

Joseph Andrews (1742): Lecture I Literary and Cultural Contexts

Dr Beth Swan

Edition used: Henry Fielding, *Joseph Andrews* (1742), edited by Douglas Brooks-Davies, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970.

Henry Fielding

Brief Biography (1707-54)

Fielding was of aristocratic descent, educated at Eton. He commenced legal studies in the late 1720s and was eventually called to the Bar in 1740, becoming principal Westminster magistrate in 1748. He was both dedicated and effective and, together with his brother, John, was responsible for creating the first organised police force, the Bow Street Runners.

Literary Influences

Epic:

One of the earliest literary forms. Homer and Virgil are the best known classical examples. The best known English examples are probably Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (pub.1596) and Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667). Generally a long narrative, usually in verse, dealing with one important action or theme. The style and subject should be sublime, eg. Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Epic made sense of history as myth within collective consciousness eg *Paradise Lost* makes sense of the Fall of Man - in public memory even for non-Christians. Fielding describes *Joseph Andrews* as a 'comic Epic-Poem in prose'(Preface,p.4): implies a paradox - epic isn't generally comic, wasn't written in prose and even if it was, he's just said it's a poem. Comic comment on the reductive activity of 'pigeon-holing' literary works but suggests the range of the novel - panoramic - dealing, however comically, with human nature - vast array of characters from all walks of life and important institutions of society eg law, so there is a sort of epic grandeur in terms of thematic concerns.

Epic motifs in the novel underline this literary influence:

Adams is compared to Hercules: we read that he had 'Strength of a Wrist, which Hercules would not have been ashamed of'(I,ch.17,p.74). Indeed, he usurps the role of hero in II,ch.9, when he rescues Fanny, amusingly using appropriately heroic language which in this context becomes somewhat absurd: 'Be of good cheer, Damsel...you are no longer in danger of your Ravisher, who, I am terribly afraid, lies dead at my feet'(p.124), thus recovering a potentially tragic situation for comedy. Hercules was a Greek hero, depicted as a strong man with a lion-skin and club; Adams's stick may represent in comic terms Hercules' club. Hercules was often represented as a comic figure on stage but, traditionally, he embodies ideals of heroic masculine virtue and strength.

Joseph is also related to the figure of Hercules: there are a number of references to his strength, eg. 'His limbs were put together with great Elegance and no less Strength'(I,ch.8,p.33) and 'expert...Cudgel-playing'(I,xii,p.45). He is likened to Hercules when we read, Slipslop, we read, 'would not venture her Place [or job] for any Adonis or Hercules'(I,vii,p.31). See ch.8,pp.33-4 for description of Joseph - usually get detailed physical descriptions of heroines, not heroes - reflects the fact that Joseph is pursued as a love interest as well as pursuing. Joseph reflects the elements of both masculine virtue, (albeit not always very heroically!) and the figure of comic drama. NB the purpose of such classical allusions is to give Adams and particularly Joseph, a degree of dignity and an air of masculine strength to make them attractive to the reader and to render Joseph a believable love interest for Lady Booby and Fanny.

Fanny is described in II,ch.12,p.136. She's 19 and attractive but not perfect: plump, slightly uneven teeth and marked, albeit not badly, by smallpox. Her complexion is 'a little injured by the Sun, but overspread with such a Bloom, that the finest Ladies would have exchanged all their White for it'. She's not perfect in terms of romantic conventions of beauty (cf Shakespeare's 'My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun') but she has a natural, healthy beauty, 'a Sensibility [which] appeared almost incredible; and a Sweetness...beyond either Imitation or Description', together with 'a natural Gentility'(II,ch.12,p.137).

The myth of what became known as 'the choice of Hercules' was very popular in the eighteenth century and it is possible that Fielding is making allusion to it. Xenophon (Greek historian and essayist 4th/5th century BC) narrates the story in his *Memorabilia*: the young Hercules, sitting at a crossroads, is approached by two women: Vice/Pleasure and Virtue. Vice offers him a life of luxury and Virtue offers him a rather more difficult life of virtuous activity. Hercules chooses the path of virtue. The parallel with Joseph refusing the wealthy Lady Booby and seeking a life of virtue, embodied in Fanny, is easy to draw and underlines the structure of epic motifs running through the novel but I would argue that the parallel with *Pamela* is much more important within both the novel's structural and its thematic framework.

There is also a comparison to be made with Homer's *Odyssey* (Homer = 9th century BC). It has been suggested that Joseph and Adams's journey is in some sense an odyssey: both journeys trace the progress of a man towards his home through hardships after incurring the wrath of a superior (Poseidon and Lady Booby). Adams's visit to Trulliber, who keeps pigs (II,xiv), parallels Ulysses' visit to the swineherd Eumaeus in *Odyssey* ch.xiv. Eumaeus was charitable to Ulysses and so possibly provides an ironic comment on Trulliber, who talks a lot about charity but does nothing, also embodying a criticism of contemporary society and its concern for talking about virtue and social goodness but its lack of action. See II,ch.14 and ch.15: Parson Trulliber is 'reputed a Man of great Charity: for tho' he never gave a Farthing, he had always that Word in his Mouth'(II,ch.15,p.152). Lady Booby's love for Joseph parallels Calypso's love for Ulysses; both women are forced to give the men up (it is perhaps worth noting that Ulysses does not resist Calypso in the way Joseph resists Lady Booby!). Another possible parallel occurs when Joseph is robbed and stripped and thrown in a ditch; a coach passes and the passengers are persuaded to be charitable towards him (ch.12,pp.45-7) (notably, the lad who is most charitable, giving Joseph his coat, is subsequently transported for robbing a hen-roost). Ulysses is rescued by Nausicaa who arrives in a wagon. These allusions do not provide a sustained classical framework as we find for example in Joyce's *Ulysses* but, yet again, they give breadth to the novel and dignity to the characters.

Picaresque

The Spanish picaro, originating in the 16th century, was a character from low life, often a scoundrel. The term came to be applied to anyone at odds with society eg Fielding's Tom Jones - illegitimate. The picaresque novel, which began in England with Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594), is an episodic narrative describing the progress of the picaro eg. Defoe's *Moll Flanders*, Smollett's *Roderick Random*. We can see the influence in *Joseph Andrews*, which follows his adventures – he's outside society at times in that he's from lower classes and up against the law on a couple of occasions.

Satire, notably 'Scriblerian'.

The Scriblerus Club, formed about 1713. Members included Swift, Pope, Gay and Congreve. Tory intellectuals and writers met in London to discuss contemporary topics. They invented the character Martinus Scriblerus, a pedantic hack. They satirised bad taste, irrationality eg in legal or political system and political exploitation. Hence the advent of the term 'Scriblerian'. *Joseph Andrews* clearly has a strong satiric bent.

You might want to look at III,ch.1. Fielding comments, 'I describe not Men, but Manners; not an Individual, but a Species...I have writ little more than I have seen'(III,ch.1,p.168). He distinguishes between the satirist and the libeller: the satirist 'hold[s] 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'(pp.168-9). The satirist 'privately corrects the Fault for the Benefit of the Person, like a Parent'; the libeller 'publicly exposes the Person himself, as an Example to others, like an Executioner'(p.169).

Cultural Context

Chastity

Bernard Mandeville argued in 1723 that honour, a word used almost synonymously with virtue or chastity, is 'a Chimera...an Invention of Moralists and Politicians', which 'signifies a certain Principle of Vertue not related to Religion'. [Bernard Mandeville, *Remarks added to The Fable of the Bees* (1714) in 1723, edited by Philip Harth, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970, p.212.] While Mandeville is deliberately provocative and so not an entirely reliable mouthpiece for eighteenth-century thinking, he does highlight the disparity between twentieth century assumptions concerning eighteenth-century virtue and those which actually framed eighteenth-century behaviour. Eighteenth-century legislators did not simply translate moral concerns into law. Eighteenth-century concepts of virtue are surprisingly pragmatic and are predicated not on religious ethics as we might expect but on issues of power and property, which were often related by way of inheritance law.

Female virtue was defined almost exclusively in terms of chastity, a term which ostensibly indicated many moral qualities but which ultimately ensured that brides would be pure and that heirs would thus be legitimate. Chastity was required far more insistently of gentlewomen than of those lower down the social scale, where the transmission of property was less at issue. The legal double standard thus valorised and encouraged the obedient, silent, chaste wife and allowed the male to be as immoral as he pleased. Virtue was one of the most important issues in an eighteenth-century woman's life because it helped determine marriage opportunities and therefore her economic situation for life. It's perhaps difficult for twentieth-century readers to understand the importance of this issue in eighteenth-century terms and thus its popularity in novels, which exploited popular concerns. Women had almost no realistic work opportunities, particularly if they were from the upper classes - they weren't educated to do anything but get married - not prepared for a life of work. This was also the case with many middle class daughters - quite a problem for parents who couldn't afford a large dowry but wanted daughters to marry well. Such women usually either became governesses, which was a pretty dreadful position most of the time, being treated as a quasi-servant by people who may have been from the same social background; or they married tradesmen who may have wanted to climb the social ladder. The essential problem was that women were brought up to marry for economic support. Writers such as Defoe argued that for this reason marriage was in effect a kind of prostitution for some women. The story of Leonora in *Joseph Andrews* acts as a warning against mercenary marriage choices, with Leonora left with neither her beloved Horatio nor Bellarmine's fortune. See II, ch.4, pp.90-104; ch.6, pp.111-5.

Moral issues tend to be viewed by literary commentators purely as narrative strategies within a sentimental framework, for example, poverty may usefully be described as the test of the sentimental man, for example Fielding's Heartfree in *Jonathan Wild*, Sarah Fielding's David Simple or Goldsmith's Dr Primrose, but sexual assault is the test of the sentimental woman, most famously Pamela and most infamously, Shamela. For this reason, fiction often reflects the teachings of conduct books, warning women against masculine wiles! Fielding lampoons such teachings. See *Joseph Andrews* IV, ch.7, pp.268-70: '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 Traitor, point at her, and hunt her out of their Society'(p.268). Lady Booby tells Slipslop that she did not allow 'herself indecent Liberties, even with a Husband'(p.266).

Immediate Literary Context

Joseph Andrews cannot be properly understood and appreciated without reference to its predecessors *Pamela* (1740) and, to a lesser extent, *Shamela* (1741).

Editions used: Samuel Richardson, *Pamela* (1740), edited by Peter Sabor, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985; Henry Fielding, *Shamela* (1741), edited by Douglas Brooks-Davies, Oxford: oxford University Press, 1970.

In *Pamela*, Richardson transposes the popular romantic convention of heroines protecting their chastity into a seemingly incongruous area: the lower class. Pamela was Mr B's mother's servant; when his

mother dies, she works for him. Pamela herself recognises society's economic evaluation of virtue: '*poor* peoples virtue is to go for nothing'(p.172). Sir Simon sums up attitudes to rape of the lower classes: he argues Mr B 'hurts no *family*' (p.172) by trying to seduce Pamela. Richardson and some would argue, male writers of all eras, isolate chastity as the essential element of femininity. This attitude, while no doubt partly based on ideas of mythologised feminine purity, is also derived from property laws. Pamela's insistence on seeing Mr B's sexual attempts in moral terms is comic to the other characters but it enables Richardson to question society's view of virtue and to expose its property origins, revealing a servant's virtue to have some value, even though property does not depend on it. Pamela herself seems to concentrate on chastity, which Fielding lampoons in *Shamela* as the famous 'diminutive mere Grain of Mustard-seed'(Shamela, Parson Tickletext's letter at the beg. p.322), ie. something taken out of proportion until it becomes absurd.

However, *Pamela's* sub-title, *Virtue Rewarded*, provides a key to the way Richardson wishes us to interpret the novel. The Preface tells us that the intention is 'to inculcate *religion* and *morality* in so easy and agreeable a manner, as shall render them equally *delightful* and *profitable*'(p.31). Such a Preface owes much to literary convention but Richardson does seem to have genuine moral concerns; it is reasonable to assume that he intended Pamela to appear virtuous. Indeed he argues that the novel is designed 'to give *practical* examples, worthy to be followed in the most *critical* and *affecting* cases, by the *virgin*, the *bride*, and the *wife*'(p.31).

However, Pamela's behaviour and running commentary on her chastity, which in itself seems somewhat inappropriate and rather too 'knowing' for an innocent, give rise to some misgivings on the part of the reader, who may share Mr B's feeling that her behaviour may be somewhat 'stage-managed'. Fainting is associated with romantic heroines, not servants: Pamela is appropriating the genteel behaviour of women from a higher social sphere - it could be interpreted as a form of social pretension. As such, Mr B is both amused and frustrated by it. Pamela is always aware of her 'audience' and her propensity for fainting could be seen as playing to that audience: Mr B comments, 'she has a lucky knack of falling into fits when she pleases'(p.98).

The convention of heroines fainting is worth noting briefly as the objective correlative of eighteenth-century society's hypocritical notions of virtue, which mask concern for property with apparent moral delicacy. [Objective correlative is a term coined by T.S.Eliot: a situation, set of objects or chain of events which evokes a particular emotion.] Fielding lampoons such behaviour in *Shamela*, who, as her name suggests, uses sham fits to manipulate situations, openly admitting her subterfuge to the reader: 'imagining I had continu'd long enough for my purpose in the sham Fit, I began to move my Eyes, to loosen my Teeth'(p.349). Shamela embodies criticisms of Pamela's seemingly calculating awareness of the social advantages of virtue. She feigns reticence and fear because such things were thought to indicate feminine virtue. Fielding criticised the social hypocrisy engendered by such ideals, commenting wryly in *Tom Jones* (1749), 'how extremely natural virtue is to the fair sex...virtue they can all admirably well put on; and as well those individuals who have it not, as those who possess it'(pp.473-4). In *Shamela* the words 'feign', 'pretend' and 'act' are frequently used in relation to Shamela, suggesting that her ostensibly moral behaviour is mere posturing.

One of the reasons *Pamela* was so widely criticised was that it was thought to encourage young women of the lower classes to make a great show of chastity and rather than remaining chaste for moral reasons, to do so in order to try to ensnare their employer. Parson Oliver articulates such objections in his letter to Parson Tickletext at the beginning of *Shamela*, playing on the fact that Richardson argued that the novel provided moral teaching suitable for young women: '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'(p.324).

Pamela was tremendously successful. People were frightened that, rather than simply seeking to be pure for moral reasons, young women would affect purity rather calculatedly for financial gain. Shamela is to be interpreted partly within this context; she makes the link between prostitution and marriage overtly: 'I thought once of making a little Fortune by my Person', that is, by prostitution, 'I now intend to make a great

one by my Vartue'(p.342) because if she remains chaste, she may be able to marry Squire Booby and make more money than she could by prostitution. Interestingly, Shamela doesn't use the word 'virtue'; the corruption of the word to the vulgar sounding 'vartue' reflects contemporary society's corruption and vulgarisation of the concept of virtue, which should denote spiritual and moral excellence but which was reduced to physical chastity. In a sense society's definition of virtue was a 'sham'; hence Shamela's name appropriately echoes Pamela's but reminds us of the potential latent hypocrisy.

When Fielding presents Pamela in *Joseph Andrews*, he capitalises on the ambiguities in Richardson's presentation of her: she appears vain and rather arrogant, telling Joseph that Fanny 'was' her equal in rank but that 'I am no longer *Pamela Andrews*, I am now this Gentleman's Lady, and as such am above her'(IV,ch.7,p.271). She even has the gall to tell her supposed brother, 'It would become you better...to pray for the Assistance of Grace against such a Passion, than to indulge it'(p.271) because she and Booby don't want to be related to someone of Fanny's lowly social status. Ironically of course, Fanny turns out to be her sister.

So - to recap - the discussion concerning the nature and protection of virtue ran throughout the century. Attitudes vary but writers show consistent discomfort, sometimes anger and at times dark amusement at the outrageousness of women's chastity being reduced to a property issue and of sexual misdemeanours being viewed, directly or otherwise, in terms of property. *Pamela*, *Shamela* and *Joseph Andrews* are only three of the novels involved in this debate. In *Shamela*, Fielding exposes the problem of hypocrisy inherent in the reduction of virtue to physical chastity, as embodied by Pamela, but he does not suggest an answer; in *Joseph Andrews*, he explores the possibility of an answer. Richardson was also wrestling with the problem of what constituted true virtue. In *Clarissa* (1747-8), ie. several years after *Pamela* and *Joseph Andrews*, he created a profoundly Christian heroine with none of the potential ambiguities of Pamela's behaviour; more usefully for our purposes, he also created a virtuous hero: Sir Charles Grandison.

Sir Charles Grandison (1753-4)

Edition used: Samuel Richardson, *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753-4), edited by Jocelyn Harris, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Richardson follows Christian as opposed to romance tradition in presenting the hero Grandison's chastity as part of his virtue. Charlotte, his sister, tells his beloved Harriet that he is 'virtuous, even, as I believe, to chastity'(V,p.497). Charlotte is clearly aware that chastity is considered to be a feminine virtue: 'I would not have my brother made the jest of one Sex, and the aversion of the other; and be thought so singular a young man'(V,p.497). Ideologies of masculine virtue had not changed by the end of the century, when Wollstonecraft noted in the polemical essay *Rights of Woman* (1792), 'in proportion as this regard for the reputation of chastity is prized by women, it is despised by men'. [Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), edited by Miriam Brody, London: Penguin, 1988, p.247.] Richardson suggests that Grandison is chaste but, in order not to compromise his status as hero, he is presented as adventurous and, unlike Joseph, he is flirtatious at times, which lessens the impact.

The essential difference between the two heroes lies in their social status. Grandison is an aristocrat and so can express his virtue actively: he can use his power and status for good and thus appear as the rescuing hero. Richardson is thus able to reconcile the demands of literary heroism with his concerns regarding virtuous behaviour in an often hypocritical social environment. Joseph, on the contrary, comes from a lower social echelon and cannot express his virtuous standards equally publicly. The narrative strategy of the novel underlines this: whereas Grandison consistently rescues people, Joseph sometimes needs to be rescued, for example when he is in trouble with the law. Grandison represents an ideal held by many during the period. Joseph Andrews has the same potential in terms of moral goodness but his behaviour, his sometimes excessive language, his social class and his blundering naivete render him a comic figure rather than an ideal. Richardson was writing a different kind of novel: *Sir Charles Grandison* is a novel of manners, a sentimental romance, not a satire with a picaresque flavour.

Fielding dealt with the same question of virtuous behaviour but with a comic eye: he wants to make us consider the issues raised in the figure of Joseph but refuses to commit himself. His concerns are aesthetic

as well as moral. With Richardson, the moral argument is uppermost but Fielding is also concerned with satirising a literary type (the pursued maiden and the good man rolled into one) and with making the reader laugh. For Richardson, the issue is perhaps too serious to laugh; for Fielding, laughter, or at least smirking, is a means of potentially serious evaluation and criticism. Grandison is Richardson's answer to the vexed question of what constitutes a 'good man'; Joseph Andrews is Fielding's answer to the same philosophical and ethical issue.

NB *Joseph Andrews* appeared in 1742; *Sir Charles Grandison* wasn't published until 1753-4. They're part of the same debate but *Grandison* is later.

Joseph Andrews (1742)

Joseph Andrews is a logical progression in the fictional debate concerning virtue. *Pamela* (1740) is satirised in feminine form in *Shamela* (1741) and then in masculine form in *Joseph* (1742). The humour of *Joseph Andrews* is predicated on the legal absurdity of a man worrying about his chastity. The debate concerning masculine honour or virtue was centuries old. The masculine equivalent of female honour or chastity, which protected family lineage, was actively defending the family name. Masculine virtue has roots in epic tales and traditions of heroism and is usually presented as something akin to Hotspur's romanticised and heroic concept of honour in Shakespeare's *I Henry IV*, often finding its expression in duelling. Hercules would fit into this context of active, masculine strength. Interestingly, Richardson's chaste hero, Sir Charles Grandison, is a skilful swordsman and so fulfils contemporary ideals of masculine virtue as well as Christian ethics.

In *Joseph*, Fielding lampoons Pamela, his supposed sister, but also questions the social concepts of virtue. Like Pamela, Joseph affects to dress simply. IV, ch.5, p.261: Joseph borrows some of the Squire's clothes, just as Pamela was given some of her mistress's clothing and 'was soon drest in the plainest Dress he could find, which was a blue Coat and Breeches, with a Gold Edging, and a red waistcoat with the same'(p.261). Like Pamela, Joseph appears a little vain; 'His Hair was cut after the newest Fashion, and became his chief Care'(I, ch.4, p.22) - more appropriate for a rich fop than a servant.

Joseph resists Lady Booby's sexual advances in a neat parody of Pamela's behaviour. In I, ch 5 Lady Booby is lying in bed and comments hopefully, 'I have trusted myself with a Man alone, naked in Bed; suppose you should have any wicked Intentions upon my Honour'. Joseph protests, somewhat fatuously, 'that he never had the least evil Design against her'(ch.5, p.25). His letter to Pamela parallels her letters to her family in Richardson's novel: it is apparently modest but the detail is inappropriate to true modesty and suggests some vanity. He comments, like Pamela, 'I never loved to tell the Secrets of my Master's Family'(I, ch.6, pp.26-7) but proceeds to do just that. Were it not for his constant protestations of innocence, we might be tempted to assume that the prurient detail suggested a rather more knowing character, as has been suggested of Pamela. Joseph writes: 'she ordered me to sit down by her Bed-side, when she was in naked Bed; and she held my Hand, and talked exactly as a Lady does to her Sweetheart'(p.27) which, he assures us, he only knows from seeing plays.

Lady Booby expostulates angrily, 'Did ever Mortal hear of a Man's Virtue! Did ever the greatest, or the gravest Men pretend to any of this Kind!'(I, ch.8, p.36). Clearly the answer to her rhetorical question is 'yes'. While seriously considering the issue of virtue, Fielding seems amused by the idea of a 'male-virgin' and enjoys playing with the incongruity. The term 'male-virgin' was sufficiently preposterous to be used as an insult. Richardson's Lovelace, a consummate rake, mocks Hickman, a good, albeit rather boring character in *Clarissa*, 'a male-virgin, I warrant!', commenting, 'women...like not novices'. [Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa* (1747-8), edited by Angus Ross, London: Penguin, 1985, p.802.] Fielding's Tom Jones, a likeable and slightly roguish character, does not 'pretend to the gift of chastity, more than [his] neighbours'. [*Tom Jones* (1749), Penguin, p.668.]

Fielding exposes this double standard satirically but never fatally. He presents playfully an issue which he knows will provoke amusement but serious questions are implied about masculine and feminine chastity. Joseph, being male, is less problematic than a female character and provides an alternative forum for discussion. Fielding is able to avoid the social implications of female chastity and can give free rein to his

humour. Joseph's comment 'I hope, I shall have more Resolution and more Grace than to part with my Virtue to any Lady upon Earth'(I,ch.10,p.41) satirises Pamela and the strict notion of virtue as chastity which she embodies but its comic context precludes us from taking him too seriously. Many eighteenth-century readers would have been amused by the idea of a 'male-virgin' but Fielding does little to dispel their amusement, unlike Richardson in *Sir Charles Grandison*.

Joseph's position as a serious commentator on virtue is undermined by his comic presentation: he argues that he 'is the Brother of *Pamela*, and would be ashamed, that the Chastity of his Family, which is preserved in her, should be stained in him'(I,ch.8,p.36) - he is ostensibly her brother. It would be obvious to an eighteenth-century reader that the 'stain' he is referring to is connected with patrilineal inheritance: his comment is absurd because as a male, he will not be bearing heirs and so his family cannot be 'stained' by his behaviour; he sees the stain as moral and Fielding seems to have some sympathy for this but it is a legal and social absurdity. When Joseph comments, 'What Riches, or Honours, or Pleasures can make us amends for the Loss of Innocence?'(I,ch.13,p.52), he breaks down into a parody of Pamela, rendering his argument amusing rather than convincing. Joseph is constantly pursued by women but Fielding recognises the essential difference between his situation and that of Pamela: as a male 'his Chastity is always in his own power'(p.76). Hence when Betty's passion 'mastered both her Modesty and her Reason', Joseph is able to take 'her in his Arms' and 'shut her out of the Room'(I,ch.18,p.76).

Joseph Andrews questions the definition of virtue, clearly bearing its property basis in mind. Sometimes playfully, sometimes seriously, Fielding advocates the importance of male virtue in Christian terms: charity, long-suffering, even chastity.

The second lecture will look at Joseph as hero and the novel's socio-legal critique.

© Dr Beth Swan, www.english-lecturer.co.uk