealth. Yet their joy seems premature: a rumor reaches them of Ferdinand's forthcoming execution, and Mrs. Oldham faints. At this very moment Ferdinand, Elmira, and Oldham arrive at the Russian court, and without further transition sorrow yields to supreme happiness.

3. Oldham "would have thought that day lost, which was not marked in the calendar of humanity with some deed of kindness and philanthropy" (p. 41). Love is described as "the arch destroyer of tranquillity" that finds "its way into the bosoms" of young people (p. 146). We are poetically informed that the hero has reached manhood: "the blossoms of maturity had exposed his chin to the razor" (p. 149).

4. A note of grimness prevails in the relation of Mrs. Oldham's sentence (pp. 63-64) and her father's reaction to it (p. 85), and of her despair in finding her husband's house deserted (p. 112). For all this misery full com-
pensation is granted in the promising happiness at the end of the story which mentions "a lovely family of infants, who were heirs to the various virtues and charms of their parents" (p. 308).


6. His stay in Portugal did not influence his northern view of the impulsive southern temper and "a climate where the passions between the two sexes are so easily inflamed" (1:20). Nor did his Maryland origin and possible Catholic upbringing make him uncritical of Roman Catholicism; see the intolerance of Alonso's mother (chap. 1), and a Franciscan's rebuke of Alonso: "you reason too much to be a good catholick" (1:140). References are to the original edition of *Adventures of Alonso*.

7. His remarks about the contempt for the people evidenced by some British ministers and by the readiness with which Parliament lends itself to their maneuvers might indeed have been well received in the American Colonies (1:125-27).

8. He once repulses the advances of his master, "who, being palled with the enjoyment of women, sought for pleasure in the abandoned prostitution of his own sex" (2:77); perhaps a surprising passage in view of the fact that the novels of the age were meant for a largely female, genteel, reading public. In Brockden Brown's "Stephen Calvert," Clelia claims that she left her husband because of his homosexuality (see Dunlap, *Brown*, 2:401).

9. The couple, "drowned in tears and embraces," last lay eyes on one another at the close of the first third of the novel (1:88).

10. E.g., he tries to smuggle past the official control a diamond obtained very cheaply from a Negro who had to get rid of it at once.


12. L. D. Loshe has noted how easily one love lost by the hero is succeeded by another "even more desirable" (p. 24).

13. Charles and Wright are also unlucky in their first marriages: the former's wife proves unfaithful; Wright's is carried off by an epidemic. Eugenio's match is similar to Mercutio's with Leonora but more fortunate.

14. They never proceed to the United States, though, as has been pointed out by A. H. Quinn (*Fiction*, p. 13). A writer following the established paths of storytelling found it easier to use the more romantically remote conventional settings than to attempt to convey local color.
15. For an illustration of the rapid to-and-fro between the various groups of travelers, see 2:158, 163, 167. The absence of chapter divisions makes the changes of setting and characters seem even more abrupt.

16. Isabella's falling in love with Mercutio is described in truly sentimental fashion (1:117). For a contrast, see the sober comment on Lucinda's death: "This was a severe stroke to the afflicted Mercutio! Yet well calculated to teach him resignation to the will of the Almighty" (1:31).

17. A similar passage is found later (2:5).


19. One conscious attempt at fun, emphasized by the typography, occurs in the oratory of a lieutenant addressing some impressed sailors: "Come, my brave mess mates, now is the time to EXTINGUISH yourselves in OFFENCE of your king and country" (1:73).

20. See P. H. Boynton, Literature and American Life (Boston: Ginn & Co., 1936), pp. 195-96, and Cowie, Rise, p. 30. Perhaps a sense of the burlesque also prompted the plagiarized version, History of Lorenzo and Virginia, or Virtue Rewarded (Concord, N.H., 1834). In this almost verbatim copy, the most important changes occur on the title page where the original didactic motto is replaced by one promising Gothic thrills; the dedication stresses the entertainment value rather than the instructiveness of the story. References are to the third edition of Constantius and Pulchera. (The original edition appeared in Boston in 1794.)

21. Alexander Smith is attributed to Charles Lenox Sargent. The preface, in an elaborate "authenticity guarantee," asserts that the manuscript, written by Smith, was first obtained by a Spanish sailor, then by an American. One of the latter's fits of madness occurred as the "editor" was passing by: the manuscript was sold to him after the madman had died.

22. Alexander Smith was the name used on board the historical Bounty by an American sailor named John Adams. When the Topaz reached Pitcairn in 1808, he was the only survivor of the mutineers there. In the novel he tells the story of his fellow exiles' mutual extinction (an actual event) as a subterfuge to discourage further pursuit.

23. E.g., it could have been Narrative of the Adventures and Sufferings of John R. Jewitt, reprinted in New York in 1815.

24. Smith keeps his pride in his American origins, too, and proudly reports, upon the arrival of the Topaz from Boston, that Christian "had no idea that the Americans had arrived at so much perfection in ship building and seamanship; and was sorry to say his own country's merchant vessels suffered much in the comparison" (p. 215).

25. There is some confusion in the dates and count of the years. The approximate date of Smith's casting off from his desert island is early June 1788, and he enlists on the Bounty in London after a series of adventures; but Bligh sailed from England in October 1787.

26. Mr. Penrose: The Journal of Penrose, Seaman. By William Williams, 1727-1791. With introduction and notes by David Howard Dickason (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1969), p. 13. This is the first edition to give the full text of Williams's manuscript, whereas the London editions of 1815 and 1825 are marred by abridgement and "correction." Professor Dickason provides information about Williams and a good assessment of Williams's literary abilities, as well as listing some motifs which Mr. Penrose shares with later American fiction. His conjecture is that the book was written
while Williams was in America, but the evidence which he submits only makes clear that the manuscript seems to have been complete by the early 1780s.

27. See, e.g., the references to “Sot’s Bay” (pp. 40-41), the pithy estimate of an Irish captain’s skill (p. 47) and of Penrose’s musical ability (p. 254), the homely phrase “in dolefull dumps” (p. 54), the image introducing the mention of the flamingoes (p. 64), the metaphor of “an Old House” (p. 131), the proverbial saving one’s breath (p. 298), the pun on “draw” (p. 330), the variants of speech and jargon (pp. 171 f., 212 f., 282 f.).

28. Penrose himself makes the point that he would be unlikely to invent details of his adventures (pp. 134, 259, 267).

29. Some obviously “arranging” hand may seem to have timed the arrival of Bell just before Somer’s death and to have provided Penrose with paper and books. It is a gratifying coincidence that Penrose finds the lass meant for Toby “the finest Indian girl” (p. 145) he has seen, since he is to marry her later. Composition operates occasionally in a pictorial sense in Mr. Penrose, as might be expected from a professional painter (e.g., 178 f.).

30. See, e.g., pp. 71, 121 f., 218 f., 221 and 225 f., 302.

31. The prisoners’ regulations (p. 45) anticipate Penrose’s political sense.

32. See, e.g., pp. 90, 94 f., 117, 129 f., 139, 348-54, 358 f.

33. See, e.g., pp. 61, 64, 82, 254, 256, 258, 316.

34. The topic of slavery, often combined with that of the war with the North African states, was often used; e.g., the novels of Digges and Butler, and cf. Mrs. Rowson’s musical comedy of sorts, The Slaves of Algiers (1794), or William Ray, The American Tars, an autobiographical account with fictional ingredients. The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olauda Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa (1789) was probably known in America and may have influenced Humanity in Algiers. For the historical background, see the recent study by H. G. Barnby, The Prisoners of Algiers.

35. With this disproportion in mind, W. P. Trent wrote, “our clever American author is not even artist enough to master a simple form of narrative” (A History of American Literature, p. 205). Teut Riese credits the second half with one advantage: Tyler achieved a perspective transcending the picaresquely accidental of the first volume and could thus offer a relative view of the merits of America and her democratic principles (Das englische Erbe in der amerikanischen Literatur). G. Thomas Tanselle’s excellent Royall Tyler contains a lengthy discussion of The Algerine Captive. Tanselle finds it advisable to treat the two volumes as two different books; if the first is related to Modern Chivalry, the second is related to the Indian captivities. Tyler’s novel was the first American novel to have an English edition (1802); the Monthly Review, which, like the Monthly Magazine, praised the novel guardedly, qualified its praise by comparing the book with Crusoe and Gulliver, and hinting at “transatlantic peculiarities” (42[September, 1803]:93). In America, The Algerine Captive was comparatively well treated in the context of a gloomy survey of American fiction, in the Monthly Anthology (5[1808]:499). Cooper pronounced the novel distinctly superior to most American fiction (Early Critical Essays, p. 97).

36. Vol. 2, chaps. 15, 25. There is some resemblance here with the technique of Alonso. The chapters about the relative merits of the Christian and Muslim faith, which were thought too lukewarm a defense of Christianity (Monthly Review, p. 93), indeed only confront terminologies (2: chaps. 5-7, 22-24). See also Tanselle, p. 172.

38. See the conclusion, 2:240-41; and the references to Franklin (1:154), Yankee humanity (1:201), American prosperity (2:193). The treachery of Adonah's son is another, oblique, compliment to American integrity (2: chap. 36). Other kinds of references to America include the satire on the speculators (1:47) and the mention of regional rivalries (1: chap. 25).

39. Though *The Algerine Captive* is not so important a book as *Modern Chivalry*, the latter provides a more valid test for its qualities than the majority of the contemporary American novels.

40. Underhill is not determined in his choice of a profession by the example of famous American physicians but by the attractive bindings of some books on medicine (1: chap. 8).

41. The discussion of the duel matter is strikingly similar in tone to Brackenridge's, in *Modern Chivalry* (1792).

42. See especially pp. v-x, referred to occasionally in the first and third chapters of this study. Tyler's preface is echoed in Dennie's letter to him (August 30, 1797); see L. G. Pedder, ed., *The Letters of Joseph Dennie* (Orono, Me., 1936), p. 165.


44. There is, however, a clever contrasting device in chaps. 12 and 13: Corncob first praises Barbados, but at regular intervals deplores the frequency of hurricanes there; and then, after the abuses of slavery have been brought to his notice, he inserts with the same regularity remarks about the just retributive function of the hurricanes.

45. The boy openly rejoices when an irascible aunt of his dies, and is rebuked for this, but Jonathan's parents forget almost as promptly as he that a decorous show of grief is required: "All the neighbours crowded to our house to condole with us, and as they unanimously said my aunt was in heaven, the whole family was soon consoled, and the next day we were all as merry as ever" (pp. 13-14).

46. While Robert B. Heilman (p. 72) called *Jonathan Corncob* "the first novel with a strikingly original American character and with an unmistakable American background," R.W.G. Vail more specifically stressed its pioneering use of "the character of Jonathan to typify the Yankee personality with its shrewd, dry wit, its inquisitiveness and ability to look out for Number One" (*PBSA* 50[1956]:101-14) Tyler's *The Contrast* introduced Jonathan to the stage in 1787 too; the play appeared in print in 1790.


48. In the Philadelphia reissue (1802) of a London compilation, *The Female Mentor* (1793), the readers were urged to read Mrs. Lennox's book but to avoid *Sir Charles Grandison*, with its unrealistic painting of virtuous perfection (2:87-89). For Mrs. Lennox, see Miriam R. Small, *Charlotte Ramsay Lennox* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1935); and Gustavus H. Maynard, *The First American Novelist?* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1940). It has been pointed out that in *The Female Quixote* Mrs. Lennox was following the model of Marivaux rather than Cervantes; see James R. Foster, *History of the Pre-romantic Novel in England*, p. 80.

49. John Herbert Nelson (The Negro Character in American Literature, Vol. 4, no. 1 [Lawrence: University of Kansas, Dept. of Journalism Press,
mentions Cockloft’s servant Caesar, in Salmagundi, as the earliest instance of a Negro character. He draws attention to the fact that liberal comments on slavery appear early, e.g., in Modern Chivalry (there are some in Vol. 2, vi, chaps. 1-2, published in 1792); some remarks indeed appear in The Power of Sympathy (1789), and frequently later (e.g., Julia, 1800, and The Prisoners of Niagara, 1810).