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Subject/ Digression

مادة النثر للمرحلة الثانية

محاضرة للمدرس صباح سالم جبار

عنوان المحاضرة / الخروج عن النص في العمل الروائي

رواية جوزيف اندروز انموذجاً

Here we attempt to study Digression as an important technique in Fielding's **Joseph Andrews**. Digression is a technique used by some writers specially in picaresque novel to add a variety of subjects and stories within the same novel. In **Joseph Andrews**, Fielding defends his digressions saying that they will provide a rest for the readers to refresh themselves. The reader here resembles a traveler in a long journey.

This is a summary of the main digression in the novel, Leonara's story in Book 2, Chapter IV.

Leonora was the daughter of a wealthy gentleman and the possessor of many superficial charms. At eighteen, while she was living with an aunt in the north of England, she began a flirtation with a sardonic young lawyer named Horatio. Horatio soon conceived "the most violent Passion for Leonora" and proposed marriage to her, which proposal Leonora initially resisted but ultimately accepted. The lovers then exchanged some letters and set the date for the wedding. When the happy day was two weeks off, Horatio had to attend the sessions for their county, leaving Leonora alone to gawk at a passing coach and six and exclaim, "O, I am in love with that Equipage!" The owner of the coach and six, a Frenchified cavalier named Bellarmine, admired Leonora conspicuously at that evening's assembly. Leonora found herself the happy target of every woman's hatred: "She had before known what it was to torment a single Woman; but to be hated and secretly cursed by a whole Assembly, was a Joy reserved for this blessed Moment." Leonora danced the night away with Bellarmine, despite her earlier resolution not to dance while Horatio was away.

The next day Bellarmine proposed to Leonora, who referred him to her father and then worried, though briefly, that she had wronged Horatio. Her primary motive in changing fiancées was financial: "How vast is the difference between being the Wife of a poor Counsellor, and the Wife of one of Bellarmine's Fortune!" She further rationalized the action

by reasoning that if Horatio mourned the loss of his beloved, "Bellarmine may be as miserable for me too." The next morning her Aunt advised her to accept Bellarmine, arguing that "there is not any thing worth our Regard besides Money." Leonora accepted this reasoning, and she and Bellarmine settled it between them that he would seek her father's consent soon. After supper the lovers sat chatting about French and English clothing when Horatio appeared unexpectedly, triggering "a long Silence." Horatio finally broke the ice, whereupon Leonora played dumb about their engagement. Staggered, Horatio exclaimed, "I am in a Dream; for it is impossible I should be really esteemed a common Acquaintance by Leonora, after what has passed between us!" Some sparring ensued between Horatio and Bellarmine concerning the role each occupied with respect to Leonora, but the lady's Aunt soon entered and updated Horatio about "a small Alteration in the Affections of Leonora." The lawyer would have dueled the cavalier then and there, had not the ladies prevented it. Horatio soon took his leave.

Leonora awoke the next morning to the news that "Bellarmine was run through the Body by Horatio, . . . and the Surgeons had declared the Wound mortal." The Aunt advised Leonora to go back to Horatio, but Leonora claimed that she must have time to grieve before strategizing; she then argued that Horatio would never forgive her and that it was all the fault of the Aunt. A cheerful note from Bellarmine, however, reconciled the ladies to each other and dispelled all thoughts of returning to Horatio. Leonora's passion for Horatio revived "with greater Force after its small Relaxation than ever," and she planned, against the advice of her Aunt, to visit Bellarmine during his recovery.

Before the lady in the coach can finish her story, however, the coach arrives at an inn for dinner, "sorely to the dissatisfaction of Mr. Adams," who has been listening avidly.

Chapter VI.

Leonora acted as Bellarmine's nurse, and her almost constant presence in his apartment became a subject for gossip among the ladies of the town. After his recovery, Bellarmine finally set out to seek the approval of Leonora's father. The miserly old gentleman had no objection to his daughter's making such an advantageous match, but he also had no intention of providing her with a dowry. When Bellarmine clarified that he would not take Leonora without a dowry, the old gentleman expressed his regret that Leonora should lose such an eligible match. Failing to persuade his would-be father-in-law, Bellarmine left the house and the country, returning to France without seeing Leonora, and sent from Paris a note explaining to her why they could not marry after all. After receiving the bad news, Leonora returned to the house that occasioned the telling of her story, where she has "led a disconsolate Life." Horatio, meanwhile, has worked hard and acquired "a very considerable Fortune," and he has never spoken an ill word of Leonora.

Digression

It means a story that comes completely outside the main narrative or main plot. The characters of this story do not have any relation to the main story this is why fielding indicates in the prefatory chapter to Book that the reader can omit this story and shift to the next chapter. Some critics have called the digressive tales "negative analogues," meaning

that they express negatively the positive moral themes of the main story. Thus, while Joseph and Fanny embody everything that young lovers ought to be and do, Leonora manages to get everything wrong. The fact that she begins with every earthly advantage makes her folly all the less forgivable: she is wealthy, attractive, popular, and shrewd; her only weakness is a moral one, as she brings to her selection of husbands a form of pragmatism that is really just applied selfishness. This pragmatism misfires when Leonora abandons the man she really loves for a wealthier man who, as will be seen in the conclusion of her story, is no less self-interested than she is. For being too clever by half, the novel punishes Leonora, rewarding instead the dogged loyalty of Joseph and Fanny; the contrast between her sophistication and their straightforwardness implies that Fielding's providence favors simplicity, which Fielding considers an attribute of goodness.

In Chapter V introduces a farcical battle scene: serious epics are full of lavishly detailed scenes of combat that substantiate the heroic qualities of the participants, but in Fielding the narrative specificity serves, of course, not to glorify the action but to underscore its ludicrousness. Naturally, Mr. Adams epitomizes this ludicrousness: the Hostess dashes the hog's blood into his face "with so good an Aim, that much the greater part first saluting his Countenance, trickled thence in so large a current down his Beard, and over his Garments, that a more horrible Spectacle was hardly to be seen or even imagined"; when the smoke has cleared, "[t]he principal Figure, and which engaged the Eyes of all, was Adams," who, as usual, looks the silliest. He does not, however, descend to the level of the guiltiest: the hog's blood battle provides a useful window into Fielding's ethics, and the fact that neither Adams nor Joseph thinks of turning the other cheek indicates that Fielding does not use violence and nonviolence as a basis on which to distinguish the wicked characters from the virtuous.