

HENRY FIELDING'S WHORES

HENRY FIELDING'S WHORES

By KALIN SMITH, B.A. (Hons.)

A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

McMaster University

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AUTHOR: Kalin Smith, B.A. Hons. (University of Toronto)

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Abstract

The mercenary whore is a recurring character-type in Henry Fielding's plays and early fictions. This thesis examines Fielding's representations of the sex-worker in relation to popular eighteenth-century discourses surrounding prostitution reform and the so-called 'woman question'. Fielding routinely confronted, and at times affronted his audience's sensibilities toward sexuality, and London's infamous sex-trade was a particularly contentious issue among the moralists, politicians, and religious zealots of his day. As a writer of stage comedy and satirical fiction, Fielding attempted to laugh his audience into a reformed sensibility toward whoredom. He complicates common perceptions of the whore as a diseased, licentious, and irredeemable social other by exposing the folly, fallibility, and ultimate humanity of the modern sex-worker. By investigating three of Fielding's stage comedies—*The Covent-Garden Tragedy* (1732), *The Modern Husband* (1734), and *Miss Lucy in Town* (1742)—and two of his early prose satires—*Shamela* (1741) and *Joseph Andrews* (1742)—in relation to broader sociocultural concerns and anxieties surrounding prostitution in eighteenth-century Britain, this thesis locates Fielding's early humanitarian efforts to engender a reformed paradigm of charitable sympathy for fallen women later championed in his work as a justice and magistrate.

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For Peter.

∞

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HENRY
FIELDING'S
WHORES
BEING A STUDY OF
VICE, VIRTUE
&
THE SEX TRADE IN
EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY LONDON

A THESIS
Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER of ARTS

By KALIN SMITH

Omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci,
lectorem delectando pariterque monendo.
—HOR.



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MMXV

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



PARSON YORICK to DOCTOR P. WALMSLEY

3 September 1752

Sir,

The Author of this Volume hath surely been afflicted by a certain *lues Boswelliana* perpetuated no doubt by excessive exposure to what the great A. P—e styles as the *vapours from the land of dreams*. His Humors—insofar as I can ascertain—bear remarkable semblance to the Balladeering of C—C—in all of their imbalances, and yet I see no symptoms of the Melancholia about his Person, nor want of any Mirth in these Pages... What wretched Monster is it that laughs at so Vile and Contemptible a Subject as Whoredom? What breed of Mansplaining Boob dares profess the Innocence and Purity of the most Sinful and Debased of Harlots? I leave any formal diagnoses of this Vile Brute to those more aptly versed in the *philosophia naturalis and medicus* than myself, but am most obliged to forewarn you, Sir, that although Mr. S— hath taken great measure to neither offend nor amuse His reader, I am confident thou shalt surely find him guilty on both charges. All comfort and all satisfaction is sincerely wished you by, dear Sir,

Your most obliged, most obedient, and most humble servant,
Pars. YORICK



SIR JOHN PUFF, Esq. to DOCTOR P. WALMSLEY

13 September 1752

Dear Sir,

I have read this young scholar's Volume through and through, and a most inimitable Performance it is. Who is he, what is he that could write so excellent a Treatise? he must be doubtless most agreeable to the Age, and to *his honour* himself... He hath one of the worst and most fashionable Hearts in the World, and I would recommend to him, in his postdoctoral performance, to undertake the Life of this most esteemed Author. For he who so dissects the Character of Shamela Andrews, is equal to the Task; nay, he seems to have little more to do than to pull off the Cocotte's Masque, and *that* which makes her so agreeable to the Squire Booby, and the Cap will fit.

I am, Sir,
Your humble Servant,
JOHN PUFF



PREFACE



In the spring of 1668 fervent mobs of moral reformers marched the streets of London to rally against King Charles II and his court. They opposed their king's affairs with several eminent courtesans, and ransacked the brothels of Moorfields and East Smithfield. By 1758, however, Magdalene asylums began housing repentant prostitutes as a sociocultural movement toward charitable sympathy for 'fallen women' superseded the riotous pillorying remembered from the Bawdyhouse Riots of 1668. *Henry Fielding's Whores* investigates this shifting attitude toward prostitution in Great Britain from 1730 through 1750 as the playwright and novelist Henry Fielding was beginning his career as a writer of satirical fictions. The London prostitute and bawd figure regularly in Fielding's works, but what is so remarkable about these sex-workers are the variegated circumstances in which they appear: male and female, impoverished nightwalker and fashionable courtesan, country bumpkin and urban debutante. Prostitution, as Fielding understood it, was an increasingly uncontrollable vice transcending class, gender, and labour relations.

Before we begin to identify Fielding's place in the prostitution reform movements of mid-century London, it is necessary that we first consider the sociocultural position of the sex-worker during the historical moment in which Fielding is writing his satires. The

'long' eighteenth-century (1660-1830) is commonly cited as the height of sexual liberation in English history. Georgian London, as more and more cultural studies are beginning to show, was the centre of commercialized sex in Britain. At the time, women's rights were only starting to gain momentum. For the most part, women were treated as commodities to be traded on the marriage-market or in the sex-trade. This was only further reinforced by the legal status of wives as property to their husbands. Vice and virtue, furthermore, were a delicate balancing act for women of sexual maturity. The assumption, that we will see Fielding interrogate, is that any and all women are commodities to be bought and sold on the marketplace, their value commensurate with sexual purity, virginity, and virtue more broadly. In so many words then, women of all ranks and sorts depended on the sexual commodification of their bodies to produce either immediate capital by way of prostitution or through a financially prosperous marriage.

There were numerous terms used to signify prostitutes by profession, and many of these varied by both geographical location and position within the hierarchy of the sex-trade. In Hampshire, for example, a prostitute might be referred to as a 'drazil-drozzle', or in Warwickshire as a 'dolly-tripe', a 'bunter' was a lowly whore, and a 'squirrel' one of higher rank. These are just a few of the colloquial names given to the sex-worker, but many adopted aliases of their own fashioning that ranged from the innocuous—Sally Salisbury and Betsy Careless, for example—to the crude and ribald, like Rosamund Sugarclit and Poll Nimblewrist. Some were notorious spendthrifts, only taking on the highest paying john, while others were merely forced into the trade out of a lack of any

alternative means of providing for themselves. Kitty Fisher, for example, one of London's most reputed whores of the period, purportedly "ate a banknote of 1,000 guineas on a slice of bread to prove that she could afford to be choosy about her clients" (Brand, 26). Still, the greater majority no doubt found themselves working the sex-trade to make ends meet. Women were predominantly uneducated outside the realm of domestic servitude, and thus had few options outside the taking of a husband or the taking up of sex-work.

Prostitution was not illegal in Britain at the time, but the moralists of the day actively—indeed sometimes violently—suppressed the vice to the best of their ability. Bawds faced pillorying or imprisonment if they were found to be 'disturbing the peace', so upholding appearances of virtue and respectability was crucial to the ongoing success of the trade. Jonathan Swift, a major influence on Fielding, perhaps best characterized this in his 1732 poem titled "A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed" in which Corinna—a poked young prostitute—removes all of her cosmetics—artificial teeth, hair, eyebrows, breasts, and even an eye—while sitting at the vanity in her bedchamber. She also applies 'plaister' to her "shankers, issues, and running sores"; in other words, she covers up the marks of venereal disease on her body. Syphilis posed a serious threat to the prostitute because, if she were found to be infected with the disease, she would almost certainly lose her clientele, or perhaps worse: her post within a bawdyhouse. Many, therefore, took great measures in concealing their malady. For an author so invested in exposing fraud and deception, the prostitute would act as a perfect metaphor for all of Fielding's thematic concerns: social, political, and economic.

At the time, Britain was divided on how to best handle the problem of rampant prostitution, especially in London. Some were sympathetic to ‘fallen women’, and some dogmatically condemned the whore. Countless solutions were put forth by moralists, politicians, and clergymen alike, but little proved effectual in ridding the metropolis of an industry so deeply entrenched within the criminal underworlds and economic underbellies of the island. In 1703, for example, author and bookseller John Dunton took to the streets to follow prostitutes prowling about the town, and thunderously recited scripture in an—unsurprisingly failed—attempt to provoke them into repentance. In 1727, by comparison, Bernard Mandeville employed his pen in what he called *A Modest Defence of Publick Stews*. Neither those opposed nor sympathetic to the increasingly pronounced problem of prostitution could ultimately assuage one another, let alone find a mutually acceptable solution to the both social and moral problem of the sex-trade.

So where did Henry Fielding, the primary subject of this study, stand on the issue of prostitution then? Fielding, with perhaps only one or two exceptions, is a writer of comic fiction. He used his satirical wit to burlesque not only the popular tastes and entertainments of the day, but also the conservative, more polite sensibilities of so many modern Britons. He is, like his Scriblerian predecessors, an earthy humorist through and through. Any student of the author quickly discerns his career-long fixation on fraudulence, affectation, and criminality; it is thematically present in nearly all of his fictions. Apart from writing for the stage, journaling, and contributing to the development of the modern novel-form, however, he also served as a jurist and court magistrate, and

later formed the Bow Street Runners—an early metropolitan police force—with the help of his half-brother Sir John Fielding.

Fielding was certainly sympathetic to the prostitute, but he has a funny way of showing it in his fictions. He is indeed critical of the mercenary values of these characters, but by no means naïve to the sociocultural circumstances that drive a man or a woman to capitalize off of her body. Although he burlesques the figure of the prostitute to comic effect, he also complicates the long-standing attitude toward prostitutes as sinful and diseased *others*. The eighteenth-century whore was no doubt a figure of ill-repute, but the courtesan and kept-mistress occupied a different position in London society. Men and women of fashion were largely exempt from the types of public shaming that threatened the lowly streetwalker and common harlot. Fielding's whores evolve throughout his fictions into fallible, markedly human subjects of Great Britain's emerging free-market economy. Every modern Briton, for Fielding, is a whore in some form or another; it is inescapable given the nature of Great Britain's both patronage-based and increasingly commercialized, mercantile economic structure. What Fielding satirizes in his fictions is not the whore herself—nor the sins of the flesh—but the mercenary values that breed corruption and degeneracy at virtually all levels of British society. He accomplishes this by laughing his audience into a refined, reformed sensibility. It is an exonerative laughter at the character of the prostitute that proceeds from, as Hobbes pointed out a century

prior, “the sudden imagination of our own odds and eminency in ourselves, by comparison with the infirmities of others, or with our own formerly”.¹

Few students of Fielding have considered the character of the whore that figures so often in his works, but it seems obvious at least to me that this character-type fully encompasses all of Fielding’s broader sociopolitical concerns with affectation, corruption, and sexual morality in the age of Walpole. Bertrand Goldgar, in his 1985 article in *Philological Quarterly*, was first to point out that “Fielding’s attitude toward the whores of London emerges as curiously ambivalent”, but focusses his attention predominantly on Fielding’s editorial responses to a 1752 Act of Parliament aiming to regulate “Places of Publick Entertainment, and punishing Persons keeping Disorderly Houses” (Goldgar 265, and 25 Geo.II, c. 36). It is indeed important to consider the politics so deeply entrenched in eighteenth-century journalism, but despite Fielding’s ever-shifting political affiliations and allegiances during his writing career, his attitude toward sexual morality, I contend, remained largely unchanged in his fictions. Tiffany Potter and Laura J. Rosenthal have recently commented at varying lengths on Fielding’s moral licensing of the eighteenth-century rake and stallion, but focalize their critiques for the most part on decidedly masculine libertinism. This thesis fills in such a gap in Fielding scholarship. *Henry Fielding’s Whores* has three aims. First, I consider the moral implications of Fielding’s satirical burlesques during his tenure on the London stage. Although certainly not an

¹ *The Treatise on Human Nature and That on Liberty and Necessity. With a Suppl. to Which Is Prefixed an Account of His Life and Writings by the Editor.* Ed. Philip Mallet. Oxford, 1812.

exhaustive analysis, chapter one considers three plays—*The Covent-Garden Tragedy*, *The Modern Husband*, and *Miss Lucy in Town*—in light of Fielding’s position within the prostitution reform movements of mid-eighteenth-century Britain. Second, I explore Fielding’s send-up of Richardson’s *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded*, and examine its place within the body of sequels, panegyrics, and counter-fictions that soon followed its initial publication in 1740. Third, I consider Fielding’s first experiment in the novel form, *Joseph Andrews*, in light of his ongoing interest in affectation, corruption, and sexual morality. The figure of the whore in Fielding’s fictions is at once tragic and comic, but more importantly acts as an extended metaphor for nearly all of the sociopolitical concerns taken up in his satire.

Ch. I Captain Hercules Vinegar and the Hundreds of Old Drury



Henry Fielding penned over twenty plays in the 1730s. He was one of the most successful playwrights of the decade, and perhaps the most contentious. His satire is bitter, but always edifying. There is a vein of didacticism running through all of the sexual violence and criminality dramatized in comedies such as *Rape Upon Rape* (1730), *The Temple Beau* (1730), and *The Old Debauchees* (1732). Still, the topicality of his satires often made enemies for Fielding both at court and in the press. His political dissent ultimately resulted in stricter censorship laws when, in 1737, Walpole's Theatrical Licensing Act threatened to silence Tory satirists, Fielding's wit especially. The playwright persevered of course, but he began experimenting with new fictional forms too. Stage comedy demanded caricatured—recognizably, if not comically exaggerated—heroes and villains. The playhouses were some of the most loud and unruly centres of London's burgeoning public sphere, and it really is no wonder that theatrical spectacle took precedence over dialogic wit on the stage during this period². But Fielding is a

² See: William Hogarth's *A Just View of the British Stage* (1724). The satirical print depicts theatre managers Robert Wilks, Colley Cibber, and Barton Booth rehearsing a play rich in special effects while using the pages of *Hamlet* as toilet paper. For further studies on Fielding's relationship with Hogarth see: Ronald Paulson's *Popular and Polite Art in the Age of Hogarth and Fielding* (Notre Dame UP, 1979), P.J. De Voogd's *Henry Fielding and William Hogarth: The Correspondences of the Arts* (Rodopi, 1981), Vivian de Sola Pinto's "William Hogarth" in *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature 4. From Dryden to Johnson* (Penguin, 1997), and Douglas Fordham's "William Hogarth's The March to Finchley and the Fate of Comic History Painting" in *Art History* 27.1 (2004): 95-128.

moralizer, and in keeping with the tradition of stage comedy, he rewards virtue and punishes vice. His characterization, however, is seldom so straightforward. The virtuous are just as easily led to sin as the sinful are capable of being led back to virtue. Even the most morally contemptuous of Fielding's antagonists is brushed with a mark of humanity in some form or another.

The sex-trade in London was a thriving, though highly contested industry that Fielding adopted as the subject of his social commentary on more than one occasion during his career as a playwright: *The Covent-Garden Tragedy* (1732), *The Modern Husband* (1734), and *Miss Lucy in Town* (1742) to name just a few. In this chapter I consider Fielding's characterization of the London prostitute and bawd in light of said plays and the cultural anxieties that surrounded sex-work in Britain's burgeoning mercantile economy during the eighteenth century. *The Covent-Garden Tragedy*, first and foremost, synthesizes high drama with low farce not simply to burlesque the tragic mode nor the figure of the sex-worker, but to call the audience's attention to the markedly human drama played out by bawds, johns, and whores. I then consider several thematic undercurrents pertaining to prostitution in *The Modern Husband*. Prostitution, as Fielding understood it, is a genderless vice pervading all ranks of British society. What is so decidedly modern about the Moderns is their mercenary interest in sexual economy and the business of marriage at this historical moment. For Fielding, marriage is type of lawfully sanctioned prostitution demanding reform away from economic exchange and toward mutual affection and camaraderie. Finally, I examine *Miss Lucy in Town*: a short farce spotlighting the corruption and venality of the sex-trade. In this play, Fielding

dramatizes the crooked swindlings of bawdry, and the allure of materialism pervading the metropolis. These three plays touch on three unique dimensions of eighteenth-century whoredom: the fallibility of the whore, the corruption of the bawd, and the all-encompassing problem of sexual economics in a newly consumer-based society.

The Covent-Garden Tragedy was performed only once—on June 1st, 1732 at Drury Lane—as an afterpiece to *The Old Debauchees*³. Critical responses to the burlesque, however, continued to fill the *Daily Post* and *Grub-Street Journal* for the remainder of the season. What became a minor paper war was premised on Fielding’s ‘low’ subject-matter; the neighbouring bawds and whores of Covent Garden. A bawdyhouse was, for Fielding’s critics, too obscene a setting for the polite society of the Theatre Royal. In *The Grub-Street Journal* Mr. Dramaticus says Fielding might to the same effect “invite the audience to some noted Bawdy-house in Drury-lane, giving the old Lady timely notice to have her Whores, Bullies, Cullies, &c. in readiness” (2 June). Fielding replied to these objections of obscenity as ‘Mr Wm. Hint, Candle-Snuffer’ in the June 21st *Daily Post*, and defended the literary merit of his burlesque against Dramaticus’ critique:

I defy you, with the help of all your Dictionaries, to wrest one Word of it into an indecent Meaning. If Bawds and Whores, Rakes and Bullies are, in themselves, Characters improper to be shewn on a Stage, you must quarrel with half our Plays, (as you would have known had you seen as many

³ Robert D. Hume notes that *The Covent-Garden Tragedy* was later revived by Fielding and his ‘Great Mogul’s Company of Comedians’ for four nights at the Little Haymarket in 1734, and “a fifth night by the summer company that year”, but “obviously the work never caught on” (134).

as I have) and particularly, the so justly celebrated
BEGGAR'S OPERA.⁴

The Covent-Garden Tragedy is, like Gay's 1728 ballad opera, a mock-heroic farce dramatizing the low prostitute in the language of high sentimental tragedy. Fielding identifies the target of his burlesque as Philip's repertory tragedy *The Distrest Mother* (1712) in his 'Prolegomena' and mock-criticism appended to the printed edition. In his hoaxed critique 'originally intended for the Grubstreet Journal' he writes: "as for the Characters of Lovegirlo and Kissindra, they are poor Imitations of the Characters of Pyrrhus and Andromache in the *Distrest Mother*, as Bilkum and Stormandra are of Orestes and Hermione" (368). Peter Lewis maps these source texts in his study on *Fielding's Burlesque Drama: Its Place In The Tradition*, but *The Covent-Garden Tragedy* does more than simply burlesque the tragic form.

By deflating the high form Fielding also aggrandizes the low subject. The Covent-Garden bawdyhouse becomes the setting of a markedly human drama played out by bawds and whores embodying the same socioeconomic interests and motivations as the aristocrats and citizens in attendance at the Theatre Royal. Of course, the theatre attracted audiences from all ranks and social classes. Each section—the box, the pit, and the gallery—to some extent stratified the audience according to social rank. Nobility paid five shillings for a box seat; critics, scholars, and gentry paid three shillings for a seat in the pit; the middling-sorts paid two shillings for a lower-gallery seat; and servants and footmen paid a single shilling for an upper-gallery seat (Stone, 82). But while Britons

⁴ "To Dramaticus, alias Prosaicus, alis Bavius, alias &c. &c. &c.". *Daily Post*. 21 June 1732. *Burney Collection*. Web. 20 October 2014.

high and low congregated at the theatre, they seldom intermingled. *The Covent-Garden Tragedy* blurs these distinctions of rank by subverting them.

Fielding's objection to accusations of indecency in the burlesque incited further critical response upon publication of a printed edition. In the August 24th *Grub-Street Journal* Prosaicus considers the farce "only in the Author's own way, whether 'tis a piece of just humour". He reinforces Dramaticus's charge of obscenity, and argues that "humour is to represent the foibles of nature, not its most shocking deformities"⁵. Theatre criticism is highly political at this moment in the history of London theatre, but the crux of ongoing debate surrounding *The Covent-Garden Tragedy* is its ethicality and indecency. Kissindra, Stormandra, and Mother Punchbowl evoke sympathy from the audience, albeit ironically detached, through Fielding's bathetic verse. They are fallible, sentimental figures in constant negotiation with vice and virtue, their trade and their honour. Fielding's whores are, in other words, humanized through their ongoing struggle to compromise between the two. He is adding a certain degree of psychological depth to the character-type that was, for the most part, nonexistent in contemporary representations of the whore.

In his recent introduction to the text, Thomas Lockwood has observed that after two centuries of subsequent critical analysis "it is by no means clear even so that the original two critical questions have ever been answered convincingly, one way or the other: Is this a right choice of material?—not morally, as Prosaicus meant, but artistically or imaginatively right? And is it funny?" (*Plays: Vol. 2*, 358). But Fielding's burlesque

⁵ "Dear Ned". *The Grub-Street Journal*. 24 August 1732: 138. *Burney Collection*. Web. 20 October 2014.

cannot be understood ‘artistically or imaginatively’ without considering its moral implications for an audience divided in their attitudes toward contemporary sexual mores. It is a corrosive satire that both acts as a counterpoint to the idealized world of sentimental tragedy, and spotlights the inherent commercialism and commodification of sexual relations at this moment in the history of sexuality. The moral undercurrent is perhaps best identified in Fielding’s prologue spoken by Theophilus Cibber who plays the role of Lovegirlo when he says:

Examples of the Great can serve but few,
For what are Kings and Heroes Faults to you?
But these Examples are of general Use.
What Rake is ignorant of King’s Coffee-House?
Here the old Rake may view the Crimes h’ as known,
And boys hence dread the Vices of the Town:
Here Nymphs seduc’d may mourn their Pleasures past,
And Maids, who have their Virtue, learn to hold it fast.
(372)

Tom ‘King’s Coffee-House’ was a notorious brothel in Covent-Garden that for over twenty-years acted as a meeting ground for whores and their clients. Hogarth, Pope, Gay, and Smollett have all referenced the establishment in their works too. As a site of debauchery and vice, it was frequently targeted by the Society for the Reformation of Manners: a group who aimed to suppress immorality and vice in the metropolis. The burlesque is as didactic as it is farcical. Fielding spells out the moral undercurrent for his audience. Their primary targets were local brothels and streetwalkers.

Fielding’s travestic representation of the London prostitute ‘are of general Use’ because commerce is revealed to be inseparable from any and all forms of sexual relation: harlotry, courtesanship, mistressing, rakery, and marriage. Sex, the most intimate and

private form of social interaction, is thematically intertwined with labour, the most communal and public form of social exchange. Laura J. Rosenthal's recent study of prostitution in eighteenth-century British literature and culture shows us just how topical sex-work was in regard to contemporary debates and controversies surrounding London's emerging capitalist marketplace. As her study reveals, prostitutes were routinely penned as "morally condemned, sexually objectified, and/or exorcized 'others,' but also [acted] as reference points for a range of readers faced with a newly commercialized culture offering new forms of mobility, often without traditional safety nets", and furthermore that literary prostitutes "represent the fallout of commercial society; they represent the anxious possibility of abandonment to an unforgiving marketplace that threatens the boundaries of personal and national identity" (7). With *The Covent-Garden Tragedy*, Fielding depicts the whore not as a sinful, diseased, and deformed reprobate, as much of his audience might have imagined, but as a sympathetic figure forced into sex-work as a matter of economic necessity.

The Battestins have observed that Fielding's burlesque "was too ribald for the tastes of an audience accustomed to the genteel comedies of Cibber, or, nearer the mark, the more refined merriment of Gay's 'Newgate Pastoral'" (*Henry Fielding: A Life*, 136). While no task is quite so thankless as explaining a joke, in his prolegomena to the printed edition Fielding reaffirms his farcical intentions. The humour of *The Covent-Garden Tragedy* was, Fielding maintained, lost on his critics, whom he chides "hath determined to instruct the World in Arts and Science, without understanding any" (363). The mock-letter addressed 'Dear Jack', for example, first calls into question the very genre of the play.

“To tell you the Truth,” the invented critic writes, “I know not what to make of it: One wou’d have guess’d from the Audience, it had been a Comedy: For I saw more People laugh than cry at it” (365). Fielding’s tongue-in-cheek commentary prefaces the play not as a sentimental tragedy as his title suggests—and at the height of its popularity on the London stage at the time—but as a sentimental comedy subverting his audiences’ expectations. The whores’ sins are forgiven, the lovers reunited, and order restored to Punchbowl’s house. This is precisely what Fielding’s critics objected to in the farce, however. In his mock-criticism appended to the text Fielding sardonically remarks that his “characters, I think, are such as I have not yet met with in Tragedy... Is [*Mother Punchbowl*] the Mother of any Body in the Play? No. From one Line one might guess she was a Bawd, *Leathersides* desires her to procure two Whores, &c. but then is she not continually talking of Virtue? How can she be a Bawd?” (367). The prostitute at this historical moment was largely seen as an amoral and monstrous figure in British society. Fielding evokes varying degrees of representational empathy between the bawd and the whore. The bawd is predominantly mercenary, corrupt, and at times nefarious, but only insofar as she has fallen victim to the stringent demands of a market economy unfavourable to the tradeswoman. The whore, on the other hand, is victimized similarly, but further empathic through her inability to escape the corrupt bawd’s credit-based system of ownership and property. Still, both were treated as criminals beyond reform, and commonly flooded the cells of Newgate and Bridewell. That they might maintain any virtue or mark of humanity was an opinion far from universal for Fielding’s audience.

Robert D. Hume aptly notes that *The Covent-Garden Tragedy* continued to be staged as a puppet-show for nearly a decade following its initial run at Drury Lane, “but the better record it made in that medium may say something about the work itself, perhaps more winning or simply more fun once all those downright Covent-Garden characters are made to retreat into squeaky, less literal form” (349). Fielding’s task of humanizing the prostitute is forgotten when translated into the medium of puppetry, and is a testament to the cultural sensibilities Fielding was likely to affront in his original production. As he would continue to write in his mock-criticism: “the Meanness of the Diction, which is some degrees lower than I have seen in any Modern Tragedy, we very often meet with Contradictions in the same Line... it very often takes away its Meaning, as particularly *virtuous Whore*. Did it ever enter into any Head before, to bring these two Words together?” (369). The terms ‘*virtuous*’ and ‘*Whore*’ are antonyms for Fielding’s audience, but that Fielding was the first to represent the whore in such an empathetic light is of course quite untrue.

We know that Hogarth completed *A Harlot’s Progress* by late 1731, Gay’s *Beggar’s Opera* ran for an applaudable sixty-two consecutive performances in 1728, Behn’s *The Revenge; or, a Match in Newgate* dramatized the ‘whore with a heart of gold’ in 1680, and Dekker and Middleton’s 1604 city comedy was wryly titled *The Honest Whore*. What distinguishes *The Covent-Garden Tragedy* from its predecessors is that, for Fielding’s whores Newgate and the pillory are distant threats, not immediate realities. The entire farce is set in-and-around Mother Punchbowl’s bawdyhouse, with Fielding’s dramaturgical focus centred on prostitution as economic necessity rather than criminal

offence. The risk of imprisonment and pillorying for sex-workers in London throughout the eighteenth century is well-documented in the Old Bailey Proceedings. Punchbowl acknowledges these risks when Bilkum contests his fare with a nearby chairman:

What is the Reason, Captain, that you make
This Noise within my House? Do you intend
To arm reforming Constables against me?
Wou'd it delight your eyes to see me dragg'd
By base *Plebeian* Hands to *Westminster*,
The Scoff of Serjeants and Attornies Clerks,
And then exalted on the Pilory,
To stand the sneer of every virtuous Whore?
Oh! cou'dst thou beat to see the rotten Egg
Mix with Tears, and trickle down my Cheeks...
Or see me follow the attractive Cart,
To see the Hangman lift the Virgal Rod. (377-8)

Ronald Paulson identifies 'Mother' Elizabeth Needham as Fielding's model for Mother Punchbowl, the same bawd depicted greeting Moll in Hogarth's *Harlot's Progress*.

Needham was convicted for keeping a bawdyhouse in 1731, sentenced to stand on the pillory near Park Place, and died shortly thereafter on account of the pelting she received (98). Needham's brothel in Park Place attracted clientele from both high and low society. "Rape-Master General" Colonel Francis Charteris and celebrity prostitute Sally Salisbury are both commonly cited as her patrons, for example. Mother Punchbowl, however, labours to attract even the basest clientele. The burlesque opens with Punchbowl lamenting her trade in the back-parlour of her house:

Who'd be a Bawd in this degen'rate Age!
Who'd for her Country unrewarded toil!
Not so the Statesman scrubs his plotful Head,
Not so the Lawyer shakes his unfeed Tongue,
Not so the Doctor guides the doseful Quill. (I.i, 375)



Elizabeth Needham greeting Moll Hackabout at the Bell Inn, Cheapside. Plate 1 in William Hogarth's *The Harlot's Progress* (1732).

Fielding immediately frames prostitution within the context of trade and commerce by likening the bawd to the statesman, lawyer, and doctor. The London sex-trade was thriving during the mid-eighteenth-century, but moral reform movements—particularly those of the Society for the Reformation of Manners—ensured that prostitution continued to be considered a socially harmful vice. For many, however, prostitution remained a matter of economic necessity.

As London's population exploded during the eighteenth-century, more and more 'fallen women' relied on prostitution as a means of subsistence. Defoe's *Moll Flanders* opined a decade earlier that "Vice came in always at the Door of Necessity, not at the Door of Inclination" (149). In his recent study titled *The Secret History of Georgian London*, Dan Cruickshank has suggested that at least one in five women was resigned to sex-work. When Fielding's Stormandra reprimands the ghost of Lovegirlo appearing before her in a chamber at Punchbowl's bawdyhouse, he barks

Thy person is as common as the Dirt,
Which *Pickadilly* leaves on ev'ry Heel. (II.v, 393)

Despite being steeped in hyperbole, Lovegirlo's snide remark shows us just how inflated London's prostitution market had become. *Pickadilly* was a filthy highway for travellers coming to-and-from the metropolis, and continues to serve as a major artery in-and-out of London today. Before he arrives at the bawdyhouse, Leathersides explains to Punchbowl that

A Porter from *Lovegirlo* is arriv'd,
If in your Train one Harlot can be found,
That has not been a Month upon the Town;
Her, he expects to find in Bed by two. (I.iv, 379)

Young and impoverished provincial girls travelling to London in search of work were quickly taken-in by bawds as a source of capital. Jane Austen once jokingly explained to her sister that, on a trip to the city, she might “fall a Sacrifice to the arts of some fat Woman who would make me drunk with small Beer”⁶. Procuresses like Punchbowl marketed these girls’ virtue to rakish johns like Lovegirlo. The price of a whore was often a reflection of their touted purity. Perceived virtue was therefore the most highly valued commodity among whoremongers. As Bilkum attempts to cheat Stormandra out of her fare, she roars:

And dost thou think I have a Soul so mean?
Trust thee! dost think I came last week to Town,
The Waggon Straws yet hanging to my Tail? (II.i, 387)

Fielding represents the sex-trade as an increasingly stringent business throughout *The Covent-Garden Tragedy*. Stormandra cannot afford to devalue her favours. With more and more nightwalkers working the streets of London, bawds like Punchbowl stood to lose their clients to competing houses. “Who set thee on, thou traitor, to undo me,” she says to Bilkum regarding Stormandra’s fare,

Is it some envious Sister, such may be;
For even Bawds, I own it with a Blush,
May be dishonest in this vicious Age. (II.ii 388)

That Bilkum might purchase favours from Stormandra on credit alone is, for Punchbowl, a ludicrous presumption. She simply cannot afford the risk of going unpaid in such an over-flooded market in such a ‘vicious Age’. Further, the Georgian bawdyhouse was not

⁶ “18 September 1796”. *Jane Austen’s Letters to Her Sister Cassandra and Others: 1796-1809*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1932.

the only centre of trade on the prostitution market. Industrious women, often with inner-city relations, might abandon the lowly bawdyhouse to become kept-mistress to a wealthier client. Fielding recognizes the threat such adulterous relations posed to businesswomen like Punchbowl who laments the

(Days I shall see no more)—it tears my Brain.
When Culls sent frequent, and were sent away.
When Col'nels, Majors, Captains, and Lieutenants,
Here spent the Issue of their glorious Toils;
These were the Men, my *Bilkum*, that subdued
The haughty Foe, and paid for Beauty here.
Now we are sunk to a low Race of Beaus,
Fellows unfit for Women or for War;
And one poor Cull is all the Guests I have. (I.iv, 380)

She is recalling the War of Spanish Succession fought at the dawn of the century in this passage. Her bathetic mourning for an imagined golden age of prostitution suggests that her bawdyhouse now exists in a perpetual state of economic uncertainty. Tiffany Potter has noted that Fielding “appropriates the traditional language of moralism and virtue to disrupt their popular significance, and to move toward a discourse celebrating the freedom and power of the individual” (56). While this is certainly true for libertines like Lovegirlo and Gallono, such liberties were no doubt certainly denied to impoverished whores like Stormandra and Kissindra, who remain subservient to Punchbowl throughout the burlesque. Their bodies are her property, and commodified as such.

Fielding does, however, make a concerted effort to humanize prostitution in addition to spotlighting the commercialization of sex in the period. The dramaturgical focus of *The Covent-Garden Tragedy* is equally as invested in the whores' affairs of the heart as it is in their economic affairs. Fielding presents them as inextricably intertwined.

For Stormandra, Lovegirlo is as much a john as he is the object of her affection. When his ghost accuses her of having “had a thousand diff’rent men”, she replies that

If that be Falshood, I indeed am false,
And never Lady of the Town was true;
But tho’ my Person be upon the Town,
My Heart has still been fix’d on only you. (II.v, 393)

Of course Stormandra later reveals that her feelings for Lovegirlo are rooted in his purse, but *that* she feels for him at all is a testament to her humanity. The prostitution of her body is a means to an financial ends, and Lovegirlo delivers time and time again. There is a confusion of sex, love, and money resonating throughout the farce:

I own I chose *Lovegirlo*, own I lov’d him,
But then I chose and lov’d him as a Cull;
Therefore prefer’d him to all other Men,
Because he better paid his Girls than they.
Oh! I despise all Love but that of Gold,
Throw that aside and all Men are alike. (II.vi, 395)

Fielding’s whores are—again, and as we will continue to see throughout his writing—in constant negotiations with the mid-century fashion for vice and their own virtue.

Stormandra capitalizes off of the prostitution of her body, but is ironically disillusioned by the feelings she thereafter develops for Lovegirlo. Her fallibility complicates her position as a ‘Lady of the Town’, and reveals her emotional complexity; at once covetous and affectionate. To Bilkum, attempting to acquire her favours on credit, she says:

When shiv’ring on a Winter’s icy Morn,
I found thy coatless Carcase at the Roundhouse,
Did I not then forget my proper Woes,
Did I not send for half a Pint of Gin,
To warm th’ ungrateful Guts? pull’d I not off
A Quilted Petticoat to clothe thy Back?
That unskinn’d Back, which Rods had dress’d in red,

Thy only Title to the Name of Captain?
Did I not pick a Pocket of a Watch,
A Pocket pick for thee? (II.ii, 390)

Fielding's high rhetoric in this passage comically aggrandizes Stormandra's charity toward Bilkum, but also showcases her compassion for his suffering. *The Covent-Garden Tragedy* demands the audience see the figure of the prostitute in the same light. Fielding's telos here is reforming sexual impropriety rather than shaming it. He affects empathy from the audience to accomplish this. Stormandra's argument with Kissindra over their shared love of Lovegirlo best exemplifies this in the burlesque when she contends that

Shame more justly to the Wretch belongs,
Who gives those Favours which she cannot sell,

and to which Kissindra replies that

harder is the wretched Harlot's Lot,
Who offers them for nothing and in vain. (II.vi, 394)

Without directly sanctioning prostitution, Fielding does suggest that sexual impropriety is more shameful when it is not rooted in a formal economic exchange. The lewd old maid and the young rake lasciviously pursuing a marriage are, for Fielding, more deplorable characters than the impoverished whore working to survive. In *Pasquin*, performed at the Little Haymarket four years later, Fielding would go so far as to suggest that, in varying degrees, everyone is a whore: "every one now keeps and is kept", says Lord Place, "there are no such things as marriages now-a-days, unless merely Smithfield contracts, and that for the support of families; but then the husband and wife both take into keeping within a fortnight" (II.i, 266). In *The Covent-Garden Tragedy*, this is best articulated in Miss Rafter's epilogue to the burlesque when she says that

To be a Mistress kept, the Strumpet Strives,
And all the modest Virgins to be Wives.
For Prudes may cant of Virtues and of Vices,
But faith! we only differ in our prices. (373)

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Marriage is represented as a type of legally and religiously sanctioned prostitution in a similar ‘comedy’ written by Fielding that same year: *The Modern Husband*. What Fielding dramatizes in this play is thematically concurrent with *The Covent-Garden Tragedy*, but on terms of marriage and the domestic as opposed to whoredom in a bawdyhouse. The scene of the domestic, Fielding suggests in *The Modern Husband*, is virtually indistinguishable from the scene of the whorehouse when sexual economy takes precedence over sexual morality. The play premiered at Drury Lane on Valentine’s Day with a cast of principals that included Elizabeth Butler as Emilia; famed for her role as Sarah Millwood, a ‘lady of pleasure’, in Lillo’s *London Merchant* one year prior. It follows the adulterous affairs of the Moderns, the Bellamonts, and their children in their venal pursuits of romance and capital in London. The satire is pointed particularly at the Moderns—‘the willing cuckold’ and his ‘willing wife’—who sue for ‘swingeing’ damages after forging an adulterous affair between Mrs. Modern and Lord Richly. Mr. Modern is aware of his wife’s several ongoing affairs, and pursues criminal conversation action against Lord Richly in order to supplement the money he has made prostituting his wife to Captain Bellamont. The play, then, ultimately exposes the corruption and debasement of marriage by self-interested, mercenary Britons like the Moderns.

Charles Woods has cited William Neville, 14th Baron of Abergavenny's highly publicized case of a similar nature against Richard Lyddel in 1730 as a probable influence, but such cases were by no means uncommon to the press (364). *The Grub-Street Journal*, *The Craftsmen*, *London Evening Post*, and *London Journal* all reported regularly on similar trials⁷. The case of *Grosvenor and Cumberland*, for example, resulted in £10,000 worth of damages being awarded to the plaintiff. It was not until the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 that the tort was reformed throughout the United Kingdom. Lockwood notes in his recent introduction to the text that "all newspaper and pamphlet reporting of these trials carefully specified award amounts, and it would appear that the money ran about even with the illicit sex as matter of eager public interest" (188). Fielding was not the first playwright to stage a production centred around a husband's prostitution of his wife either. Aphra Behn's *The Lucky Chance* (1687) and Eliza Haywood's *A Wife to be Lett* (1723) both tell a similar narrative of husbandry and patriarchal profiteering. In Fielding's play, however, the wife—Mrs. Modern—conspires alongside her husband. *The Modern Husband*, as grave and unfunny as it reads nearly three centuries later, is markedly Horatian satire. The laughter Fielding attempts to incite from his audience is meant to disarm and correct— to expose the Moderns' folly.

A husband stood to gain as much as a bawd by pimping his wife. What is so 'Modern' about Fielding's husband is this very conception of the husband as tradesman and wife as property. "Husband, did I say?" says Mrs. Modern, "Sure, the Wretch, who

⁷ See: *Grub-Street Journal* (9 Dec. 1731), *The Craftsmen* (6 Dec. 1729), *London Evening Post* and *London Journal* (4 Dec. 1731), &c.

sells his Wife, deserves another Name” (I.iii, 221). Mr. Modern is indeed Mrs. Modern’s pimp. He has the same mercenary values as Punchbowl in *The Covent-Garden Tragedy* too. “Never fear your Reputation, while you are rich” he explains to his hesitant wife, “for Gold in this World covers as many Sins, as Charity in the next... You will find Wealth has a surer Interest to introduce Roguery into Company, than Vertue to introduce Poverty”. It is not so much her ongoing private affair with Bellamont that Mrs. Modern fears will compromise her reputation, but the making-public of such an illicit romance. She is more concerned with perceived virtue than moral uprightness:

MR. MOD: Very strange, that a Woman who made so little
Scruple of sacrificing the Substance of her Vertue, should make so
much of parting with the Shadow of it.
MRS. MOD: 'Tis the Shadow only that is valuable—Reputation is
the Soul of Vertue. (I.iv, 222)

Money is of course at the heart of the Moderns’ scheming one way or another. Mrs. Modern’s initial reluctance to make public her affair with Bellamont is rooted in the ‘value’ her ‘vertue’ carries. She is conscious of the fragility of a woman’s reputation in London, and the socioeconomic weight it holds in her society. Mr. Modern, on the other hand, sees virtue as a sham. “Vertue has appeared nothing more than a Sound”, he pleads to his wife, “and Reputation is its Echo. Is there not more Charm in the Chink of a thousand Guineas, than in ten thousand Praises? But what need more Arguments, as I have been contented to wear Horns for your Pleasure, it is but reasonable, you shou’d let me show ’em for my Profit”. Again, it is the extent to which he might immediately ‘profit’ from the affair that drives Mr. Modern to pursue legal action against Mr. Bellamont. Fielding is of course exaggerating his mercenary profiteering with ironically detached

hyperbole, but the implication is that the ‘chink of a thousand Guineas’ is more desirable to Mr. Modern than his reputation, that of his wife and their marriage about the town.

Mrs. Modern is his property, a commodity to be traded on the marketplace. Such misogyny is no doubt deplorable to contemporary readers, but Fielding is by no means licensing Mr. Modern’s actions. Rather, he is exposing the corruption of marriage as a social degradation by representing it in such a grim light. “Your person is mine”, Mr. Modern barks at his wife, “I bought it lawfully in the Church, and unless I am to profit by the Disposal, I shall keep it all for my own use... Why had I not been born a *Turk*, that I might have enslaved my Wife, or a Chinese, that I might have sold her!” (IV.i, 256-7). Comments like these throughout the play have led to centuries of staid criticism. Pat Rogers openly confesses in his biography that he “would rather attend a second-rate performance of *The Lottery* than endure the five-act virtue-in-distress which constitutes *The Modern Husband*” (54). Indeed most critics have shied away from Fielding’s subject-matter to focus their reading on his dramatic shortcomings instead⁸. As flawed as it may be as a drama, Fielding’s message is certainly clear: “It is a Stock-jobbing Age”, Bellamont explains,

every thing has its Price; Marriage is Traffick throughout; as most of us bargain to be Husbands, so some of us bargain to be Cuckolds; and he wou’d be as much laught at, who preferr’d his Love to his Interest, at this End of the Town, as

⁸ Tiffany Potter is perhaps the only modern critic to comment at length on Fielding’s libertinism in *The Modern Husband*. The play, she writes, “is one of assessment and challenge of hegemonic orders and of a libertine freedom of intellect and behaviour until one independently chooses to marry, at which point sexual activity is, in Fielding’s moral sphere, finally to be limited to a single partner” (67). Fielding later reworked this same narrative in *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*.

he who preferr'd his Honesty to his Interest at the other. (II.
vi, 237)

The rise of a consumer culture in eighteenth century Britain—the transition from a feudal to a largely mercantile society—made possible a commodification of virtually everything, including British-subjects themselves. Of course arranged marriages, marriages of convenience, and the sex-trade were nothing new to eighteenth-century Britons, but what *The Modern Husband* shows us is just how much the business of sex thrived in an era of increasing sexual liberation.

Fielding laments this. Moral depravity, libertinism, and the corruption of marriage as an institution of trade are all subject to Fielding's ridicule with a certain sanctimony that would become characteristic of his later fictions. Mercenary values are the problem here. In his epilogue 'spoken by Mrs. Heron' who plays the part of Mrs. Modern, Fielding explains that

*... if these Discoveries succeed,
Marriage will soon become a Trade, indeed!
This Trade, I'm sure, will flourish in the Nation,
'Twill be esteem'd below no Man of Fashion,
To be a Member of the—Cuckold's Corporation!
[...] Oh! should no Chance this Corporation stop,
Where should we find one House, without a Shop? (286)*

The language of commerce in this passage tidily summarizes Fielding's satirical aim to the drama. Marriage is not so far estranged from prostitution when economics supersede affection. This is not to condemn the libertine or whore as ill-fated '*Monsters*' beyond repair, but to expose their folly and thereby correct it. After all, Mr. Bellamont repents his affair with Mrs. Modern, and Mrs. Bellamont ultimately forgives the transgression.

Hindsight, for Mr. Bellamont, turns what initially reads like a debauched comedy of humours into a decidedly sentimental comedy. The fifth act closes with the reformed Mr. Bellamont explaining to his son Gaywit that

However slight the Consequences may prove,
Which waits unmarried Libertines in Love,
Be from all Vice divorc'd before you wed,
And bury Falshood in the bridal Bed. (V.xv, 285)

The '*Monsters*' in the play, though debauched, are capable of reform. Fielding is humanizing them in these final moments of redemption. Virtue upstages vice, and all's well that ends well. The underlying didacticism of the play abruptly overturns the four preceding acts' lewdness. Fielding forgives his characters sins, and the audience is conditioned to sympathize with what Tiffany Potter has so accurately called their 'Honest Sins'.

The Modern Husband shames the Moderns, the Bellamonts, and the rakish Lord Richly nonetheless, however. They are the object of Fielding's satire despite his clemency. The drama is meant to expose the prostitution of marriage. "It is a modern Trade", Gaywit says to Mr. Bellamont, "unknown to our Ancestors, a modern Bubble, which seems to be in a rising Condition at present" (II.vi, 236-7). Sexual liberation is problematic for Fielding for this very reason. Money so easily corrupts the marriage-bed, and has indeed led to a cottage industry of husbands in the business of trading for their wives. Lord Richly speaks of marriage as an investment in property, for example, when he says that "To marry a Woman merely for her Person, is buying an empty Vessel: And a Woman is a Vessel, which a Man will grow cursed weary of in a long Voyage" (V.vii,

275). The metaphor reflects the mercenary values that Fielding burlesques time and time again in his fictions. Self-interest is no grounds for a marriage, and in an increasingly commercializing age the institution of marriage is, for Fielding, under threat.

In his June 21st entry in *The Champion*—a periodical lasting from 1739-40—Fielding again voiced his fear over what he perceived to be the failing state of marriage in Great Britain. Financial marriages and criminal conversation action exploited an institution that ought to be premised on mutual love and respect between two parties. “The Dramatick Writers have endeavour’d to make the Words Husband and Cuckold synonymous”, he writes under the pseudonym of Captain Hercules Vinegar. “Serious Persons have likewise publish’d very grave Essays, setting forth the many Disadvantages and Inconveniences of a married State”, he continues, and goes on to cite Francis Osborne’s 1656 *Advice to a Son* and an anonymously authored pamphlet titled *A Dissuasive against Marriage, The Batchelor’s Estimate, &c.* (380-1).⁹ The anxiety surrounding marriage in these texts, and for Fielding, is the abuse and exploitation of the

⁹ The pamphlet was later appended to a miscellany printed by John Roberts in 1734 under the full and comically revealing yet curiously naturalizing title: *Reasons Against Matrimony: Being a Survey of the Isle of Marriage. Or, a New and Accurate Description of All the Provinces, Districts, Ports, Towns, Rivers, Policy, and Governments, of that Vast and Populous Country: Containing a Particular Account of Its Various Inhabitants, Under the Following Heads: the Discreet, the Prudes, the Ill-matched, the Ill-at-ease, the Jealous, the Cuckolds, Whether Contented, Frantick, Imaginary, Or Incredulous; and the Inhabitants of the Two Little Districts of Divorce and Widowhood; as Also Some Remarks on the Two Islands of Polygamy, and of Love. With Useful Directions and Cautions how to Avoid the Many Dangerous Precipices, Torrents, Morasses and Quicksands, Wherewith the Island of Marriage Abounds, and Wherein So Many Thousands who Have Undertaken the Voyage, Have Miserably Perish’d. To which is Prefix’d a Dissuasive from Matrimony, in an Epistle Dedicatory to Caelia.*

institution as a method of social climbing or as the means to an financial end. The likes of Mr. Modern who appear before a Court of Justice in pursuit of criminal conversation action are put to shame and ridiculed. The “Courts of Justice are highly entertain’d with the Institution as often as it comes before them, and roast a Cuckold very handsomely for the Entertainment of the Jury”, Fielding explains, “after they have enjoyed him (as the Wits call it) for five or six Hours, make the Gallant pay the Piper, and present the Cuckold with a round Sum of Money to make him amends” (382). Fielding attempts to incite the same laughter from his audience in *The Modern Husband* as the magistrates before the jurors in criminal conversation cases. The cuckold becomes the court jester, a tragically comic figure capable of profiting off of his misfortune. The problem for Fielding, however, is that it is not beneath the likes of Mr. Modern to willingly parade his horns for profit. On the other hand, shame is a powerful social deterrent, and Fielding goes on to explain that

It is no Wonder, therefore, that we see several young Gentlemen of great Prudence and Reflection, instead of marrying, at the Age of 18 or 19 become Guardians to the Persons of young Ladies; an Office which they generally execute with great Industry and Application for a short Time, and then the young Ladies, without the Assistance of the Chancery, chuse another; so that they have often two or three different Guardians in a Twelve-month... Thus Marriage seems to be in a fair Way of being shortly laid aside: For as to those Conjunctions which we sometimes read of in News-papers, they are rather of Estates than Persons. (382-3)

In other words, the measure of one’s estate is the same measure of one’s value as a partner in marriage. It is an economic exchange. There is financial risk involved, and simply

being ‘Guardians to the Persons of young Ladies’ offered an attractive alternative to the young libertine eager to debauch a young woman of virtue without having to compromise his estate or liberty. Lord Richly embodies these values in *The Modern Husband*, and Mr. Modern the latter. Their relationship is one of buyer and seller, and neither is eager to negotiate his price.

The Moderns stand to gain more by pursuing criminal conversation action against Mr. Bellamont than by continuing the affair in secrecy. “Suffer me to discover you together”, Mr. Modern pleads to his wife, “by which means we may make our Fortunes easy all at once. One good Discovery in *Westminster-Hall* will be of a greater Service than his utmost Generosity—The Law will give you more in one Moment, than his Love for many Years” (IV.i, 257). Of course any claim awarded in a court of justice would go straight into the hands of Mr. Modern, and therefore offers little incentive for *Mrs.* Modern in terms of financial award. On the other hand, her virtue operates as a type of credit in the marketplace. Her body is in so many ways a currency, and her reputation a means of exciting prospective investors. Mr. Modern, to belabour the metaphor here, attempts to sell his stock before the bubble bursts, before his cuckoldry is found out, and his property devalued. “Ladies are apt to value themselves on their Virtue,” Gaywit remarks to Mrs. Bellamont, “as a rich Citizen does on his Purse; and I do not know which is of the greatest Use to the Publick... And as, in the City, they suspect a Man who is ostentatious of his Riches; so shou’d I the Woman, who makes the moist Noise of her Virtue” (III.iv, 247). Virtue has ‘value’ as currency in the marriage market, but it is a currency that can so easily be forged. As Lord Richly quite eloquently puts it in the fourth

act: “Vertue, like the Ghost in *Hamlet*, is here, there, every where, and no where at all; its Appearance is as imaginary as that of a Ghost; and they are much the same sort of People who are in Love with one and afraid of the other” (IV.ii, 259). The concept of ‘virtue’ is confused with sexual fidelity in Richly’s allusion, but it certainly would have spoken to London theatregoers of the time. Richly’s pathos is obviously far removed from that of the young Prince of Denmark too, but that is precisely the intent behind Fielding’s satire with *The Modern Husband*. ‘Vertue’ is salable, and marriage is commerce.

The term ‘commerce’ itself carried sexual connotations in the eighteenth century that have for the most part been lost in modern usage¹⁰. The economic exchange between both parties in a marriage, for Fielding, devalues the institution. It becomes a type of lawfully sanctioned prostitution— another black-market in London’s increasingly uncontrollable sex trade. “‘Sdeath”, in the words of Captain Merit, “there’s a Fellow now —that Fellow’s Father was a Pimp; his Mother, she turn’d Bawd; and his sister, turn’d Whore; you see the Consequences: How Happy is that Country, where pimping and whoring are esteemed public Services, and where Grandeur, and the Gallows lie on the same Road!” (I.viii, 225). The human body is a site of economic possibility, possession, and profiteering for the characters that inhabit Fielding’s drama as indeed for all ‘modern’ eighteenth-century Britons. Fielding attempts to incite laughter from the moral depravity of his characters time and time again throughout the play, but their follies are really quite humourless without all of the farcical detachment of high burlesque.

¹⁰ “commerce, n.”. *OED Online*. March 2012. Oxford University Press. Web. 22 May 2015.

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In 1737 Fielding was at the height of his career as a dramatist. He had formed a company of actors at the Little Haymarket, the ‘Great Mogul’s Company of English Comedians’, and staged two of his most politically-charged satires to date: *Pasquin* and *The Historical Register for the Year 1736*. But Walpole’s Theatrical Licensing Act—routinely cited as a response to Fielding’s satires on Parliament—barred ‘the Great Mogul’ from the stage that same year, and in lieu of financial stability he returned to studying law, enrolling as a student of the Middle Temple. He was called to the bar in June of 1740, but remained closely connected to the London theatre community. Despite parliamentary efforts to silence his wit, Fielding did stage two more plays in 1742: *Miss Lucy in Town* and *The Fathers*. Charles Woods has suggested that Garrick partnered with Fielding in authoring *Miss Lucy in Town* on account of its similarities to *Lethe: or Aesop in the Shade* (1740), and as Lockwood notes in his recent introduction to the text, “If Garrick and Fielding did not work together on *Miss Lucy in Town*, then Fielding, or his unknown coadjutor, certainly took broad hints from Garrick’s play, just as Garrick borrowed freely from the *Virgin Unmask’d*. But the simpler and more plausible view is that they worked together” (*Plays, Vol. 3, 463*).¹¹ *Miss Lucy in Town* first premiered at Drury Lane in the spring of 1742 as an afterpiece to *Othello*. The one-act bedroom farce was no doubt paired with Shakespeare’s revenge tragedy to lighten the mood of theatregoers before they spilled out onto Catherine Street leaving a murder-suicide on

¹¹ Woods, Charles B. “The ‘Miss Lucy’ Plays of Fielding and Garrick” *PQ* 41 (1962). 294-310.

stage behind them. Playhouse managers commonly coupled a high five-act tragedy with a low one-act farce, burlesque, or pantomime in order to round off the performance.

Miss Lucy In Town is a sequel to *The Virgin-Unmask'd* (1735), and revives the roles of Lucy Goodwill and her former footman, now husband Mr. Thomas. With the farce, Fielding continued to explore the corruption of the bawd-figure and the susceptibility of the naïve young lady to whatever crooked swindling might convince her of setting-up shop in a bawdyhouse, typically the allure of material wealth. The newlyweds, Lucy and Tom, travel to London from the Goodwill country manor, and unwittingly set up lodgings in a bawdyhouse run by the allusively named Mrs. Haycock.¹² There, six weeks after their wedding, Lucy is happily spoiled by the bawd and her coconspirator Tawdry who plot to ‘complete her Education’ while an unsuspecting Thomas is about town searching for a tailor. The farce opens in media res with Haycock lamenting the state of the London sex-trade:

TAWDRY: Besides, Ma'am, virtuous Women and Gentlemen's Wives come so cheap that no Man will go to the Price of a Lady of the Town.

HAYCOCK: I thought *Westminster-Hall* would have given them a Surfeit of their virtuous Women: But I see nothing will do; tho' a Jury of Cuckolds were to give never such swinging Damages, it will not deter Men from qualifying more Jurymen. In short, nothing can do us any service but an Act of Parliament to put us down. (477)

¹² A thinly-veiled allusion to then notorious bawd ‘Mother Haywood’ who ran a bagnio in Covent Garden, and was rivalled perhaps only by ‘Whoremaster General of Covent Garden’ Richard Haddock during the 1730s. The *Daily Gazetteer* from 12 December 1743 reports that “Last Saturday died the noted Mrs. Haywood, who for many Years kept the Bagnio in Charles-street, Covent-garden, said to have died worth upwards of 10,000 *l.*”.

The source of her discontent here is market inflation. She is of course referring to the same criminal conversation cases that Fielding had taken as his subject in *The Modern Husband*. That nothing but an ‘Act of Parliament’ should bring her to financial ruin is no doubt a jab at Walpole and the Licensing Act too. London’s playhouses and bawdyhouses were so centralized in Covent-Garden that the two terms were practically synonymous if not confused colloquially. In his recent survey of the city throughout the period, befittingly titled *A Great and Monstrous Thing*, Jerry White has observed that

prostitution flourished around the theatres as well as in them. There was a great deal of streetwalking in the theatre districts, but they were primarily great concentrations of the bawdy-house trade in lodging houses, taverns, coffee houses, bagnios and brothels. Drury Lane, because of its venerable Theatre Royal, was the oldest, ‘the hundreds of old Drury’ a synonym for prostitution throughout the eighteenth century and before. (359-60)

One of the only critical responses to *Miss Lucy In Town* that we have from the period takes issue with this commingling of entertainments exactly. The “Letter to a Noble Lord, To whom alone it Belongs. Occasioned by a Representation at the THEATRE ROYAL in *Drury-Lane*, of a FARCE, called *Miss LUCY in Town*” printed by Thomas Cooper in the November 29th Daily Post is predominantly critical of the Lord Chamberlain, who acted as the stage censor, but also contests the dramatic representation of “the nightly Misteries of *Covent Garden*” in Fielding’s farce. “If you continue your Indulgence”, he continues to warn old Charles FitzRoy, 2nd Duke of Grafton, “a *Playhouse* and a *Bawdy-house* will be synonymous Words” (9-17, *sic.*). Although the letter “has its own interest”—as Lockwood notes in his introduction, building off of the aforementioned Woods article—it certainly

echoes Dramaticus' critique of *The Covent-Garden Tragedy* in *The Grub-Street Journal* ten years earlier (468).

Fielding's satire is once again aimed at mercenary values in *Miss Lucy in Town*. So much of the farce is invested in negotiating Lucy's price, and exposing the London sex-trade as a sleazy criminal underworld quick to capitalize from the naïve and credulous. Haycock persuades Lucy into prostituting herself to Lord Bawble and Zorobabel by convincing the bumpkin that extramarital sex for profit is 'the Fashion' of all the 'fine Ladies' in the city, and "Fine Ladies do every Thing because it's the Fashion... they go to Auctions without intending to buy; they go to Operas, without any Ear; and slight their Husbands without disliking them; and all—because it is the Fashion" (482). For Lucy, entirely innocent to Haycock's design, the luxuries and entertainments of the town come at the small price of her virtue. "I shall want everything that other find Ladyships want", she says to the bawd, "I shall want everything I see" (479). As Britain's commercial centre, London no doubt offered Lucy more luxuries and entertainments than would have been accessible to her back at the Goodwill country manor. The irony in all of this is that Lucy is in fact the luxury and entertainment for hire herself here. Fielding naturally overstates her naiveté in aid of the satire, playing upon the rich dramatic irony and potential for double entendre, but a mere 'three hours' of instruction from Haycock and Tawdry is enough to teach her to barter with Zorobabel: "if you fetch me all the Things you promised me, you shall kiss me as long as you please" she explains to him (489). She may be laughably unschooled in London's criminal underbelly and sex-trade, but she certainly learns the value and economic transferability

of her affections quite quickly upon adopting what she now understands to be the ‘fashionable’ air to evoke around town.

A young girl from the countryside like Lucy, ‘The Waggon Straws yet hanging to her Tail’ to borrow Stormandra’s words, came at a higher fare to prospective johns like Lord Bawble and Zorobabel. Haycock markets her “as such a Piece of Goods, such a Girl just arrived out of the Country!—upon my Soul as pure a Virgin”, “Pure Country innocent Flesh and Blood” (485-6). Her unspoiled virtue is her main selling point. Again, sex with a virgin was widely understood to prevent and cure venereal disease—an increasingly common affliction in the metropolis—but there is no evidence to suggest that either Lord Bawble or Zorobabel is interested in Lucy as a ‘virgin cure’ (Blank, 64). Her virtue is fetishized as an imported commodity by Haycock, rather. Artful prostitutes could simulate virginity to increase their fares too. Alum or vinegar dissolved in water could cheaply be applied to the vaginal walls in order to tighten the surrounding skin, and applying leeches to the vagina made for blisters that burst during intercourse, giving the appearance of a broken hymen (Scott, 186). These are simply two amongst many tricks well-documented in the popular whore biographies of the period, but the point is that there was economic incentive in feigning virtue, virginity, and sexual purity in the sex-trade. The business of prostitution was entirely unregulated, and in every way a buyer’s market. “Look’e”, Zorobabel says to Haycock, “if this be Stale Goods, I’ll break every Window in the House”, and later in the conversation continuing to threaten: “I know of a Woman of Fashion at St. *James’s* end of the Town, where I might deal cheaper than with yourself” (485-6). Zorobabel’s mercenary self-interest is wrought with Jewish stereotype,

but when Lucy ultimately settles her affections on Lord Bawble, Haycock risks losing the patronage of her principal client, and her own mercenary values again become the subject of the farce. “What shall I do?” she cries in a short aside,

I am ruin'd for ere! My Lord hath carried away the Girl. Mr. *Zorobabel* will never forgive me; I shall lose him and all his Friends, and they are the only Support of my House. Foolish Slut, to prefer a rakish Lord to a sober *Jew*: But Women never know how to make their Market 'till they are so old, no one will give any thing for them. (495)

The language of commerce in this passage reveals just how valuable virtue was in a market that is, ironically, built off sin. Lucy's choice of johns is 'foolish' in the eyes of Haycock precisely because it is the less economically viable option of the two. That she should 'make her market' before getting to be 'too old' further reinforces the satire on mercenary values that Fielding returns to time and time again in his dramatic works as indeed his later prose fictions.

Miss Lucy In Town is really the antithesis of Shakespeare's revenge tragedy. Thomas forgives Lucy's affairs, Lucy repents them, and the couple happily retire back to the countryside. But Fielding laughs his audience to the same moral conclusions implicated in the bard's revenge tragedy, “*Virtuous Love gives greater Joys*” Lucy sings, echoed by a chorus. The 'green-eyed Monster' of *Othello* is decidedly absent in Fielding's farce, but thematically the two are virtually synonymous. Fielding turned his attention toward prose fiction at this point in his career, but sexual morality, politics, and economy continued to drive his satires.

Ch. II Shamela's Vartue, &c.



Fielding took up with *Shamela* what he left behind at the Little Haymarket. With the same subversive wit that brought down the city's non-patent theatres, the 'Great Mogul' turned to prose parody in 1741 to burlesque *Pamela; or Virtue Rewarded* (1740), a then anonymously-published epistolary novel by Samuel Richardson. Few, if any texts circulating Great Britain at the time captured the public imagination quite like *Pamela*, nor had any English fiction before it been so commercially successful. It was a bestseller; Pamela Andrews became a cultural icon overnight, a paragon of virtue for young maidservants domestic and abroad. There were *Pamela* paintings, playing-cards, stationary, and ornamented fans, racehorses named after the young maidservant (rivalled by the likes of 'Stiff Dick', 'Foxhunter', and 'Frisky Fanny'), and even a waxwork tableau advertised in the *Daily Advertiser* as "representing the Life of that fortunate Maid, from the Lady's first taking her to her Marriage".¹³ One anecdote routinely cited by literary historians is that a rural community of Britons rang church bells upon reading of Pamela's marriage to Mr. B when the "Story of Pamela first came out, [and] some

¹³ What J.G. Turner calls the "Pamela-frenzy" has already been thoroughly charted in Kreissman, *Pamela-Shamela*, 3-7; Turner, "Novel Panic: Picture and Performance in the Reception of Richardson's *Pamela*," 70-96; Fysh, *The Work(s) of Samuel Richardson*, 57-79; and Keymer and Sabor, '*Pamela*' in the Marketplace: *Literary Controversy and Print Culture in Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland*, 143-76.

Extracts got into the public Papers”.¹⁴ Indeed the novel had been circulating for just over a month before *The Gentleman’s Magazine* declared that “a Second Edition will [soon] come out to supply the Demands in the Country, it being judged in Town as great a Sign of Want of Curiosity *not* to have read *Pamela*, as not to have seen the French and Italian Dancers”.¹⁵ But although it was widely read, not all Britons revered the moral triumphs of Mrs. Andrews, and in addition to all of the *Pamela*-idolatry and merchandizing that accompanied the success of Richardson’s novel came a score of critical responses to the work too.

The first was Fielding’s *An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews* on 2 April 1741, two months after Richardson revised and expanded the novel for its second run. More soon followed, however: unauthorized sequels, stage adaptations, and a number of moralizing counter-fictions and satirical re-imaginings of Richardson’s original narrative.¹⁶ Some simply sought to profit off of the *Pamela*-vogue, while others opposed the heroine’s mercenary plight for Mr. B’s hand in marriage. The ‘Pamelists’ argued that the novel would, to borrow the author’s words, “promote the Cause of Religion and Virtue”. The ‘Anti-Pamelists’, on the other hand, condemned the novel as a morally

¹⁴ Lynch, *Thraliana*, I. 145. For a detailed study on the evolution of this anecdote since the diaries of Hester Lynch, see: McKillop, “Wedding Bells for Pamela”, 323-5.

¹⁵ 11 January 1741, 56; italics mine.

¹⁶ *Pamela’s Conduct in High Life; Life of Pamela; Pamela, A Comedy* [Goodman’s Fields]; *Pamela: or, Virtue Triumphant* [Drury-Lane]; *The Virgin in Eden; Anti-Pamela, or Feign’d Innocence Detected; The True Anti-Pamela* (1741); *Pamela: An Opera* [Newcastle]; *Pamela Censured* (1742); and *Pamela: or The Fair Impostor* (1743). Frank G. Black has catalogued and commented on several of these critiques, continuations, and counter-fictions in “The Continuations of Pamela,” 499-507.

corrupting tale of cunning and deceit.¹⁷ For those in opposition to Richardson, like Fielding, Pamela was merely prostituting her ‘vartue’ as a means to an economic end. Whatever the rationale for these responses to the novel, moral or monetary, *Pamela* continued to engender controversy throughout the 1740s. The panegyrics have for the most part retired to the archives, but *Shamela* remains in print and on college syllabi nearly three-centuries later because its satire encompasses so much more than Richardson’s novel¹⁸. Fielding derides contemporary letters, politics, and religion all at once in the pamphlet of some fifty pages. The parody is a vehicle for his satire on moral corruption and degeneracy in multiple strata of British society. Clergymen, noblemen, and domestics alike are burlesqued as depraved reprobates whose public virtue is really just a masque for private vice. Parson Williams, for example, manipulates scripture to justify his romance with Shamela; Shamela misrepresents herself as a naïve, virgin domestic to Squire Booby, and so forth. *Pamela* provided Fielding with a topical foundation for his first prose satire, but it certainly was not his only target. Cibber, Middleton, Walpole,

¹⁷ Dobson, 26.

¹⁸ Fielding never acknowledged authorship of the pamphlet, but Horace Walpole has ‘By Fielding’ scribbled in his edition now housed at the Lewis Walpole Library, and nobody suspects otherwise since Woods article on “Fielding and the Authorship of *Shamela*” (*Philological Quarterly* 25.3 [July 1946]: 248-72). Still, *Shamela* was left out of the various *Works* until 1900 when Clara L. Thomson first cited the pamphlet as a parody “not improbably written by Fielding” (*Samuel Richardson*. London, 1900. 38). In 1926, after nearly two centuries of relative obscurity, *Shamela* was reprinted by the Golden Cockerel Press as a work by Henry Fielding. Martin Battestin offers a comprehensive overview of this publication history in his introduction to the Wesleyan Edition (*The Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon, Shamela, and Occasional Writings*. Oxford UP, 2008. 133-45).

Whitefield, and Wesley are, to varying degrees, all subjects of the satire too. Fielding, as a number of critics have already observed, was unaware that Richardson was the author behind *Pamela* when he wrote *Shamela* (*Henry Fielding: A Life*, 304). Richardson had not revealed himself to be the anonymous ‘editor’ of the epistolary narrative until December of that year when he printed his own sequel: *Pamela in Her Exalted Condition*. We pit the two authors against one another so often in retracing the rise of the novel-form during the period, but the burgeoning rivalry was still a nameless one that spring.

So what really provoked *Shamela* then? It would be too easy to write Fielding off as an ‘Anti-Pamelist’. *Shamela* may be a contemptuous caricature of Richardson’s heroine, but as Thomas Lockwood has already noted, “Fielding nevertheless identifies devotedly with his character in spirit, for the reckless freedom from hypocritical respectability she represents”.¹⁹ She might not have been his ‘favourite child’, but she was certainly the closest to his heart. The satire instead targets the false virtue and empty posturing of English gentility— of pretensions in authorship, hypocrisy among the clergy, and mercenary self-interest in court ‘Pollitricks’. Everyone is a subject bought and sold in Great Britain’s free-market economy. Everyman is a whore, to put it bluntly—as Fielding does with such humour in this short pamphlet. *Shamela* is *Pamela* stripped of what Fielding saw as glaring artifice in not only Richardson’s narrative, but the constructs of modern British subjectivity as well. The pamphlet’s full title abbreviates—but still finely articulates—the vast scope of his satire:

¹⁹ “*Shamela*” in *Cambridge Companion to Henry Fielding*. Cambridge UP, 2007. 48.

An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews. In which, the many notorious Falshoods and Misrepresentations of a Book called *Pamela*, are exposed and refuted; and all the matchless Arts of that young Politician, set in a true and just Light. Together with A full Account of all that passed between her and Parson Arthur Williams; whose Character is represented in a manner something different from that which he bears in *Pamela*. The whole being exact Copies of authentick Papers delivered to the Editor. Necessary to be had in all Families. By Mr. Conny Keyber.

The breadth of targets in the title of the pamphlet alone, as Martin Battestin remarks in his biography, “gave readers a foretaste of the rich variety of the tiny feast awaiting them within” (*Henry Fielding: A Life*, 303). Eighteenth-century readers would have quickly identified Colley Cibber—Poet Laureate and Pope’s ‘King of Dunces’—and his recent *Apology For The Life of Mr. Colley Cibber* (1740) as one major focus of the burlesque. ‘Conny Keyber’ is of course a perversion of the fop’s name, but it also conjures up an association with Conyers Middleton whose *Life of Cicero* (1741) is targeted throughout the pamphlet too²⁰. Labelling his protagonist as a ‘young Politician’ carries the satire further into the realm of contemporary court politics. The colophon also aligns the burlesque in opposition to Walpole. A. Dodd—the supposed printer of the pamphlet—is

²⁰ In his *Apology* Cibber joked that the theatre “Companies gave Encouragement to a broken Wit to collect a fourth Company, who for some time acted Plays in the Hay-Market, which House the united Drury-Lane Comedians had lately quitted” in reference to Fielding’s career as a playwright. He continues to insult Fielding when he says “that as he was in haste to get Money, It would take up less time to be intrepidly abusive than decently entertaining. . . upon this Principle he produc’d several frank and free Farces that seem’d to knock all Distinctions of Mankind on the Head. . . [and] set Fire to his Stage by writing up to an Act of Parliament to demolish it” (Dublin, 1740. McMaster University Library. 164.)

Anne Dodd Jr., a Westminster pamphleteer responsible for distributing low, ephemeral hackwork, and opposition newspapers like *The Craftsman* and *Mist's Weekly Journal*.²¹ That the character of Parson Williams should be 'represented in a manner something different' also hints at the clerical satire at work in the pamphlet, given that Richardson's characterization of the country parson is decidedly high and commendatory in *Pamela*. Marketing the pamphlet as a work 'Necessary to be had in all Families' further reinforces Fielding's satire on the clergy who at the time treated *Pamela* as a devotional text. The same precept appears on the title-page of Richard Allestree's *Whole Duty of Man* (1658), a high-Protestant conduct book that we find among Shamela's belongings later in the narrative.²² There is, to borrow Lockwood's words, "a unity of tone rather than theme" in *Shamela*.²³ The satire is multifaceted, but ultimately consolidated in Fielding's contempt for all things affectatious. His 'tone' in the narrative is deliberately facetious toward false

²¹ "Dodd, Anne (c. 1685-1739)," Michael Treadwell in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Vol. 16*. H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, eds. London: OUP, 2004. 387.

²² The other works that Fielding lists as belonging to Shamela reveal a great deal about her oftentimes contradictory characterization in the burlesque. They include: *A full Answer to a Plain and True Account &c.* (in all likelihood a pamphlet written in response to Thomas Bowyer's *A Plain and True Account of the Nature and End of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper* [1735]), Delarivier Manley's *Secret Memoirs and Manners of Several Persons of Quality of Both Sexes. From the New Atlantis* (1709), the Abbé du Prat's *Venus in the Cloister; or, The Nun in her Smock* (1724), *A Short Account of God's Dealings with the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield* (1740), *Orpheus and Eurydice* (likely the Georgic, but perhaps Theobald's 1739 opera-pantomime of the same name), and—like most polite eighteenth-century Britons—"Some Sermon-Books". High and low intermingle in Shamela's collection of printed works as they do in the constructs of her character in the narrative.

²³ *ibid*, 39.

virtue and empty posturing. *Shamela* subverts Pamela into a harlot and high-minded Arthur into a rake. B. of course needed little emendation as a lecherous womanizer with a laughably short temper. Fielding, however, is not so much deriding their intentions as he is attempting to humanize these characters by reimagining the narrative on less edenic terms. He is breathing psychological depth and complications of character to Richardson's flat and resolutely unchanging characterization of the maidservant. In other words, *Shamela* is not so much a moral critique as it is an attempt to expose the utility of morality as a justifier for amoral—mostly self-interested—conduct.

Not surprisingly then, conduct literature—still a popular genre of writing in the 1740s—is an important component of the satire. Treating *Pamela* as though it were a conduct book like Allestree's *Whole Duty of Man* is Fielding's concern throughout the frame narrative. Tickletext, for example, writes a commendatory letter to Parson Oliver in which he argues: "Happy would it be for Mankind, if all other Books were burnt, that we might do nothing but read thee all Day, and dream of thee all Night. Thou alone art sufficient to teach us as much Morality as we want. Dost thou not teach us to pray, to sing Psalms, and to honour the Clergy? Are not these the whole Duty of Man?" (237). At the end of the letter he even goes so far as to suggest that *Pamela* is "the only Education we intend henceforth to give our Daughters" (238). Fielding is exaggerating the novel's positive reception for the purposes of his satire, but as Tom Keymer and Peter Sabor have recently illustrated—such spirited enthusiasm was not a far stretch from the truth. The problem for Fielding, however, is that *Pamela* is ultimately a lesson on how to climb the

rigid ranks of English society by trading on virtue, and not on any doctrine of grace puffed by the clergy. Parson Oliver's reply to Tickletext best encapsulates Fielding's own attitude toward the text as a model for young maidservants when he explains that

The Instruction which it conveys to Servant-Maids, is, I think, very plainly this, To look out for their Masters as sharp as they can. The Consequences of which will be, besides Neglect of their Business, and the using all manner of Means to come at Ornaments of their Persons, that if the Master is not a Fool, they will be debauched by him; and if he is a Fool, they will marry him. Neither of which, I apprehend, my good Friend, we desire should be the Case of our Sons. (240)

Fielding no doubt inherited some of eighteenth-century Britain's patriarchal misogyny, but it seems obvious at least to me that even Parson Oliver's anxieties regarding *Pamela* are comically inflated in this prefatory letter. In *Fielding and the Woman Question*, a study of what the author calls Fielding's 'rationalist-feminist thought', Angela J.

Smallwood has argued that "feminism itself is unacceptable to Fielding. It may invoke equality between the sexes, Fielding implies, but ultimately it seeks to prove and enact the superiority of one sex over the other. Thus it is as destructive of his ideal of friendship and reciprocity between the sexes as the patriarchal system ever was" (71). What Fielding is trying to convey through Parson Oliver is what every 'Anti-Pamelist' would go on to suggest: that Pamela's innocence is simply a masque for mercenary self-interest.

Certainly, however, his anxieties are rooted in the preservation of a patriarchal social order that is indeed appalling by contemporary standards. The parson continues to berate what he calls the *Pamela* "Phrenzy now raging in Town" throughout his response to

Tickletext, but more specifically—the amatory and at times pornographic quality of the novel. “I cannot agree that my Daughter should entertain herself with some of his Pictures”, he argues, “which I do not expect to be contemplated without Emotion, unless by one of my Age and Temper, who can see the Girl lie on her Back, with one Arm round Mrs. *Jewkes* and the other round the Squire, naked in Bed, with his Hand on her Breasts, &c. with as much Indifference as I read any other Page in the whole Novel” (240).

Anybody who reads *Pamela* is immediately struck by Richardson’s eroticization of the rape scene, but Oliver’s concern is that this episode in the narrative may incite amorous thoughts, and thus activities, among younger, more impressionable readers. Pamela’s motivations aside, the novel is—for Oliver—suggestive and at times downright obscene. It is really anything but suitable for preaching at the altar.

In *Shamela* Fielding italicizes the heroine’s musings on the events of the narrative, and these brief passages often stand out as travestic moralizations regarding her current state of affairs. After finally winning Booby’s hand in marriage, for example, Shamela is resolved not to acknowledge him at the breakfast table because “*Nothing can be more prudent in a Wife, than a sullen Backwardness to Reconciliation; it makes a Husband fearful of offending by the Length of his Punishment*” (267). Her hostility is grounded in Booby’s refusal to indulge her excessive spending habits no doubt, but her ability to manipulate the squire through coercion is what Fielding is really parodying here. Time and time again throughout the pamphlet he calls the readers attention to Shamela’s machiavellian machinations through these italicized interjections. “*How sweet is*

Revenge”, she says for instance, “*Sure the Sermon Book is in the Right, in calling it the sweetest Morsel the Devil ever dropped into the Mouth of a Sinner*” (258). What Fielding is attempting to suggest by travestyng Pamela in such a light is that whatever morality might be found in the novel is merely being utilized as a justification for amoral conduct and behaviour. Shamela does not long for Squire Booby, but the fortune at her disposal should they wed. Her virtue—or rather her calculated righteousness—acts as leverage in the pursuit of social advancement through marriage. While still courting Booby in the early letters of the narrative, for example, Shamela explains to her mother that she

practiced over all my Airs before the Glass, and then sat down and read a Chapter in the Whole Duty of Man... So down goes me into the Parlour to him. *Pamela*, says he, the Moment I came in, you see I cannot stay long from you, which I think is sufficient Proof of the Violence of my Passion. Yes, Sir, says I, I see your Honour intends to ruin me, that nothing but the Destruction of my Vartue will content you. *O what a charming Word that is, rest his Soul who first invented it.* (257)

She is conscious not just of her lowly role as a domestic on Booby’s estate, but how the ‘airs’ she evokes can be used to her advantage in breaking free from a subordinate office. Upon their wedding night she continues to play the part of the chaste maidservant, and admits that she “acted my Part in such a manner, that no Bridegroom was ever better satisfied with his Bride’s Virginity. And to confess the Truth, I might have been well enough satisfied too, if I had never been acquainted with Parson *Williams*” (265). These types of episodes in the narrative repeatedly highlight what Fielding saw as the *sham* in the character of Pamela Andrews.

He complicates Richardson's heroine to expose this more sinister dimension of the character. She is frank about her designs on Booby's fortune, and the rather salacious means through which she might take it for her own. 'Pamela' is merely a guise of innocence, a part to be played. Shamela knows her strongest asset in teasing the squire into marriage—and thus a dower—is her 'virtue', so she trades on it. "I thought once of making a little Fortune by my Person", she writes to her mother, "I now intend to make a great one by my Virtue" (260). Her real affections belong to Williams by whom she carried a child, but of course such a match is anything but sensible for the two low debauchees from the countryside. Still, whatever interest she feigns in Booby is pecuniary. Their marriage, for Shamela, would strictly be a financial one. The affair with Williams outlasts the timeframe of the narrative—we eventually learn "that Mr. *Booby* hath caught his Wife in bed with *Williams*; hath turned her off, and is prosecuting him in the spiritual Court" in a final postscript to the pamphlet—but Henrietta reminds her daughter of how precarious a woman's reputation can be in a patriarchy.²⁴ "My Advice", she writes to Shamela, is "that you would avoid seeing [Parson Williams] any more till the Knot is tied. Remember the first Lesson I taught you, that a Married Woman injures only her Husband, but a Single Woman herself" (260). Whatever 'injury' Shamela might endure by continuing the affair with Williams is entirely economic in the eyes of her mother. Any sex before 'the Knot is tied' with Booby will only tarnish the maidenhead's

²⁴ 276; Here Fielding is again referring to criminal conversation action pursued in the 'spiritual Courts' like the King's Bench in Westminster Hall.

reputation, and therefore compromise her stake in his fortune. The affair with Williams is, quite simply, fiscally irresponsible.

The language of commerce between Shamela, Henrietta, and eventually Mrs. Jervis and Mrs. Jewkes comes as no surprise given each character's position as a sex worker. Fielding's contemporaries would have immediately identified Henrietta as a prostitute from her "*her Lodgings at the Fan and Pepper-Box in Drury-Lane*" listed above the first letter from Shamela (242). Like Covent Garden, Drury Lane was virtually synonymous with prostitution at the time. There are other hints and crude double entendres in her listed address, however, that are less obvious to readers coming to the text almost three centuries later, and that identify her as a harlot. A 'box', for instance, signified a private room within a coffee-house, and to 'pepper' was colloquial slang for infecting with venereal disease.²⁵ A 'Pepper-Box' is therefore suggestive of a bawdyhouse. Parson Oliver also reveals that Henrietta "sold Oranges in the Play-House" in Fielding's frame narrative, and any eighteenth-century theatregoer would have understood the implications of such a title. Orange-girls were lowly 'merchants' more often than not soliciting sex around the concessions in the pit of the theatre, and as a result—as Catherine Ingrassia notes in her recent edition of the text—"during the Restoration, 'orange' became slang for the female pudendum" (241). Hogarth depicted two of these orange-girls at work in his *Laughing Audience (or A Pleased Audience)* some

²⁵ *The New Partridge Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*. New York: Routledge, 2006.

six years earlier as a subscription ticket for *The Rake's Progress*. In this first letter to her mother Shamela goes on to explain that she will soon be visiting Arthur in London, and that:

I believe Mrs. *Jervis* will come along with me, for she says she would like to keep a House somewhere about Short's-Gardens, or towards Queen-Street; and if there was convenience for a *Bannio*, she should like it the better; but that she will settle herself when she comes to Town.—*O! How I long to be in the Balconey at the Old House.* (242-3)

Shamela is referring to the Theatre Royal in this passage, where Henrietta is likely working as an orange-girl, but this passage is riddled with allusions to Jervis's harlotry too. She is referring to a bawdyhouse when she says Jervis is going to 'keep a House', and '*Bannio*' is a perversion of *bagnio* which also refers to a bawdyhouse, although one of lower repute and fronting as a Turkish bathhouse.²⁶ Again, these associations would have been relatively transparent to Fielding's audience. Jervis holds a different office than Henrietta and Shamela, however. She is a procuress— a bawd looking to set-up shop in London's entertainment district. Fielding rewrites the rape scene to be a premeditated ploy by Jervis, and bolsters the pamphlet's satire on mercenary values in doing so. "You know he hath large Sums of Money", she explains to Shamela,

besides abundance of fine Things; and do you think, when you have inflamed him, by giving his Hand a Liberty, with that charming Person; and that you know he may easily think he obtains against your Will, he will not give any thing to come at all—. This will not do, Mrs. *Jervis*, answered I... nothing under a regular taking into Keeping, a settled

²⁶ "bagnio, n." *OED Online*. June 2015. Oxford University Press.



Subscription ticket to William Hogarth's *The Rake's Progress* titled *The Laughing Audience, Bill of Sale*. 1733. The Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College.

Settlement, for me, and all my Heirs, all my whole Lifetime,
shall do the Business. (246-7)

Shamela aspires to more than just common harlotry or a mistress kept by Squire Booby. She is pursuing social advancement and financial security by teasing him into marriage. Perhaps Parson Oliver articulates it best when he explains that Shamela is among those “Wretches who are ready to invent and maintain Schemes repugnant to the Interest, the Liberty, and the Happiness of Mankind, not to supply their Necessities, or even Conveniences, but to pamper their Avarice and Ambition” (239). All of Shamela’s posturing toward the squire is, as she says: ‘Business’. Henrietta offers Shamela similar advice regarding her courtship of the squire earlier in the narrative when she says that “you should take care to be well paid before-hand, not trust to Promises, which a Man seldom keeps, after he hath had his wicked Will. And seeing you have a rich Fool to deal with, your not making a good Market will be the more inexcusable” (244-5). What Henrietta means by ‘a good Market’ is sexual desirability. Unless Shamela maintains her role as the righteous, innocent virgin, she risks losing her stake in the squire’s estate. The purpose of Fielding’s pamphlet, however, is not so much to berate these women as whores as it is an attempt to expose the utility of morality in their crooked swindling. *Pamela*, after all, was largely considered an exemplary tale of moral fortitude. Even Pope, perhaps the most cynical of the Augustans, is on record having said “that he had read

Pamela with great Approbation and Pleasure, and wanted a Night's Rest in finishing it, and say[ing] it will do more good than many of the new Sermons".²⁷

What Fielding is able to accomplish through *Shamela* begins to develop what so many moralists of the period would later articulate as a *theory of moral sentiments*. Adam Smith, David Hume, and Francis Hutcheson elaborated heavily on the utility of morality in the latter half of the century, and continued to build upon the moral sense theories first posited by Anthony Ashley-Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftsbury in *An Inquiry Concerning Virtue, or Merit* (1699). These ethicists established an epistemological foundation for affective emotional response and its relation to moral consciousness, but also laid the theoretical groundwork for the sentimental novel. I do not mean to suggest that *Shamela* in any way anticipates the mid-century vogue for sentimental fiction, but rather burlesques through fictional discourse the utility of moral sensibility for self-serving ends. In his *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, for example, Hume argues that

the circumstance of *utility*, in all subjects, is a source of praise and approbation: That it is constantly appealed to in all moral decisions concerning the merit and demerit of actions: That it is the *sole* source of that high regard paid to justice, fidelity, honour, allegiance, and chastity: That it is inseparable from all the other social virtues, humanity, generosity, charity, affability, lenity, mercy, and moderation: And, in a word, that it is the foundation of the chief part of morals, which has a reference to mankind and our fellow-creatures.²⁸

²⁷ "Cheyne, George". *The Alexander Pope Encyclopedia*. Pat Rogers. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press. 2004.

²⁸ *Enquiries Concerning the Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*. L.A. Selby-Bigge and P.H. Nidditch, eds. Oxford: OUP, 1975. 231.

Of course Hume's philosophical discourses are usually written with a certain degree of weary ironic detachment from his subject-matter, and indeed here he is comically sending-up Smith's theory of moral sentiments to a certain degree. Nevertheless, he is suggesting that there is a certain degree of relativity to morality in this passage from the *Enquiry*. Morality is learned, not innate, and furthermore rooted in its applicability to the subject's ultimate end. Shamela is a caricatured embodiment of self-interested moral sensibility taken to its comedic limit, and Parson Williams perhaps even more so. Fielding's burlesque is centred around exposing this precise utility of moral sensibility, and particularly in regard to the characters of Richardson's novel.

Shamela's mercenary values are inflated time and time again throughout the narrative. "O! Bless me! I shall be Mrs. *Booby*", she explains to her mother, "and be Mistress of a great Estate, and have a dozen Coaches and Six, and a fine House at *London*, and another at *Bath*, and Servants, and Jewels, and Plate, and go to Plays, and Opera's, and Court; and do what I will, and spend what I will" (254). The marriage, in other words, would be a financial one for Shamela. She has no other means of acquiring such luxuries, of breaking free from domestic servitude, without resigning herself to Booby. Even after their nuptials, however, money continues to drive Shamela's every action: "Well, says he, whether you will believe me or no, I solemnly vow, I would not change thee for the richest Woman in the Universe. No, I warrant you, says I; and yet you could refuse me a nasty hundred Pound" (267). Fielding calls the reader's attention to this

aspect of Shamela's character over and over again to humanize and complicate Richardson's idealized heroine. For this reason, as Jenny Davidson so accurately observes, "readers of *Shamela* who return to *Pamela* often feel themselves to be reading a different—and a far less innocent—novel".²⁹ Pamela's self-interested, mercenary motivations are laid bare in *Shamela*, and this is precisely what makes the pamphlet so comedic. Fielding, when not directly lifting passages from his source text, is reimagining Pamela without all of the false posturing and pretences. Her swooning, for example, is burlesqued as little more than an attempt to manipulate the squire. Having been barred from any further spending off of the Booby estate almost immediately after their marriage, she explains to the squire that

Times are altered now, I am your Lady, Sir; yes to my Sorrow, says he, I am afraid—and I am afraid to my Sorrow too: For if you begin to use me in this manner already, I reckon you will beat me before a Month's at an End. I am sure if you did, it would injure me less than this barbarous Treatment; upon which I burst into Tears, and pretended to fall into a Fit. (267)

Her fit of tears is an attempt to draw sympathy from the squire in order to manipulate his emotions. She is playing the part of the distressed housewife once again as a means to a financial end, and is again successful in feigning her way into the squire's pocketbook.

"Speak to me, my Love," Booby pleads,

I will melt my self into Gold for thy Pleasure. At last having pretty well tired my self with counterfeiting, and imagining

²⁹ *Hypocrisy and the Politics of Politeness: Manners and Morals from Locke to Austen*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2004. 134.

I had continu'd long enough for my purpose in the sham Fit, I began to move my Eyes, to loosen my Teeth, and to open my Hands, which Mr. *Booby* no sooner perceived than he embraced and kissed me with the eagerest Extacy, asked my Pardon on his Knees for what I had suffered through his Folly and Perverseness, and without more Questions fetched me the Money. I fancy I have effectually prevented any farther Refusals or Inquiry into my Expences. It would be hard indeed that a Woman who marries a Man only for his Money should be debarred from spending it. (267)

As much as Fielding is burlesquing Pamela's motivations through Shamela, however, he is also attempting to humanize her character by showing her in a flawed and imperfect light. He is complicating Richardson's angelic characterization of the maidservant, not simply inverting her character as some scholars have suggested.³⁰ There are few deviations from Richardson's original plot structure in *Shamela*. The heart of Fielding's satire instead rests upon his characterization of Pamela as a fallible, at times sinful British subject with a mind for improving her social position as the author so often did for himself. But Fielding complicates Richardson's heroine even further when he details the records of her indulgent spending habits the morning after her above-mentioned swooning fit:

The next Morning we rose earlier, and I asked him for another hundred Guineas, and he gave them me. I sent fifty to Parson *Williams*, and the rest I gave away, two Guineas to a Beggar, and three to a Man riding along the Road, and the rest to other People. I long to be in *London* that I may have

³⁰ See: Martin, Catherine Gimelli. "On the Persistence of Quest-Romance in the Romantic Genre: The Strange Case of *Pamela*." *Poetics Today* 12.1 Spring 1991. 87-91. and Hawley, Judith. "Introduction". *Joseph Andrews and Shamela*. Toronto: Penguin, 1999. vii-xxix.

an Opportunity of laying some out, as well as giving away. I believe I shall buy every thing I see. What signifies having Money if one doth not spend it. (266)

Her charity is both benevolent and self-interested at once. On one hand she is donating the fruits of her labour to those more immediately in need of the hundred guineas than herself, and on the other hand she is making a show of ‘having Money’ for the express purpose of signifying her newfound wealth and improved social rank. “Nature”, as Adam Smith would later explain in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, “seems to have so happily adjusted our sentiments of approbation and disapprobation, to the conveniency both of the individual and of the society, that after the strictest examination it will be found, I believe, that this is universally the case”.³¹ More and more we are beginning to understand just how self-conscious and self-serving moral sensibility, sentimentality, and politeness were to midcentury Britons of the more middling-sorts, and—as Simon Dickie has recently noted—how much it “enabled the newly prosperous trading class to differentiate itself at once from the mob below and the corrupt aristocracy above” (2). It would be too easy to write Shamela off as a wicked and vile caricature of Richardson’s heroine. Fielding’s characterization, as I stated in the preceding chapter, is rarely so straightforward. Shamela is really more of a humanization than a bastardization of Pamela. She is at once a grotesque caricature and naturalized reimagining of Richardson’s heroine, and as Thomas Lockwood has already noted “very carefully calculated to please and to frustrate

³¹ “Of the Effect of Utility upon the Sentiment of Approbation”. London: A. Millar, 1790. IV.i.14.

disapproval. She is indulged so freely and so sympathetically by her creator that no pretence of condemnation, no post-scripted report of her having been caught in bed with Williams and turned out of her house, can make it seem that she is not also beloved by her creator”.³² Shamela is as comically pert as she is devilishly coy, in other words. She has an earthy humour and markedly human dimension that Fielding certainly saw missing in Richardson’s characterization of Pamela.

Most of the humour in the pamphlet is rooted in dramatic irony. The reader is aware of Shamela’s masqued intentions and hidden history with Williams. Booby, on the other hand, is hilariously duped by the girl time and time again. Like so many of Fielding’s heroines before her, she knows there is a monetary value in carrying on this façade. Even around Jewkes she is at first hesitant to break character. “Then [Mrs. Jewkes] proceeded to tell me what an Honour my Master did me in liking me” she says to her mother, “and that it was both an inexcusable Folly and Pride in me, to pretend to refuse him any Favour. Pray, Madam, says I, consider I am a poor Girl, and have nothing but my Modesty to trust to. If I part with that, what will become of me” (254). Her modesty and feigned virtue are her only source of socioeconomic mobility, and her reputation is a tenuous balancing act. Jewkes of course has already clued into Shamela’s ongoing affair with Williams, and suspects the girl is merely ‘pretending’, but still Shamela maintains her innocence. “I would have you to know, Madam”, she brusquely scoffs at Jewkes, “I would not be Mistress to the greatest King, no nor Lord in the

³² “Shamela”. *Cambridge Companion to Henry Fielding*. Cambridge UP, 2007. 38.

Universe. I value my Vartue more than I do any thing my Master can give me; and so we talked a full Hour and a half, about my Vartue; and I was afraid at first, she had heard something about the Bantling, but I find she hath not” (255). Shamela’s ongoing talk of ‘vartue’ subverts the very meaning of the word, and indeed develops into a sexual innuendo, a bodily reification of her sexual immorality. Keeping her running affair and child by Williams secret is imperative to the success of her financial marriage with Booby. Playing the part of the virtuous maidservant and repeatedly upsetting the squire’s advances gives Shamela the opportunity to bargain with Booby until she is compensated to her liking. This of course is all owing to the instruction of her mother, of whom we already know to be working as a prostitute around London’s theatre district. “I remembered, Mamma,” she writes,

the Instructions you gave me to avoid being ravished, and followed them, which soon brought him to Terms... Next Morning early my Master sent for me, and after kissing me, gave a Paper into my Hand which he bid me read: I did so, and found it to be a Proposal for settling 250*l* a Year on me, besides several other advantageous Offers, as Present of Money and other things. Well, *Pamela*, said he, what Answer do you make me to this. Sir, said I, I value my Vartue more than all the World, and I had rather be the poorest Man’s Wife, than the richest Man’s Whore. (259)

She is determined to marry him because it will offer her a financial reward amounting to well in excess of his paltry offer for two-hundred-and-fifty pounds per annum at the expense of her virtue. She is making her market. Fielding is neither condemning nor licensing Shamela’s actions, but calling the readers attention to the corruption inherent

within eighteenth-century sexual politics. Booby is attempting to buy Shamela as a mistress kept, and Shamela is attempting to maximize her profits under false pretences. Both parties are negotiating in terms of finance over friendship, capital over passion. The marriage of friendship over the financial marriage is a recurring motif in nearly all of Fielding's prose fictions, and of course in *Shamela* he is promulgating a similar sentiment albeit in the burlesque form. The humour of the pamphlet, as I state above, is rooted in our knowledge of Shamela's crooked swindling for financial gain. Fielding is spotlighting the corruption and façade necessary to Shamela's breaking-free of domestic servitude. The only thing to recommend her to any position above maidservant whatsoever is this affected virtue and moral uprightness. Even as wife to the squire, however, Shamela must necessarily maintain the front and keep her former identity hidden. She explains to her mother, for example, that as the squire's wife

it will look horribly, for a Lady of my Quality and Fashion, to own such a Woman as you for my Mother. Therefore we must meet in private only, and if you will never claim me, nor mention me to any one, I will always allow you what is very handsome... you must Remember all my Favours to you will depend on your Secrecy; for I am positively resolved, I will not be known to be your Daughter; and if you tell any one so, I shall deny it with all my Might, which Parson *Williams* says, I may do with a safe Conscience, being now a married Woman. (272)

All of her investment in Booby rests upon continued deceit, but what Fielding is attempting to show here is just how important and fragile a woman's reputation is within the patriarchal social order of Britain in the 1700s. Shamela has so little opportunity for

advancing her social position beyond domestic servitude without feigning innocence, virtue, and virginity to the squire, and in turn earning his hand in marriage. She is cognizant of her rather lowly position on the Booby estate, and that her window of opportunity for seducing the squire into marriage will not outlast her youth. “We walked out together,” she writes earlier in the narrative, “and he began thus, *Pamela*, will you tell me Truth? Doth the Resistance you make to my Attempts proceed from Vartue only, or have I not some Rival in thy dear Bosom who might be more successful?... *What a foolish Thing it is for a Woman to dally too long with her Lover’s Desires; how many have owed their being old Maids to their holding out too long*” (261). The bawd Haycock shares a similar sentiment in *Miss Lucy in Town* when she discusses the marketability of youth and the immense value it carries in London’s sex trade. Fielding’s reader is aware that Booby truly does have ‘some Rival’ in Shamela’s bosom, Parson Williams, but more importantly that the maidservant is holding out on the squire to further her mercenary cause. She does not desire the man, but his estate; if she ‘dallies too long’, or reveals her affair and child by Williams, she risks losing her stake within it.

Mr. Booby is the sole sexual predator in Richardson’s narrative, but in *Shamela* both parties are preying upon one another. They are caricatured as a short-tempered libertine and a guileful whore who are mutually abusive of one another’s sexuality for self-serving ends. In an early letter to her mother, for example, Shamela explains to Henrietta that on one occasion Booby “caught me in his Arms, and flung me upon a Chair, and began to offer to touch my Under-Petticoat. Sir, says I, you had better not offer

to be rude; well, says he, no more I won't then; and away he went out of the Room. I was so mad to be sure I could have cry'd. *Oh what a prodigious Vexation it is to a Woman to be made a Fool of*" (246). Booby is no doubt preying upon what he believes to be an innocent domestic, but the reader is made aware of Shamela's true motivations behind denying the squire's advances on countless occasions in the narrative too. She is calculating in how far she will allow the squire to take his sexual advances, and in upsetting his attempts at seduction in order to further her chances of successfully winning his hand in marriage. "Well, says Mrs. *Jervis*" in response to the former episode,

I never saw any thing better acted than your Part: But I wish you may not have discouraged him from any future Attempt; especially since his Passions are so cool, that you could prevent his Hands going further than your Bosom. Hang him, answer'd I, he is not quite so cold as that I assure you; our Hands, on neither side, were idle in the Scuffle, nor have left us any Doubt of each other as to that matter. (248)

Jervis knows Shamela is merely 'acting' the 'Part' of the innocent maidservant. At the same time, however, Shamela underhandedly reciprocates Booby's advances to further provoke him, ignite his short fuse, and frustrate him into marrying beneath his rank. She is a licentious caricature of Pamela Andrews, but ultimately motivated by the prospect of making her fortune off the squire. Maintaining a guise of innocence is her only means of doing so. "*O! what a devilish Thing it is, for a Woman to be obliged to go to Bed to a spindle-shanked young Squire, she doth not like, when there is a jolly Parson in the same House she is fond of*" she laments in a letter to Henrietta (272). The 'spindle-shanked young Squire', Mr. Booby—as I have already suggested—needed little emendation for

the purposes of Fielding's satire. He is a highborn libertine with a name well-suited to his character throughout the narrative, and in many ways serves as a foil to Shamela in all of his rakish attempts to seduce her. When he discovers Shamela reading from the various books Fielding describes among her belongings, for example, Booby believes she is reading the poetry of John Wilmot, 2nd Earl of Rochester. Wilmot lived and wrote during the Restoration. His works are characterized by their highly political, and always incredibly bawdy style.

Pamela, says he, what Book is that, I warrant you
Rochester's Poems.—No, forsooth, says I, as pertly as I
could; why how now Saucy Chops, Boldface, says he—
Mighty pretty Words, says I, pert again.—Yes (says he) you
are a d—d, impudent, stinking, cursed, confounded Jade,
and I have a great Mind to kick your A—. You, kiss— says
I. A-gad, says he, and so I will; with that he caught me in his
Arms, and kissed me till he made my Face all over Fire.
(245)

The implication behind all of this is that, by reading the markedly libertine works of Rochester, Shamela too must be a rakish and lewd young maidservant— or at least so affected by the verse as to warrant another failed attempt at seduction by Booby. He is, in many ways, a caricatured libertine whose passion for Shamela is entirely rooted in the carnal. What is more, he is initially reluctant to marry her, and instead might better prefer to make her into a woman kept. “You will, I believe, Madam”, Lucretia writes to Henrietta, “wonder that the Squire... should never have mentioned a Settlement all this while, I believe it slips his Memory: But it will not be long, no doubt: For, as I am convinced the young Lady will do nothing unbecoming your Daughter, nor ever admit

him to taste her Charms, without something sure and handsome before-hand". Shamela is of course reluctant to accept any offer from the squire that is not commensurate with the fortune that would inherit as his wife, but as Lucretia reiterates shortly thereafter: "the Squire will never rest till they have danced *Adam* and *Eve*'s kissing Dance together" (250). Neither Shamela nor Booby desire to be wed. For both, it is merely a necessity if Booby is to finally indulge his lust for the girl, and if Shamela is to be compensated for her favours to him. Still, it is a contract neither party is particularly enthusiastic about signing.

Fielding's burlesque of Parson Williams as a prurient moralizer serves the same purpose as his burlesque of Pamela as a scrupulous whore. The parson utilizes scripture and church doctrine more often than not as a means of justifying amoral conduct both his own and of his swain. Fielding's satire on methodism throughout the pamphlet is aimed at what he no doubt saw as a blatant abuse of dogma for self-serving ends. *Pamela*—as I note above—was puffed by the clergy as a work of upstanding moral fortitude, and Fielding is relentless in his efforts to complicate this position. On the subject of his ongoing affair with Shamela, for example, Williams

began to discourse very learnedly, and told me the Flesh and the Spirit were too distinct Matters, which had not the least relation to each other. That all immaterial Substances (those were his very Words) such as Love, Desire, and so forth, were guided by the Spirit: But fine Houses, large Estates, Coaches, and dainty Entertainments were the Product of the Flesh. Therefore, says he, my Dear, you have two Husbands, one the Object of your Love, and to satisfy your Desire; the

other the Object of your Necessity, and to furnish you with those other Conveniences. (270)

In this passage, Fielding is suggesting that the heart and flesh—honest intentions and virtuous actions—*cannot* be separated. William’s ‘learned discourse’ is employed here as a means of justifying his continued dalliance with Shamela despite her marriage to the squire. Fielding is again calling our attention to contradistinctions between the companionate and financial marriage, but more importantly he is highlighting the ‘Necessity’ of Shamela’s mercenary plight. Again, Williams is merely a country parson with modest wages. For Shamela, transcending her position as a domestic servant demands marrying above her low social rank. “Let me do what I will”, she says to Henrietta, “I say my Prayers as often as another, and I read in good Books, as often as I have Leisure; and Parson *Williams* says, that will make amends” (244). Fielding is not so much dismissing any doctrine of grace, but rather spotlighting the deployment of such principles for self-serving ends. So long as Shamela is repentant, she is forgiven in the eyes of God for whatever trespasses she may freely indulge. Williams’s licensing of amoral conduct is what Fielding certainly feared would become commonplace among methodist preachers. He voices this anxiety regarding Richardson’s narrative, again, in the frame narrative through the character of Parson Tickletext who—regarding *Pamela*—suggests that

this example, I am confident, will be imitated by all our Cloth in the Country: For besides speaking well of a Brother, in the Character of the Reverend Mr. *Williams*, the useful and truly religious Doctrine of *Grace* is every where

inculcated. This Book is the ‘SOUL of *Religion*, Good-Breeding, Discretion, Good-Nature, Wit, Fancy, Fine Thought, and Morality. There is an Ease, a natural Air, a dignified Simplicity, and MEASURED FULLNESS in it, that RESEMBLING LIFE, OUT-GLOWS IT’. (236)

Whitfield and the Wesley’s upheld the belief that, regardless of one’s conduct, God granted saving Grace to those elect Britons who maintained faith in him. Fielding held a view contrary to this methodist precept, arguing that it merely licenses self-seeking conduct rather than promoting any communal good whatsoever. Shamela and Williams embody these ideals in the narrative, exemplifying the type of egocentrism that inherently arises from such a belief. This particular passage also lifts directly from the puff pieces appended to Richardson’s second edition of *Pamela* that refer to the novel as the ‘soul of religion’. What Fielding makes such a painstaking effort to prove through his burlesque is that whatever ‘discretion’, ‘good-nature’, and ‘morality’ is to be found within the pages of *Pamela* is merely being utilized as a means to rationalize amoral conduct. “*Be not Righteous over-much*”, Williams preaches for example, “that to go to Church and to pray, and to sing Psalms, and to honour the Clergy, and to repent, is true Religion. That those People who talk of Vartue and Morality, are the wickedest of all Persons. That ‘tis not what we do, but what we believe, that must save us” (253). Here the parson is citing Joseph Trapp’s 1739 sermon on *The Nature, Folly Sin and Danger of Being Rigueous Over-much*, and at the same time quoting Ecclesiastes 7:16.³³ Fielding’s purpose is

³³ “*Be not righteous over much, neither make thyself over wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself?*”

twofold in this section of the text. First, it mocks Richardson's self-righteous authorial pretensions after citing the biblical passage in his own introduction to the second edition of *Pamela*. Second, it again calls the reader's attention to the utility of morality as a means of justification for immoral conduct. Williams' manipulation of scripture, furthermore, parallels Shamela's own manipulation of the squire for self-serving ends. He is, for all intents and purposes, whoring himself out to further his career in the church, and this is perhaps best encapsulated in his exchange with Shamela when he explains that the Booby family

are in Verity, as worthless a Family as any other whatever... However, I have prevailed on myself to write a civil Letter to your Master, as there is a Probability of his being shortly in a Capacity of rendring me a Piece of Service; my good Friend and Neighbour the Reverend Mr. *Squeeze-Tithe* being, as I am informed by one whom I have employed to attend for that Purpose, very near his Dissolution... as I have told you, it was a venial [motive for writing to the squire], of which I have truly repented, as I hope you have; and also that you have continued the wholesome Office of reading good Books, and are improved in your Psalmody... I purpose to give you a Sermon next *Sunday*, and shall spend the Evening with you, in Pleasures, which tho' not strictly innocent, are however to be purged away by frequent and sincere Repentance. (252)

He is concealing his low opinion of Mr. Booby in order that he might thereafter takeover Squeeze-Tithe's position. Fielding is burlesquing the parson as a mercenary in the same way as he is burlesquing Pamela as a mercenary. He is differentiating between public virtue and private vice through these characters in order to remove what he no doubt saw as glaring artifice in Richardson's craft. Ethics are so easily given to compromise in the

face of liberty and luxury. Even the clergy, Fielding is suggesting through his burlesque, are subject to markedly human fallibility, to sins of lust and avarice. Every man, as Fielding understood, is made into somebody's whore in eighteenth-century Britain's mercantile *and* patronage-based economy.

But so what? That all-important question every right-minded critic ought to be asking herself. The superficial reader might easily misinterpret *Shamela* to be a moral critique of *Pamela*, and such an argument has indeed been made, but when we really consider the implications of Fielding's burlesque it becomes increasingly apparent that his lowering of these characters into corrupt degenerates is actually an attempt to make them more human, more realistic, and lifelike representations of the modern British subject.

Fielding accomplishes this through his prose in the same manner as he did on the stage. The intermingling of high drama and low comedy plays out in *Shamela* as it did in *The Covent-Garden Tragedy*, *The Modern Husband*, and *Miss Lucy in Town*. From the beginning of the pamphlet, and throughout his dedicatory remarks to 'Miss Fanny', Fielding satirizes the high prose stylings of his contemporaries—namely, Conyers Middleton (1683-1750), Colley Cibber (1671-1757), and of course the then anonymous of *Pamela*—by facetiously inflating the laudatory language characteristic of their prose. "It will be naturally expected", Fielding begins, "that when I write the Life of *Shamela*, I should dedicate it to some young Lady, whose Wit and Beauty might be the proper Subject of a Comparison with the Heroine of my Piece" (231). He is contemptuously deriding, almost verbatim, the dedication to Lord Hervey (1696-1743) found in

Middleton's *Life of Cicero*.³⁴ More importantly, however, he is immediately setting the tone for the rest of the pamphlet. "It only remains to pay my Acknowledgments", he continues, "to an Author, whose Stil [sic.] I have exactly followed in this Life, it being the properest for Biography. The Reader, I believe, easily guesses, I mean *Euclid's Elements*; it was *Euclid* who taught me to write. It is you, Madam, who pay me for Writing".

Catherine Ingrassia has already noted that Fielding's reference to Euclid "underscores a frequent complaint about *Pamela*— that she never changed, that assumptions about her subsequent action were made exclusively on her previous action" (233), but perhaps more significantly, Fielding is parodying the venal nature of his contemporaries' devotional prose, the pandering to their benefactors like the whore to her john. In Parson Oliver's prefatory letter to *Tickletext*, furthermore, the affected praise appended to the second edition of *Pamela* is similarly burlesqued: "Who [the author] is, though you so earnestly require of me, I shall leave you to guess from that *Ciceronian* Eloquence, with which the Work abounds and that excellent Knack of making every Character amiable, which he lays his hands on" (240). Fielding is at once parodying Richardson's prefatory puffs and Middleton's dedication to Hervey. The intricacy of Fielding's satire is occasionally daunting, but it is important to remember that these allusions would no doubt be recognized by eighteenth-century audiences.

³⁴ "The public will naturally expect, that in chusing a Patron for *the Life of CICERO*, I should address myself to some person of illustrious rank, distinguished by his parts and eloquence, and bearing a principal share in the great affairs of the Nation; who, according to the usual stile of Dedications, might be the proper subject of a comparison with the Hero of my piece".

Shamela is not so much a moral satire as it is an artistic satire. Fielding's task in the pamphlet is not wholly removed from his task on the stage. It is a burlesque not solely of Richardsonian prurience, but—like *The Covent-Garden Tragedy*—a burlesque of the aesthetic qualities that characterize the novel. *Pamela* adopted the epistolary narrative style common to popular amatory fictions coming out of France at the time, but indeed with a deeply entrenched—what Fielding certainly viewed as a morally flawed—didacticism to the novel. Part of the satire in *Shamela* is Fielding's burlesque of what Richardson referred to as his style of 'writing to the moment'. "You see I write in the present Tense", Shamela writes during the attempted rape scene, "well, [Booby] is in Bed between us, we both shamming a Sleep, he steals his Hand into my Bosom, which I, as if in my Sleep, press close to me with mine, and then pretend to awake... *O what a Difficulty it is to keep one's Countenance, when a violent Laugh desires to burst forth*" (247). However difficult Shamela might find it to maintain her composure during this scene, she no doubt would have experienced more difficulty feigning sleep while putting pen to page. The pamphlet is, furthermore, highly conscious of itself as a work of satirical fiction. Time and time again Fielding will remind his reader of the farcical foundation of the pamphlet by making reference to *Pamela* and the cultural enthusiasm toward the novel:

Well, but they say my Name is to be altered, Mr. *Williams*, says the first Syllabub hath too comical a Sound, so it is to be changed into *Pamela*; I own I can't imagine what can be said... [Parson Williams] answered me, I need not give my self any Trouble: for the Gentleman *who writes Lives*, never

asked more than a few Names of his Customers, and that he made all the rest out of his own Head; you mistake, Child, said he, if you apprehend any Truths are to be delivered. So far on the contrary, if you had not been acquainted with the Name, you would not have known it to be your own History. I have seen a *Piece of his Performance*, where the Person, whose Life was written, could he have risen from the Dead again, would not have even suspected he had been aimed at, unless by the Title of the Book, which was superscribed with his Name. Well, all these Matters are strange to me, yet I can't help laughing, to think I shall see my self in a printed Book. (273)

Unpacking the satire behind this passage in the narrative demands a through understanding of the *Pamela*-vogue, and indeed the novel itself. Fielding is at once satirizing Richardson *and* the popular misconception that *Pamela* was comprised of found-letters uncovered by the anonymous editor of the work, and furthermore that the novel was more a work of biography than fiction. Fielding's satire on Richardson did not end with *Shamela*, however. He continued to use the quasi-fictional universe of *Pamela* in his first experiment in the novel-form. Instead of burlesquing the mercenary motivations of Pamela Andrews, however, Fielding began to consider how the culture of libertinism, and male promiscuity worked into his theory of the disenfranchised, necessarily self-commodifying prostitute.

Ch. III

The Strawberry Birthmark on Joseph Andrews's Breast



The first edition of *Joseph Andrews* was printed in two pocket-sized volumes by Andrew Millar in late February of 1742.³⁵ Four revised editions with “Alterations and Additions by the Author” were later printed to meet public demand for the novel. It was commercially successful, but at the same time criticized for its low and amatory style by Britons more polite, or perhaps more prudish. George Cheyne not surprisingly wrote to Richardson that the novel “will entertain none but Porters or Waterman”, calling it a “wretched Performance”, and William Shenstone wrote the novel off similarly as “a very mean performance” in a letter to Richard Graves later that year³⁶. Most immediately,

³⁵ In Charles F. Partington’s *British Cyclopædia of Biography* (1.706, London, 1837)—and later quoted in the Battestins biography—the story goes that Fielding negotiated the sale of *Joseph Andrews* with Millar at a coffee-house in the Strand. “I am a Man of few words”, Millar purportedly said, “and fond of coming to the point; but really, after giving every consideration I am able to your novel, I do not think I can afford to give you more than 200*l.* for it.” “What!” exclaimed Fielding, “two hundred pounds!” “Indeed, Mr. Fielding,” returned Millar, “indeed I am sensible of your talents; but my mind is made up.” “Two hundred pounds!” continued Fielding in a tone of perfect astonishment; “two hundred pounds did you say?” “Upon my word, Sir, I mean no disparagement to the writer or his great merit; but my mind is made up, and I cannot give you a farthing more”... “allow me, Mr. Millar, to ask you, whether you are *serious*?” “Never more so,” replied Millar, “in all my life; and I hope you will candidly acquit me of every intention to injure your feelings, or depreciate your abilities, when I repeat that I positively cannot afford you more than two hundred pounds for your novel.” “Then, my good Sir,” said Fielding, recovering himself from this unexpected stroke of good fortune, “give me your hand; the book is yours” (Battestin, 325).

³⁶ “Letter from Dr. George Cheyne to Samuel Richardson, 9 March 1742” in *Samuel Richardson: Printer and Novelist*. Alan D. McKillop, ed. Durham: North Carolina UP, 1936. 77. and “[Undated] Letter to Richard Graves” in *Letters of William Shenstone*. Duncan Mallam, ed. Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1939. 44.

readers disputed Fielding's moral intent with the novel. Elizabeth Carter, for example, wrote that "it must surely be a marvellous wrongheadedness and perplexity of understanding that can make any one consider this complete satire as a very immoral thing, and of the most dangerous tendency" in a letter to Catherine Talbot almost one year after the novel's first run³⁷. Of course *Joseph Andrews* is lewd and bawdy, anyone who reads the novel would surely agree on this point, but it is precisely through these moments of low burlesque within the narrative that Fielding really conveys his moral sentiments regarding human nature. After all, as he prefaces his text, "we should ever confine ourselves strictly to nature from the just imitation of which, will flow all the pleasure we can this way convey to a sensible reader" (42-3). The hypocrisy of an amiable priest, the depravity of a highborn socialite, and the unadulterated lust of a lowborn footman are—for Fielding—the proper subjects of novel discourse because vice and virtue are the proper subjects of human discourse. *Joseph Andrews* is, above all, a character study of everyman—"not an individual, but a species", as the author says (242). Nearly every one of Fielding's characters is flawed or fallible in one form or another, sometimes tragically, and sometimes comically, but always in an effort to breathe life into what might easily be construed as contemptuous caricature by the more superficial reader. Fielding is an optimist whose understanding of human nature is, as Martin Battestin long ago identified, markedly latitudinarian.³⁸ He routinely wrote in opposition to "those authors, who have

³⁷ *A Series of Letters Between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot From the Year 1741 to 1770*. London, 1809. I. 23-4.

³⁸ "Fielding's Ethics" in *The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art*. Wesleyan UP, 1959.

set human nature in a very vile and detestable light”, as subjects “depraved, and totally bad”, but never so as to represent the ‘species’ as inherently *good* either.³⁹ We have a natural propensity for sin, but not *evil* per se; that is, virtues like benevolence and charity are innate passions too. In a verse epistle “To John Hayes, Esq.” published that same year, and certainly written with Pope’s *Essay on Man* (1734) in mind, Fielding writes:

How passions blended on each other fix,
How vice with virtues, faults with graces mix;
How passions opposite, as sour to sweet,
Shall in one bosom at one moment meet⁴⁰

But where are all the whores, and how does prostitution figure into any of this? The smart-talking sex-worker and mercenary bawd parts once perfected by Kitty Clive on the stage, and later written into the psychology of Pamela Andrews, are indeed laid aside in *Joseph Andrews*. Sexual morality, sexual politics, and sexual economy, on the other hand, are all themes at the forefront of Fielding’s first experiment in the novel-form. Like any good satirist, he is attempting to laugh his audience into “good sense”, as he so often put it in *The Champion*.

Most of the humour in *Joseph Andrews* is rooted in affectation. Fielding goes to great lengths to clarify this in his preface, but nowhere in the novel is it more obvious than in Lady Booby’s relationship to Joseph, and the author’s digressions on ‘*high* people’ and ‘*low* people’ in Chapter XIII of Book II. “Now the world being thus divided into people of fashion and people of no fashion”, he writes, “a fierce contention arose between

³⁹ *The Champion*, 11 December 1739 and 22 January 1740

⁴⁰ *Miscellanies, Volume 1*. H.K. Knight, ed. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 1972. 51.

them; nor would those of one party, to avoid suspicion, be seen publicly to speak to those of the other, though they often held a very good correspondence in private". The problem with such pretensions, for Fielding, is that no Briton occupies one end of the spectrum exclusively. Somebody is always *higher* and *lower*, so any air of superciliousness is 'truly Ridiculous', to borrow the author's words. Furthermore, "those bordering nearly on each other, to wit, the lowest of the high, and the highest of the low, often change their parties according to place and time; for those who are people of fashion in one place are often people of no fashion in another. And with regard to time, it may not be unpleasant to survey the picture of dependance like a kind of ladder" (206-7). This ladder of dependance is a reiteration of the *everyman as a whore* trope that Fielding returns to time and time again in his fictions. Social order in eighteenth-century Britain is structurally dependant on divisions of rank, and the only source of mobility is through shameless affectation. Not surprisingly then, Lady Booby explains to Joseph that he is "a handsome young fellow, and might do better; you might make your fortune" (81). In other words, by prostituting himself to a lady of fashion, Joseph might move above his lowly rank as a footman on the social ladder. Of course Joseph would never compromise his virtue for the sake of his own welfare, however. Like his sister Pamela, he clings to his virtue in the face of debauchery. "Suppose she should prefer you to all your sex", Lady Booby attempts to persuade him, "and admit you to the same familiarities as you might have hoped for, if you had been born her equal, are you certain that no vanity could tempt you to discover her?... Joseph protested that he never had the least evil design against her".

Joseph Andrews is in many ways the funhouse-mirror equivalent of Richardson's *Pamela*, with all the naughty bits intended to provoke mirth as opposed to arousal, particularly in these gender-inverted episodes detailing the sexual politics between Lady Booby and Joseph. "The world will never know anything of the matter", she continues, mistaking Joseph's modesty for false pretence, "yet would not that be trusting to your secrecy? Must not my reputation be then in your power? Would you not then be my master?" (71). Sex below one's social rank, as any student of eighteenth-century British fiction surely knows, was a practice considered vulgar and impractical by Britons of a *higher* sensibility. By showing a lady of quality like Lady Booby in such a light, Fielding is humanizing her. She is fallible, and subject to the same passions and desires of those mean and vile lower sorts. At the same time, despite Joseph's best intentions, he too admits to nearly being overcome by his passions at the sight of Lady Booby in her bedchamber. In a letter to his sister he writes

O Pamela! my mistress is fallen in love with me— that is, what great folks call falling in love—she has a mind to ruin me; but I hope I shall have more resolution and more grace than to part with my virtue to any lady upon earth... Mr Adams hath often told me, that chastity is as great a virtue in a man as in a woman... I am glad she turned me out of the chamber as she did: for I had once almost forgotten every word parson Adams had ever said to me. (89)

The highborn and lowborn alike are mutually tempted by sin, Fielding is suggesting, and both parties fear they are being exploited by the other. Lady Booby's reputation is at stake, just as Joseph's virtue and chastity are at stake should they indulge in any wanton

affair. “To sacrifice my reputation, my character, my rank in life”, Lady Booby gripes in an aside, “to the indulgence of a mean and a vile appetite! How I detest the thought! How much more exquisite is the pleasure resulting from the reflection of virtue and prudence than the faint relish of what flows from vice and folly!” (389). Fielding’s characters, not wholly unlike the author himself, are full of contradictions like these. They are at once concerned with moral fortitude and indulging carnal desire. These are the complications of character that remove them from the realm of mere caricature and into the recognizably human. It is these moments in the text precisely—when both parties are confronted by a natural propensity to sin, and overcome temptation by virtue of either vanity or self-regard—that Fielding most accurately conveys his vexed sentiments regarding human nature as inclined to both vice and virtue. “Not from the inimitable pencil of my friend Hogarth”, Fielding writes,

could you receive such an idea of surprize as would have entered in at your eyes had they beheld the Lady Booby when those last words issued out from the lips of Joseph. "Your virtue!" said the lady, recovering after a silence of two minutes; "I shall never survive it. Your virtue!—intolerable confidence! Have you the assurance to pretend, that when a lady demeans herself to throw aside the rules of decency, in order to honour you with the highest favour in her power, your virtue should resist her inclination? ... did ever mortal hear of a man's virtue? Did ever the greatest or the gravest men pretend to any of this kind? (83)

Hogarth, as Fielding invokes on a number of occasions throughout the novel, famously illustrated Londoners at their most debauched, but also as *modern moral subjects* whose humanity shines through even the gravest of caricature. Lady Booby’s response here is



Subscription ticket to William Hogarth's *Marriage à-la-mode* titled *Characters Caricaturas* (1743). The bottom reads: "For a farther Explanation of the Difference Betwixt Character & Caricature See ye Preface to Jo^h. Andrews".

exaggerated here to a similar effect. Her failed attempt to seduce Joseph is stupefying to the lady of fashion because he stands to profit in more than one way by simply indulging the cull. She wholeheartedly believes he is affecting false modesty, and merely ‘pretending’ to value his virtue. Men wielded all the socioeconomic power in Britain at this historical moment, so why should Joseph give one farthing for his virtue? Lady Booby, however, holds a higher rank in British society as an aristocratic widow than Joseph as a lowly footman. This inversion of prevailing power dynamics between the sexes is fundamental to Fielding’s burlesque because it adds an element of both dramatic and situational irony to the seduction narrative, and as Jill Campbell has observed in *Natural Masques: Gender and Identity in Fielding’s Plays and Novels*: “it also confronts us with the question of what has been reduced in the act of substitution—why what is virtue in one sex comes off as triviality in the other” (67). We find traces of this in the Tow-wouse’s marriage too. Catching Mr. Tow-wouse fornicating with the chambermaid Betty, Mrs. Tow-wouse roars,

O you damn'd villain! is this the return to all the care I have taken of your family? This the reward of my virtue? Is this the manner in which you behave to one who brought you a fortune, and preferred you to so many matches, all your betters? To abuse my bed, my own bed, with my own servant! but I'll maul the slut, I'll tear her nasty eyes out! Was ever such a pitiful dog, to take up with such a mean trollop? If she had been a gentlewoman, like myself, it had been some excuse; but a beggarly, saucy, dirty servant-maid. Get you out of my house, you whore. (127)

It is not so much that Fielding is licensing libertinism, as at least one scholar has suggested, but that by inverting normative gender roles—the *masculine* female in the case of Lady Booby and Mrs. Tow-ouse, and the *feminine* male in the case of Joseph—he is making comic, or ‘Ridiculous’, the shallowness of rank mentality, particularly in regard to sexual politics.

Lady Booby, like Mr. B. in *Pamela*, is a sexual predator. She might at best be described as a bereaved widow, but she is also a major site of Fielding’s musings on sexual virtue and economy throughout the novel. Her lust for Joseph and concern for social propriety develop into a type of psychomachia through which her conflicted passions are pitted against one another for the reader to observe in competition. “All that night and the next day,” Fielding writes, “the Lady Booby past with the utmost anxiety; her mind was distracted and her soul tossed up and down by many turbulent and opposite passions. She loved, hated, pitied, scorned, admired, despised the same person by fits, which changed in a very short interval” (345). These ‘opposite passions’ are the mark of her humanity. She is not simply a caricatured debauchee whose only concern is indulging carnal appetites. She is calculating no doubt, but also immensely conscious of just how important her reputation is to maintaining a high position on, as Fielding says, the *ladder of dependence*. These ongoing negotiations between vice and virtue reveal an underlying thread of moral consciousness—mercenary as it might be—that complicate her character. “What am I doing?” she asks herself,

How do I suffer this passion to creep imperceptibly upon me?... Marry a footman! Distraction! Can I afterwards bear the eyes of my acquaintance? But I can retire from them; retire with one in whom I propose more happiness than the world without him can give me! Retire— to feed continually on beauties which my inflamed imagination sickens with eagerly gazing on... I despise, I detest my passion.—Yet why? Is he not generous, gentle, kind?—Kind! to whom? to the meanest wretch, a creature below my consideration. Doth he not—yes, he doth prefer [Fanny Goodwill]. Curse his beauties, and the little low heart that possesses them.
(388)

Part of the satire here is aimed at Richardson's style of "writing to the moment", and granting his reader access to the inner psychology of character. Fielding, however, is also dramatizing the conflicted passions of Lady Booby. He is calling our attention to the hypocritical double-standard inherent in Richardson's idealization of sexual morality. He is distinguishing between public and private virtue, and in turn burlesquing the shallow pretensions of a rank mentality. Early in the narrative he explains that Lady Booby "indulged in [Joseph] all those innocent freedoms which women of figure may permit without the least sully of their virtue... But tho' their virtue remains unsullied, yet now and then some small arrows will glance on the shadow of it, their reputation; and so it fell out to Lady Booby" (69). The reader is almost immediately clued into Lady Booby's eventual fall from grace and descent into madness in the narrative, so whatever attempts she makes on Joseph's virtue are designed to provoke laughter rather than pathos. What is so decidedly comic about Lady Booby is her affected propriety, not the meanness of her character.

The fragility of a woman's reputation and the economic value it carries is a theme common to all of the texts we have studied thus far. In *Joseph Andrews* it is played out predominantly through the character of Lady Booby, but we also find it in Fielding's side stories related by numerous characters throughout Joseph and Adams' picaresque venture from the Booby estate, to London, and back again. The story of Leonora, Bellarmine, and Horatio, for example, serves as an antithetical microcosm to the greater romance narrative between Joseph, Lady Booby, and Fanny Goodwill. Leonora is ultimately ostracized for failing to maintain her reputation. Although she is betrothed to Horatio, she is enticed by the lavish Bellarmine, and her affections soon turn toward the more *advantageous* match.

Thereafter,

the ladies of the town began to take her conduct under consideration: it was the chief topic of discourse at their tea-tables, and was very severely censured by the most part; especially by Lindamira... The extreme delicacy of Lindamira's virtue was cruelly hurt by those freedoms which Leonora allowed herself: she said, "It was an affront to her sex; that she did not imagine it consistent with any woman's honour to speak to the creature, or to be seen in her company; and that, for her part, she should always refuse to dance at an assembly with her, for fear of contamination by taking her by the hand". (174)

Fielding is attempting to spotlight the vain pretensions of 'tea-table' gossip, and the tenuousness of a woman's reputation in this passage. More importantly, however, he is once again satirizing the mercenary motivations behind the financial marriage. Still, it is important to remember that Fielding's satire is not designed to rebuke these characters, but rather "to hold the glass to thousands in their closets, that they may contemplate their

deformity, and endeavour to reduce it, and thus by suffering private mortification may avoid public shame. This places the boundary between, and distinguishes the satirist from the libeller” (242). Fielding, as I have already suggested, is attempting to laugh his audience into a reformed sensibility. That is to say, vice is not something to be eradicated, but at best ‘reduced’. Human nature, as Fielding understood it, is inclined to both vice and virtue, and representing humanity in such a light is certainly the task of his first experiment in the novel form.

Just as in *The Modern Husband*, Fielding treats the financial marriage as a blatant form of prostitution in *Joseph Andrews*. The companionate marriage is the only institution by which equality can be achieved between the sexes. Joseph and Fanny exemplify this in their mutual benevolence toward one another, but there are numerous relationships throughout the narrative that exemplify the opposing ideal. “Will any woman hesitate a moment whether she shall ride in a coach or walk on foot all the days of her life?” Leonora’s aunt asks her in regard to Bellarmine and Horatio,

“Yes, but, madam, what will the world say?” answered Leonora: “will not they condemn me?”—“the world is always on the side of prudence,” cries the aunt, “and would surely condemn you if you sacrificed your interest to any motive whatever. Oh! I know the world very well; and you shew your ignorance, my dear, by your objection... I assure you there is not anything worth our regard besides money; nor did I ever know one person who married from other considerations, who did not afterwards heartily repent it. (158-9)

Remarkably unbeknownst to both Leonora and her aunt, Bellarmine's motivations are also mercenary, and having been denied the dowry he anticipated, he swiftly jilts the young bride-to-be. This episode in the narrative acts as both a cautionary tale regarding the dangers of the mercenary marriage, and serves as a comic imitation of the amatory romance fiction that so inform the novel's satire. "Examples work more forcibly on the mind than precepts", as the author reminds us at the beginning of the novel (59). There are several episodes in *Joseph Andrews* that work to the opposite effect too, however, and—instead of spotlighting the iniquity of the financial marriage—idealize the companionate marriage. The history of Mr. Wilson serves this purpose in the narrative. Having inherited his fortune at sixteen upon the death of his father, Wilson travels to London to fashion himself as a gentleman. His rakish, spendthrift habits soon lead to venereal disease and unpaid debts in what more or less reads like Fielding textualizing Hogarth's *Rake's Progress*. Unlike Tom Rakewell however, Wilson manages to avoid debtors prison, and eventually retires to the countryside where the vanities, hypocrisies, and affectations of city life might cease to corrupt him further. All of this is owing to the benevolent and charitable Harriet Hearty, "who was wiser than to prostitute the novel passion of love to the ridiculous lust of vanity. [They] presently understood one another; and, as the pleasures [they] sought lay in a mutual gratification, [they] soon found and enjoyed them" happily ever after (264). It is their joint interest in the union that, as Fielding suggests, makes for a happy and successful marriage. Wilson goes on to boast that he has

found none of my own sex capable of making juster observations on life, or of delivering them more agreeably; nor do I believe any one possessed of a faithfuller or braver friend. And sure as this friendship is sweetened with more delicacy and tenderness, so is it confirmed by dearer pledges than can attend the closest male alliance; for what union can be so fast as our common interest in the fruits of our embraces? (280)

Respect for the fairer sex is not a virtue Wilson always held though, and equality in marriage is certainly something learned at his lowest low. The image Fielding therefore paints of Wilson closely aligns with his sentiments regarding human nature without any ironic detachment. Wilson is a depraved mercenary who *learns* benevolence and charity by Harriet's example, and by practicing these virtues ultimately finds redemption, or at least a lasting contentment. Vice is corrected by virtue. Mrs. Slipslop shares these sentiments in the narrative, albeit somewhat crookedly, when she "imagine[s] that by so long a self-denial she had not only made amends for the small slip of her youth above hinted at, but had likewise laid up a quantity of merit to excuse any future failings. In a word, she resolved to give a loose to her amorous inclinations, and to pay off the debt of pleasure which she found she owed herself, as fast as possible" (74). Fielding is sympathetic to the correction of vice. It is not so much the case, as one scholar has recently suggested, that Fielding's understanding of character is "derived from the principle [he] learned in comic drama, that selfhood has to be quickly recognizable and not subject to much change or development".⁴¹ Rather, character or 'selfhood'—at least in

⁴¹ Baines, Paul. "Joseph Andrews" in *The Cambridge Companion to Henry Fielding*. Cambridge UP, 2007.

Joseph Andrews—is complicated time and time again by the individual’s ongoing negotiations between vice and virtue. Fielding is not simply caricaturing high people and low people, the debauched and the virtuous. He casts aside distinctions of rank and moral virtue to represent human nature as perpetually subject to change and in constant development. A misreading of Lady Booby’s character, for example, might lead to the ‘quickly recognizable’ conclusion that she is the archetypal seductress, but Fielding is careful to stipulate that “before we discover too much of her frailty to our reader, it will be proper to give him a lively idea of the vast temptation, which overcame all the efforts of a modest and virtuous mind; and then we humbly hope his good nature will rather pity than condemn the imperfection of human virtue” (80). Lady Booby is constantly wrestling with her affections for Joseph because she recognizes his good nature, but at the same time she cannot, or at least is unwilling to, sacrifice her high social rank to marry a lowborn footman. She asks

Is he not more worthy of affection than a dirty country clown, though born of a family as old as the flood? or an idle worthless rake, or little puisny beau of quality? And yet these we must condemn ourselves to, in order to avoid the censure of the world; to shun the contempt of others, we must ally ourselves to those we despise; we must prefer birth, title, and fortune, to real merit. It is a tyranny of custom, a tyranny we must comply with; for we people of fashion are the slaves of custom. (354)

Again, vice and virtue are at odds with one another in the ongoing psychomachia of Lady Booby. She is at once in love with the virtuous Joseph *and* committed to preserving the vain privileges afforded her by title and fortune. Fielding is not censuring her mercenary

values so much as he is calling for a reform of the ‘tyranny of custom’, of the financial marriage in all of its moral hypocrisy.

The eighteenth-century woman question is an issue that Fielding takes up more often than he is given credit for by most scholars. Part of the problem, as he lays out in *Joseph Andrews*, is to be found in the education of women. Very early on in their development, young girls are inculcated by the mercenary values of their mothers, teachers, and peers, and for Fielding this perpetuates the vanity and corruption of generation after generation of English women (dramatized most pointedly in the novel by Leonora and her aunt). In his *Philosophical reflections, the like not to be found in any light French romance* from Book IV of the novel, for example, Fielding writes:

the passion generally called love exercises most of the talents of the female or fair world, so in this they now and then discover a small inclination to deceit; for which thou wilt not be angry with the beautiful creatures when thou hast considered that at the age of seven, or something earlier, miss is instructed by her mother that master is a very monstrous kind of animal, who will, if she suffers him to come too near her, infallibly eat her up and grind her to pieces: that... she must never have any affection towards him; for if she should, all her friends in petticoats would esteem her a traitress, point at her, and hunt her out of their society. These impressions, being first received, are farther and deeper inculcated by their school-mistresses and companions. (264)

The popular amatory fictions of Fielding’s day are also subject to blame for further normalizing the mercenary motivations lurking beneath this learned affectation.

Fielding’s sentiments, as he points out in the title of the chapter, are ‘not to be found’ in

any such work. It is also Fielding's biggest point of contention with Richardson's *Pamela* which he no doubt saw as further licensing this behaviour. In *Joseph Andrews* this criticism is genderless. Men, too, follow the example of their superiors, and as a result, as Mr. Wilson points out: "the pleasures of the world are chiefly folly, and the business of it mostly knavery, and both nothing better than vanity; the men of pleasure tearing one another to pieces from the emulation of spending money, and the men of business from envy in getting it" (277). *Joseph Andrews* is designed to incite mirth on the part of the reader no doubt, but also to instruct her by way example through the countless tragedies that befall Fielding's characters along the way.

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Before carrying on into an analysis of Joseph's character, and articulating his place in this thesis, it is important that we first consider Abraham Adams in relation to these larger thematic issues in the text. The parson's quixotic idealism is a subject well-charted by students of the novel already, but his moral hypocrisy fully embodies what Fielding no doubt understood to be the modern human condition. Anyone familiar with bible literature might easily detect the literary significance of a name like Abraham Adams. He is, for all intents and purposes, the first and foremost representation of man after the fall. "I have made him a clergyman", Fielding says, "since no other office could have given him so many opportunities of displaying his worthy inclinations" (48). 'Worthy' though they might be, Adams is completely naive to his own hypocritical tendencies in the novel. He fails to live up to the values he so routinely preaches toward

others. He prides himself on his learning, he holds his written sermons in a vain regard, and he relies on the charity and benevolence of his fellow man without any reservation for puffing it as the whole duty of a good Christian. Still, as Fielding goes on to explain, he is “a man of good sense, good parts, and good nature; but was at the same time as entirely ignorant of the ways of this world, as an infant just entered into it could possibly be. As he had never any intention to deceive, so he never suspected such a design in others” (64). His innocence and naiveté result in his own undoing over and over again in the novel, but he remains steadfast in his belief in human goodness. Accordingly, Adams stands in sharp contrast to all of the corrupt, worldly characters that populate the novel. He is the highest exemplar of good-natured, charitable Christian virtue—as Fielding understood it—in the novel. His motivations are never mercenary, but then how does he fit into Fielding’s understanding of human nature as inclined to both vice and virtue? Of all the decidedly human characters in *Joseph Andrews*, Adams is the least recognizably fallible. Fielding invokes an anecdote concerning Socrates to account for this discrepancy in the parson’s character:

A certain physiognomist asserted of Socrates, that he plainly discovered by his features that he was a rogue in his nature. A character so contrary to the tenour of all this great man's actions, and the generally received opinion concerning him, incensed the boys of Athens so that they threw stones at the physiognomist, and would have demolished him for his ignorance, had not Socrates himself prevented them by confessing the truth of his observations, and acknowledging that, though he corrected his disposition by philosophy, he was indeed naturally as inclined to vice as had been predicated of him. (233, *sic.*)

By having Adams relate this story in the narrative, Fielding is associating the ‘great actions’ of the parson with those of Plato’s gadfly. Indeed the parson makes no secrets of his own fallibility, and his own humanity. His inclination to vice is just as natural as any other of Fielding’s characters in the novel, albeit eclipsed, or ‘corrected’ by active virtue guided by holy scripture. Of course, part of the satire here is aimed at the learned tradition under threat. Adams represents a breed of Britons not yet corrupted by the mercantile, consumer-based social ethos reshaping the face of the nation. Fielding often equates Britain’s decay in classical learning and classical aesthetic values with a decay in moral values— perhaps more pointedly in *The Author’s Farce: or, The Pleasures of the Town* (1735)—and Adams expresses a similar sentiment on more than one occasion in the novel.

What really complicates Adams’ character, however, are his truly innocent hypocrisies. He is far from sharing the mercenary values of Parson Trulliber, but he relies on the charity and benevolence of his fellow-man on more than one occasion in the novel, often utilizing scripture to bolster his cause. “Suppose I am not a clergyman”, he says to Parson Trulliber, “I am nevertheless thy brother, and thou, as a Christian, much more as a clergyman, art obliged to relieve my distress” (217). He is using the doctrine of charity for self-serving ends, to pay off his drinking debts at the roadside inn. His first question to the hostess, upon receiving the bill for seven shillings, is whether or not there is a clergyman in the adjacent parish, and whether or not he is a wealthy man (211). When

Trulliber denies Adams' the seven shillings, he goes so far as to suggest that "whoever therefore is void of charity, I make no scruple of pronouncing that he is no Christian" (218). As innocent as the parson's intentions might be, he is manipulating scripture for his own advantage— and, in so many words, prostituting the faith. Where Fielding complicates the more recognizably villainous characters of *Joseph Andrews* by revealing their hidden virtues, then, he complicates the more recognizably noble characters by revealing their hidden vices. It is this dynamic characterization precisely that adds a markedly human element to Fielding's characters. He is, as I have already suggested, attempting to laugh his audience into a reformed sensibility toward the imperfections of human nature by exposing these faults in the design of his characters.

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Joseph is the male equivalent of Richardson's Pamela; rather than evoking pathos, however, his effeminate concern for his virtue and chastity informs much of the the novel's satire on eighteenth-century sexual politics. Unlike his sister, at least as she was later burlesqued by Fielding, Joseph's motivations are never mercenary. His affections for Fanny Goodwill, and his ongoing resistance to the sexual advances of Lady Booby, Betty the chambermaid, and Mrs. Slipslop are Fielding's primary example in the novel of active virtue in practice. In his characterization, as Fielding says in his preface, "delight is mixed with instruction, and the reader is almost as much improved as entertained" (60). Joseph is a comic reversal of the damsel-in-distress, but Fielding complicates the character by exposing his fallibility. He is not a one-dimensional caricature, but a markedly human

reimagining of Richardson's innocent heroine, at once noble and virtuous, but at the same time subject to carnal, earthly desires. "O most adorable Pamela! most virtuous sister!" he cries at the prospect of his own demise,

whose example could alone enable me to withstand all the temptations of riches and beauty, and to preserve my virtue pure and chaste for the arms of my dear Fanny, if it had pleased Heaven that I should ever have come unto them. What riches, or honours, or pleasures, can make us amends for the loss of innocence? Doth not that alone afford us more consolation than all worldly acquisitions? (101-2)

I need not remind my reader of Fielding's attitude toward the *Pamela*-frenzy, but his ironic detachment here is indeed significant to understanding Joseph's pathos in relation to the broader satire at work in the novel. Joseph's ultimate disillusionment is what differentiates him from Adams. He maintains his faith in divine providence throughout the novel, but distrusts his own ability to withstand temptation after repeated attempts on his virtue. On multiple occasions he resorts to violent measures in order to ward off sexual advances, and preserve his chastity toward Fanny. When Betty tries to seduce him at the Tow-wouses', for example, he

was obliged, contrary to his inclination, to use some violence to her; and, taking her in his arms, he shut her out of the room, and locked the door... How ought man to rejoice that his chastity is always in his own power; that, if he hath sufficient strength of mind, he hath always a competent strength of body to defend himself, and cannot, like a poor weak woman, be ravished against his will! (130)

On one hand he is fighting in the name of his virtue, but on the other hand—with a certain degree of gallows humour—he is battering a largely well-intentioned, as Fielding says,

‘poor weak woman’, like Betty. These are the contradictions of moral subjectivity that are designed to incite laughter *and* sympathy in the novel. What is more, however: these contradictions *breath life* into Fielding’s characters, dramatizing human nature—as Fielding understood it—in all of its competing passions.

Joseph is the male equivalent of Richardson’s Pamela. Rather than evoking pathos, however, his effeminate concern for his virtue and chastity informs much of the the novel’s satire on eighteenth-century sexual politics. Unlike his sister, at least as she was later burlesqued by Fielding, Joseph’s motivations are never mercenary. His affections for Fanny Goodwill, and his ongoing resistance to the sexual advances of Lady Booby, Betty, and Mrs. Slipslop are Fielding’s primary example in the text of active virtue in practice. In his characterization, as Fielding says in his preface, “delight is mixed with instruction, and the reader is almost as much improved as entertained” (60). The strawberry birthmark on Joseph’s breast that finally reveals his true parentage—“as fine a Strawberry as ever grew in a Garden”—is more significant to Fielding’s task in the novel than most scholars have generally acknowledged (338). On surface level it is, as Paul Bains has recently argued, a symbol of “a beautiful and fruitful rural England into which [Joseph] is now planted”, but it is also a mark of his humanity branded onto the body (59). Certainly the symbolic meaning of its decidedly strawberry shape is tied into the Christian and Greco-Roman mythologies that so inform the narrative. In the Christian tradition the strawberry is a symbol of love and spiritual purity. The Virgin Mary, for example, is sometimes depicted adorned by the fruit to represent her divine virtue. In the

Greco-Roman tradition, on the other hand, the strawberry is a symbol of lust and sensuality—the sacred fruit to Venus and Aphrodite. In *Joseph Andrews* these meanings intermingle. The strawberry is at once a symbol of Joseph Andrews's spiritual purity *and* his carnal desires. Lady Booby, Mrs. Slipslop, and Betty the chambermaid's advances on Joseph differ from Mr. B.'s advances on Pamela in Richardson's narrative because they are not wholly unwanted. "It was by keeping the excellent pattern of his sister's virtues before his eyes", Fielding explains, "that Mr. Joseph Andrews was chiefly enabled to preserve his purity in the midst of such great temptations" (60). His love for Fanny Goodwill is what is driving his moral consciousness away from indulging his seductresses, but 'temptation' is still very much a part of his character development throughout the novel. "Would you be contented with a kiss?" Lady Booby asks him, "'Would not your inclinations be all on fire rather by such a favour?' 'Madam,' said Joseph, 'if they were, I hope I should be able to control them, without suffering them to get the better of my virtue'" (82). Fielding is reminding his reader time and time again of Joseph Andrews's humanity despite his upstanding moral fibre. He is no doubt a figure of virtue, but not without actively warding off an inclination toward vice. The strawberry birthmark, then, is ultimately a symbol of what Joseph Andrews has been all along: a highborn foundling who—by modelling himself on Parson Adams and his sister Pamela throughout the narrative—is capable of withstanding vice and actively defending his virtue.

None of this is to say, however, that *Joseph Andrews* is simply a comic gender-inversion of *Pamela*. Fielding is attempting to naturalize his protagonist, not sanctify him. There are numerous instances in the novel through which the natural world mirrors the events of the novel, and indeed equates Joseph's markedly *human* nature with the natural, almost pastoral, environs of the British countryside. Joseph Andrews' "office was to perform the part of the antients assigned to the god Priapus", Fielding writes, "which deity the moderns call by the name Jack-o'-Lent: but his voice being so extremely musical, that it rather allured the birds than terrified them" (62, *sic.*). Priapus—apart from being the Greco-Roman god of gardening and patron of seafarers and shepherds—is a god of fertility. Here, Joseph Andrews is at once being equated with the celestial *and* the terrestrial. Like a demigod, he is both human and divine. Later in the narrative, Fielding again equates Joseph with the natural world in his microcosmic analogizing between the picaresque romance narrative and the hunting escapades of passing sportsmen. Joseph and Fanny, Fielding explains,

heard a pack of hounds approaching in full cry towards them, and presently afterwards saw a hare pop forth from the wood, and, crossing the water, land within a few yards of them in the meadows. The hare was no sooner on shore than it seated itself on its hinder legs, and listened to the sound of the pursuers. Fanny was wonderfully pleased with the little wretch, and eagerly longed to have it in her arms that she might preserve it from the dangers which seemed to threaten it; but the rational part of the creation do not always aptly distinguish their friends from their foes; what wonder then if this silly creature, the moment it beheld her, fled from the friend who would have protected it, and, traversing the meadows again, passed the little rivulet on the opposite

side? It was, however, so spent and weak, that it fell down twice or thrice in its way. This affected the tender heart of Fanny, who exclaimed, with tears in her eyes, against the barbarity of worrying a poor innocent defenceless animal out of its life, and putting it to the extremest torture for diversion. She had not much time to make reflections of this kind, for on a sudden the hounds rushed through the wood, which resounded with their throats and the throats of their retinue, who attended on them on horseback. (290)

However prolix this passage might appear at first glance, Fielding is clearly developing an analogy between the plight of the hunted hare and that of his protagonist; in doing so, he is also naturalizing Joseph Andrews *and* his seductresses. The hounds are a symbolic representation of Lady Booby, Mrs. Slipslop, and Betty the chambermaid in their lustful pursuit after Joseph, and the hare, by extension, is a symbolic representation of Joseph. What is more, however, the hare is a loaded image representing vulnerability, sentiment, lust, and fertility. By drawing this image of the hunter and the hunted on the English countryside in a way analogous to the events of the narrative, Fielding is at once naturalizing Joseph Andrews's lust for Fanny Goodwill *and* his seductresses lust for the protagonist himself.

There is a certain animality to human nature that Fielding is highlighting here, both curiously naturalizing and deeply affecting, at least to Fanny. What ultimately distinguishes Joseph Andrews's affections for Fanny from the more lustful affections of Beau Didapper are the former's good-natured intentions. He is not a highborn rake, but an unknowingly highborn romantic willing to take violent measures to preserve both his own virtue, and that of his beloved. Certainly he lusts after Fanny, but only insofar as his

virtuous, good-nature permits him. It is a class-critique to some extent indeed, but not to the exclusion of lower sorts. *Joseph Andrews* naturalizes and distinguishes virtuous sexuality from the more debaucherous and vice-laden sexualities of rakes like Beau Didapper, but in turn makes more human what might otherwise be construed as a blatant retelling of Richardson's *Pamela*. The novel is not—like *Shamela*—a prolonged satire on Richardson, but a thoroughly calculated comedy designed to both instruct and delight its reader through animated examples of both the ugly and the affable in each of its characters.

AFTERWORD



Although Fielding wrote in multiple media throughout his career, there is a certain thematic and aesthetic continuity traceable in his works. That is to say, the same issues of sexual morality, corruption, and affectation at the forefront of his dramatic works continued to inform his later experiments in the novel form. Fielding refined—and indeed made more pronounced—his musings on such matters seven years later with the publication of *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling* (1749). What so many students of the author refer to as Fielding’s masterpiece is indeed another study of sexual commodification, and a young man’s vulnerability to the capitalist demands and realities of modern life in the metropolis. Mid-century picaresque narratives of ‘stallions’ and ‘fortune hunters’ certainly inform Fielding’s plot in *Tom Jones*, as Laura Rosenthal has so deftly shown in her recent study on this literature of the period.⁴² Tom Jones, who like Joseph Andrews harbours sincere and virtuous affections for his beloved Sophia, ultimately resorts to prostituting himself to Lady Bellaston out of necessity— he needs the money. The moment he realizes that he has become a ‘kept fellow’, however, is the turning point in the novel that prompts him into reforming his rakish, roguish ways. Rosenthal notes that Tom “behaves in this affair less like a sexually adventurous boy and

⁴² “Tom Jones and the ‘New Vice’”. *Infamous Commerce: Prostitution in Eighteenth-Century British Literature and Culture*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2006.

more like the midcentury female prostitute whose work produces self-estrangement rather than pleasure” (155). Certainly he has indulged his carnal desires on more than one occasion in the novel—even paying for sexual favours by Molly Seagrim—but it is the exchange of money for his own favours that truly horrifies him into reforming his behaviour.

Like the protagonists so many eighteenth-century prostitute narratives, Tom arrives in London without any money, or formal training in any craft, trade, or industry whatsoever. It is his handsome and charming person that attracts him to Mrs. Fitzpatrick and Lady Bellaston:

He knew the tacit Consideration upon which all her Favours were conferred; and as his Necessity obliged him to accept them, so his Honour, he concluded, forced him to pay the Price. This therefore he resolved to do, whatever Misery it cost him, and to devote himself to her, from that great Principle of Justice, by which the Laws of some Countries oblige a Debtor who is no otherwise capable of discharging his Debt, to become the Slave of his Creditor. (468)

By midcentury, the libertinism that so characterized the social ethos of the Restoration was under scrutiny by the moralists of the day. Tom Jones’ decision to become a ‘kept fellow’ to Lady Bellaston certainly would have degraded his character to eighteenth-century readers. One anonymously published pamphlet published that same year in London titled *Satan’s Harvest Home* plainly expresses the kind of social anxiety surrounding ‘fortune hunters’ like Tom:

what amazes and fills all Mankind with Wonder and Surprise, is a *new Vice* started upon us, introduced and

boldly led up by Women of the first Figure and Fortunes as well as Fashion, worthy the Imitation of the whole Sex. These, *vice versa*, have inverted the Order of Things, turn'd the Tables upon Men, and very fairly begun openly to *Keep their Fellows*: For Ladies during the Bands of Wedlock, as well as in a State of Widowhood, to call in private *Aid, Assistance* and *Comfort*, is an Immunity they've enjoy'd time immemorial: But for the *Fair*, and such as even profess Spinsterhood, to keep Men in private Lodgings, and visit them publickly in their Equipages, are Privileges unknown to our Ancestors.⁴³

Another work published only a few years later continued to decry the mercenary libertinism that was becoming antiquated and out-of-fashion as the new vogue for sensibility and sentimentality gained momentum. The author explains that “All their care and industry is to gain Wealth, for which they study, ride, run, and trudge about, toil, work and care, venture Limbs, Life, and all, for Money. And if you have but this itching Humour upon you, and marry *merely* for Money, the Lord have Mercy upon you; for it is neither *Match nor Marriage, but Wh—dom all thy Life long*”.⁴⁴ What Fielding is suggesting through the character of Tom Jones and his eventual revulsion at his descent into prostitution, then, is that the whore is not merely a pleasure-seeking, wanton profligate, but a fallible, markedly human, and ultimately reformable subject of Great Britain's free-market economy. He is turning the tables on prostitution to expose the

⁴³ *Satan's Harvest Home; or, The Present State of Whorecraft, Adultery, Fornication, Procurring, Pimping, Sodomy, and the game at Flatts, (Illustrated by an Authentick and Entertaining Story) And other Satantic Works, daily propagated in this good Protestant Kingdom.* London: 1749.

⁴⁴ *Reflection upon Matrimony, and the Women of This Country. In a Letter to a Young Gentleman.* London, 1755.

problem as an un-gendered vice. Men and women alike are vulnerable to self-commodification. Tom is not the only character in the novel guilty of indulging vice either. Bilful, Square, and Thwackum each attempts to earn the affections of Bridget Allworthy in order to capitalize off the Allworthy estate, and Mr. Fitzpatrick and Nightingale plot similar ruses. Anyone who reads the novel, too, might easily devise an extensive inventory of the female prostitutes littered about its pages, and—as Rosenthal has already observed—these “exchanges suggest that Tom’s sexual contract with Lady Bellaston takes place in a broader context of heterosexual exchanges in which male and female bodies can *both* leverage their attractions for profit” (158, emphasis mine). Both sexes are vulnerable to sexual corruptibility and self-commodification. Everyone is capable of whoredom, and even the markedly virtuous indeed fall victim to corruption and affectation at one point or another in his fictions. Fielding’s characters are always dynamic, and always wrestling with issues of vice and virtue. Fielding is not condemning their occasional transgressions, but showing through their example how reform is achievable with the proper amount of self-awareness and moral rectification. The prostitute figures both literally and figuratively in Fielding’s fictions so often precisely because she is the perfect embodiment of these ongoing issues during the period.

The author championed virtuous reform throughout his career, but his comedic sensibilities began to wane by the 1750s as his health deteriorated. His last few fictional works—namely, *A Journey from this World to the Next* (1749) and *Amelia* (1751)—are virtually void of the wit, satire, and vivacity that once characterized his writing. Perhaps

Fielding grew more embittered on account of his dwindling prospects for recovery, but the more likely explanation is that his new position as magistrate of Bow Street drained whatever spirits still remained in the man. Any humanitarian campaign once fought with wit and ink alone was now being fought in the courts as judicial reform, and his fictions grew more and more sentimental as his sociopolitical influence on the metropolis grew. Still, Fielding was finally, actively effecting the kind of moral reform he had initially attempted to laugh his audiences into nearly two decades earlier at the Theatre Royal.

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