

Professor M. Byron Raizis  
Chair of English Literature

## THE INDIVIDUAL VS SOCIETY IN *PAMELA* AND *TOM JONES*

In the "epistle dedicatory" to his patron, the Honourable George Lyttleton, which Henry Fielding "prefixed" to *The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling* (1749), the playwright-turned-novelist assured that gentleman that the reader would find nothing in his book which could be "prejudicial to the cause of religion and virtue..." and he added: "On the contrary, I declare, that to recommend goodness and innocence hath been my sincere endeavour in this story."<sup>1</sup> This is the assertion of a moralist, above all else, despite the fact that his story contained many amorous and daring scenes that prudes and prejudiced readers might misconstrue as intrinsically indecent.

But *Tom Jones* is much more than a didactic book, if that was indeed Fielding's intention. Andrew Wright correctly observes that one of the interruptions of the narrative by Partridge, "prevents the moralizing from making of *Tom Jones* what Fielding does not believe in, a novel with a moral."<sup>2</sup> Professor Wright's refusal to consider the novel on the premises of its own author is, in its turn, contradicted by Elizabeth Drew who accepts Fielding's claim, with the added qualification: "His aim, though, is not narrowly didactic, but broadly humane."<sup>3</sup> Indeed, a comedy is directed at

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1. Henry Fielding, *Tom Jones. An Authoritative Text, Contemporary Reactions, Criticism.* Edited by Sheridan Baker (New York: W.W. Norton, 1973), p. 7.

2. Andrew Wright, *Henry Fielding: Mask and Feast* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1965), p. 37.

3. Elizabeth Drew, *The English Novel: A Modern Guide to Fifteen English Masterpieces* (New York: Dell, 1963), p. 63.

human nature whose vices, follies, and hypocrisies it explores, exposes, exploits, and ridicules. Tom is human nature as the author would have it be.<sup>4</sup> As such, he has the intrinsic ability to finally overcome all odds and survive in a world where his personal weaknesses — and they are many — are miniscule in comparison to the villainy and corruption of his adversaries and temptors.

Avoiding, then, the very general and, at times, misleading labels “moralizing” and “didactic,” we should examine *Tom Jones* in terms of its hero’s confrontation of society, of the world that consists of the good, evil, or indifferent persons who belong to the same class as he, or to a lower or a higher one, in order to realize which segments of society Fielding wanted to expose as imperfect and in bad need of reform. In the process we will conclude that his favorite targets of satire were not exactly social classes and institutions (church, education, courts etc.), but perverted and base human agents of the same, grotesque and ridiculous exemplars of excesses.

Henry Fielding had not started his literary career as a novelist. His early writing was for the stage, and his successful and daring comedies and satires — often aimed at the Wolpole administration — ironically contributed to the passing of the 1737 Licensing Act which closed London theatres and forced the comedian to turn to fiction, journalism, and law practice in order to find new media to express himself and to satisfy his creative and critical urges. He was actually sworn in as Justice of the Peace for Westminster and Middlesex just before the publication of *Tom Jones*, and he was a diligent and effective judge.<sup>5</sup>

In his capacity as a justice Fielding came to acquire a first-hand knowledge of human character and of the social ills that plagued England of his time. In his study of English prose fiction Walter Allen asserts that “Fielding’s work was, with that of his friend Hogarth, the most powerful artistic expression of the social conscience of the age. It is not easy to overrate the brutality and squalor of much of eighteenth-century life.”<sup>6</sup> Indeed, those who have seen Hogarth’s engravings with their exaggerated realism of street scenes in London’s poor districts obtain a most vivid visual impression of backgrounds and settings, as it were, that conditioned the character and behaviour of the weak and the poor, the *lumpen proletariat* of the age.

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4. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

5. George Sherburn, “Introduction,” *The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling*, by Henry Fielding (New York: Modern Library, n.d.), p. vi.

6. Walter Allen, *The English Novel* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1958), p. 45.

Fielding came from an aristocratic family of judges and generals. His education at Eton and the University of Leyden, Holland,<sup>7</sup> familiarized him with the classics and offered him criteria for the judgment of human character and social institutions. He could not tolerate cant and affectation — just like Lord Byron three generations later — and, as he once wrote: “the only source of the true ridiculous... is affectation,”<sup>8</sup> — a statement that explains one of his predilections as a satirist.

To all these reasons, however, for Fielding's becoming a novelist we must add one more, perhaps a very significant one: the publication in 1740 of Samuel Richardson's epistolary novel *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded*. In most respects Richardson was the very opposite of Fielding. He was not an aristocrat, but a tradesman, a successful printer to the House of Commons. His education was informal and limited by comparison to Fielding's. Through marriage to the daughter of his master, while still an apprentice, and through his industry and seriousness, he prospered quickly and became a stockholder and officer in the Company of Stationers (printers and book-sellers) of the capital. Two of his colleagues and friends commissioned him, in 1739, to prepare a collection of “Familiar Letters” which would be used as a model of letter writing to “country readers.”<sup>9</sup> This *epistolarium*, as these popular publications were known in eighteenth-century Greece, would also be a kind of guide “to moral life,” primarily addressed to young women who had then to leave their homes and seek employment far from their impoverished relatives and homes. Richardson wrote one hundred-and-seventy-three letters for it and even incorporated the experiences of a young woman he knew whose difficulties and adventures offered both to the whole, excitement as well as a specific case for illustration. In the process of working on this project the imaginative printer discovered that he could give the *epistolarium* the form of a novel, with colourful characters, a plot, a moral, instead of just a collection of letters for several occasions. So he embarked on shaping his *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* which he completed in 1740, and it became “immediately and overwhelmingly successful.”<sup>10</sup> Thus Richardson the tradesman found himself a novelist by accident, just as Fielding the playwright was to find himself a novelist soon afterwards.

As Katherine Hornbreak pointed out,<sup>11</sup> Richardson was overwhelmingly

7. Sherburn, p. vi.

8. Allen, p. 47.

9. William M. Sale, Jr., “Introduction,” *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded*, by Samuel Richardson (New York: W.W. Norton, 1958), p. v.

10. Allen, p. 32.

11. As reported by Professor Sale, p. vi.

on the side of women whose interests and concerns he dramatized in *Pamela* and in his second and longer novel, *Clarissa Harlowe* (1748), the longest novel in English.

The suspense created in Richardson's fiction, through what Walter Allen was to call "the principle of procrastinated rape,"<sup>12</sup> and his somewhat hypocritical view of sex made Henry Fielding react almost immediately. As Harrison Steeves puts it, "Yet in a very definite sense Richardson accounts for Fielding. What principally induced Fielding to write fiction after a long and fairly successful career as a playwright was his feeling that Richardson and his *Pamela* were ridiculous and his judgment of people and conduct false."<sup>13</sup> Both men became novelists by accident in the first place, and we might add that the first "begot" the second through an inevitable process akin to the action-reaction, or cause-effect, pattern of occurrences. Their subsequent literary career was to establish a pattern of rivalry comparable to the Ibsen-Strindberg rivalry in the 1880s, as both pairs of contemporaries advocated pole apart views vis-à-vis the plight of women or their treachery.<sup>14</sup>

Fielding's first, and anonymous, attack on Richardson and his celebrated heroine was *An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews* (1741) — and I am tempted to believe that he pronounced her name *shame-la* — a parody of the mannerisms and themes of his rival. This was followed by *Joseph Andrews* (1742), a charming and entertaining story which — reversing the situation in *Pamela*, presenting the plight of a virtuous footman harrassed by his aggressive mistress — paved the way, in a manner of speaking, for the timely arrival of *Tom Jones* a year later.

After this brief examination of the characters and backgrounds of these two writers, and before we look into the issue of how their protagonists confronted the machinations and malice of society, we must conclude that Richardson and Fielding represent the two extremes of the creative impulse in literature: Richardson is the novelist of sensibility and of internal emotions; a conservative and puritanical moralizer for the ascending class of people who aspired to what today we consider middle class. He is a spokesman for women struggling to survive with dignity in a man's world; yet he is no feminist by any modern standards. Fielding, on the contrary, is a

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12. Allen, p. 33.

13. Harrison R. Steeves, *Before Jane Austen: The Shaping of the English Novel in the Eighteenth Century* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1966), p. 103.

14: August Strindberg published *The Father* (1887), a reply to Henric Ibsen's drama of the emancipated woman, *A Doll's House* (1897). See Robert Brustein, *The Theatre of Revolt* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1964), p. 105.

man's man — Professor Steeves calls him "a manly man"<sup>15</sup> — an author with a more natural and honest view of sex, a man with external emotions, some sentimentality, and with every intention to ridicule epistolomania as a narrative method in fiction.

Critics have mentioned Gervantes's *Don Quixote* and the picaresque novel in general as models for Fielding's "prose epic,"<sup>16</sup> but Stuart Miller, in his treatise on that genre, questions that classification of *Tom Jones*.<sup>17</sup> By contrast, *Pamela*, in terms of setting, kind of action, and characterization is as far away from the epic and picaresque genres as one can imagine. Still, there is a certain point where both these writers seem to come close together: the attitude of society in general towards their heroes, or the issue of "the individual versus society." During the course of our discussion of certain details in *Pamela* and *Tom Jones*, and soon after its conclusion, this similarity will become apparent.

First, we must make clear what we mean by the term society, and what is our conception of it in this particular study. It seems to me that simplicity always helps the definition and illustration of a term. In these two works of fiction society consists of individuals who represent practically all walks of life, both sexes, and all ages. In terms of rank, society consists of 1) individuals who are socially inferior to the protagonist (hero, heroine); 2) of persons belonging to the same social level as the protagonist; and 3) of members of the ruling class, aristocracy, or of a higher social status than he (she).

I prefer this classification (and simple analysis) to the moralistic one of good and evil individuals, because it will enable us to proceed more systematically in our investigation, and to finish by drawing — as it were — a complete picture of society, of the whole range of characters cast in the two plots, and of the ways they treated the protagonists.

Richardson wrote *Pamela* with the aspiration, among other goals, to preach a secular sermon. And he was quite successful as a popular moralizer. On the other hand, Fielding, despite his assertions in the dedication to Lord Lyttleton, was interested in using his experience as a playwright, especially a comedian, who could manipulate many characters, and make the plot move from dramatic scene to hilarious episode with the skill and ease of a seasoned

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15. Steeves, pp. 103-130.

16. Dorothy Van Ghent, *The English Novel: Form and Function* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 62.

17. Stuart Miller, *The Picaresque Novel* (Cleveland and London: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1967), pp. 4 and 132.



artist, something that nobody had exhibited up to then in prose narratives meant for quality entertainment. He was much more interested in pleasing his readers, as he had pleased his audiences, rather than in edifying their moral beliefs. Play-acting, a little innocent speculating, and even calculated hypocrisy and affectation were among the means that decent Pamela had to resort to in the course of her honorable and defensive "war" against her young master. Affectation and all manner of devious behaviour were loathed by Fielding, and his satire had used them as primary targets. Criminal behaviour certainly upset him as much as it did Richardson. The way he felt about highway robbers, for instance, is indicative of his genuine concern about the brutal manners of his age, and of how much he wanted social reforms that would stamp out crime, or at least reduce it.<sup>18</sup>

It is important to remember that the social profile of England in the early and middle eighteenth century was quite different from what it is now, or was right after the end of World War II. Society was quite strictly divided into classes whose hierarchical order was respected by the majority of the population with almost as much zeal as the Hindus maintained their traditional separation into castes. Certainly, aristocrats by blood or by profession (military, higher clergy, etc.) were very eager to maintain their power and superiority at all costs. High-society members were almost omnipotent, since most public offices and professions of prestige were held by them. Statesmen, judges, magistrates, generals, admirals, bishops came mainly from noble families. Although the House of Commons in the Parliament could safeguard the most basic human rights of the lower classes, at least theoretically, it was the House of Lords that acted as a Supreme Court, as it still does.<sup>19</sup> Consequently any serious complaint directed against a member of the peerage, or any crime actually committed by a nobleman, would ultimately be judged by the politically active and invariably conservative Lords. The implications of this in the administration of justice to the underprivileged members of the lower classes are obvious. If a lower class person would dare appeal to a court against a nobleman who had wronged him (her), the case would be judged by a socially higher person whose sympathies, more often than not, would be on the side of the strong.

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18. V.S. Pritchett, *The Living Novel* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1946), p. 4; also, Allen, pp. 45-46. Fielding's genuine concern is also manifested in his pamphlet, *An Inquiry into the Cause of the Late Increase of Robbers*.

19. The "Habeas Corpus" Act of 1679 secured basic human rights. For details on the system of justice see B. Williams, *The Wig Supremacy, 1714-1766* (Oxford University Press, 1965), "English Local Government and the Law," pp. 58-67.

Actually in *Pamela* we encounter a glaring case of this predicament in the person of Mr. B—, the innocent maid's master, who engages in the lawless pursuit of the virtually defenseless girl, and commits kidnapping and illegal detention although he is a justice himself. It is interesting to see how Pamela reports his "siege and frontal attacks" in her letters, to note that the idea of denouncing Mr. B—'s behaviour to the authorities does not even enter her mind, although, relatively early in the story, she does contemplate leaving his household to return to her poor family in the country. Of course, Pamela is instinctively attracted to the young man, and certainly prefers a "brinkmanship" situation to an open and definitive breaking of relations with him. She writes the following to her parents:

He by force kissed my neck and lips; and said, Whoever blamed *Lucretia*? All the shame lay on the ravisher only: and I am content to take all the blame upon me, as I have already borne too great a share for what I have not deserved... He then put his hand in my bosom, and indignation gave me double strength, and I got loose from him by a sudden spring, and ran out of the room! and the next chamber being open, I made a shift to get into it, and threw to the door, and it locked after me; but he followed me so close, he got hold of my gown, and tore a piece off, which hung without the door; for the key was on the inside (Letter XV).<sup>20</sup>

This is clearly the behaviour of an unscrupulous young noble who knows that, because of his social position and profession, he is quite safe from the hands of the law. Things are not much different in *Tom Jones*. The benevolent and generous Squire Allworthy, another justice, is so naive and short-tempered that his judgment of character is almost always wrong, especially when he makes decisions on the basis of "circumstantial evidence" — as we might say — or after only a superficial examination of what seems to be the case. Thus, Allworthy cannot help disowning Jones after Blifil's constant machinations. The bad judgment of the squire certainly accounts for complication and development in the plot of the novel. He had failed "to fathom the designing characters of the two Blifils, to discern the bread-and-butter obsequiousness of Thwackum and Square, to detect the duplicity of his steward, Dowling, or to see the almost transparent dishonesty of his game-keeper, Black George."<sup>21</sup> Finally, Allworthy's unfair treatment of Partridge and Jenny Jones is "due again to his proneness to judge from

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20. *Pamela*, pp. 25–26.

21. Steeves, pp. 117–118.

externals and to rest upon the rightness of his own moral presumptions.”<sup>22</sup>

It is academic to speculate whether Richardson and Fielding intended to criticize the way Courts of Justices of the Peace operated those days in rendering equal justice under the law to persons from all levels of society. The fact remains, though, that Richardson's Mr. B—, and Fielding's Squire Allworthy act unlawfully, or without “due process,” and unfairly in both stories. The reader may reach his own conclusions about the intentions of the two authors — one of them being a conscientious and effective judge himself.

Taking all these into consideration, we should not be surprised that poor Pamela is only theoretically sympathized by her fellow servants in Mr. B—'s household. What could the other male and female servants do? Go to the authorities to lodge a complaint? Their unscrupulous master represented the authorities: as a justice of the peace he was the personification of law and order in their district, officially appointed by His Majesty's Government. The consequences would be predictable: harassment of their families and themselves, plus loss of their comfortable positions as servants in a wealthy house. They could even be arrested as seditious and rebellious against their noble employer.

Thus, righteous persons of the first category — of lower social rank than the heroine — could only secretly tell her a word of sympathy, or do something that somehow pleased and comforted the distressed girl without actually exposing themselves to one of the above-mentioned dangers.

On the other hand we must single out the behaviour and “double role” or a fellow servant, the footman John. He could not help doing Pamela wrong, not out of malice, but because he was bought by the young Squire, and unwillingly became his tool. Characters like John in *Pamela* and perhaps Black George in *Tom Jones* could be also examined in naturalistic terms, or even in Marxist ones, since their unsympathetic behaviour, or treachery, is the result of pressures of their masters and environment rather than of a natural inclination. The issue is, again, academic since neither novelist was aware of what we know as Marxism and Naturalism in the history of ideas. Human conscience in those days was a rather cheap commodity, an object of bargain perhaps more so than in our own century since the Enlightenment was yet to come. Children were abused as labourers by their own parents or masters for a few pennies a day, or even sold (traded) to tradesmen for a bottle of gin.<sup>23</sup> A generation later, William Blake eloquently dramatized the

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22. *Idem*.

23. Allen, p. 46.



plight of children labourers in moving poems like "The Chimney Sweeper" of his powerful collection *Songs of Experience*.

Society's attitudes toward the protagonist in the second category — of equal rank — are more interesting. With the notable exceptions of Jonathan, Longman, and a few others who are genuinely sympathetic to Pamela — as much as they could afford without taking undue risks — the other socially important upper-level servants in Mr. B—'s household are sharply divided in their conducts.

Mrs. Jarvis is the only human being who offers Pamela active and unqualified support under all circumstances. It is Mrs. Jarvis who is not afraid to openly confront her aggressive master, to accuse him of unbecoming actions and to defy his angry threats of dismissal from her excellent job and economic security. Her "foil," as it were, is Mrs. Jewkes, her exact opposite. She is bid to keep the young girl a virtual prisoner and treat her as such, but she is so zealous to please her boss that she actually turns poor Pamela's existence into a hellish torment. In terms of cruelty and wickedness that woman is second only to Lady Davers, and to Mr. B— in the first Part of the bulky book.

Also, it is not surprising to me that Pamela's old and poor parents can do almost nothing to actively assist their endangered daughter. The omnipotence of high society could not be challenged yet; their abuses could not be checked effectively. It took the dramatic events of the popular uprising in Paris in 1789, a generation later, to awaken simple people to demand their basic human rights, dignity, and equality under the law.

Before looking into the behaviour of the aristocracy, it would be convenient at this point to examine the role played by the clergy, the representatives of the established church. Two clergymen have parts — rather minor ones — in *Pamela*: Pastor Williams and Pastor Peters. Though activities and expostulations of these two divines occupy quite a few pages, as characters and agents both are quite ineffective, consequently unimportant. They cannot take any serious action to help, or to persuade others to come to Pamela's assistance. Without being indifferent, let alone corrupt, they are incapable to make morality prevail, or not daring enough. They are both eclipsed by the influence of the aristocracy, just as the Russian Orthodox clergy, much later, would fail to check the abuses of the ruling class in their own country and class-conscious society.

The third category — high society — is unquestionably Pamela's enemy No. 1. The first to be mentioned is the young Squire and Judge, Mr. B—, who daily thinks of a new stratagem to make her fall into his, now tender now brutal, trap. He is oblivious of his noble status and of the honourable

office he holds, does not seem to be aware of the French saying "noblesse oblige," and acts dishonourably if not outright criminally, toward an innocent and defenseless teenaged servant of his own household, against the directly expressed desires and admonitions of his dying mother, and against his promise to her to look after the maiden like a protector. Of course, his youthfulness, pride, and sexual urges are his big excuses. When he offers terms for a compromise he sounds quite like an unrepentant villain who makes things worse.

Richardson's obvious indictment of the aristocracy is further illustrated by the fact that Mr. B—'s sister, Lady Davers, and several other nobles and persons of importance, not only do not rebuke the erring Squire, but they consider the daily warfare between him and the girl — a struggle of scruple and principle versus their opposites — as something quite natural and even amusing.

The reader is moved by Pamela's honest complaint that her soul is of equal importance as the aristocrats', and someday everybody is going to be equally judged by the same "Great Judge." Most of these arrogant aristocrats and their snobbish ladies do not feel like treating Pamela decently even after her marriage to reformed Mr. B—. Most outstandingly inimical is always his obnoxious sister, Lady Davers, who reforms only toward the end of Part II and actually supports the young wife. The fact that eventually most of these nobles come to accept, and even to honestly befriend Mrs. Pamela B—, at the end, having been won by her charming and adorable character and looks, dignity, and unimpeachable virtue, by no means justifies their criminal indifference before the exchange of vows and during the early period of her life as a young matron.

Pamela's triumph was twofold: first she succeeded in turning a rake, a libertine, into an affectionate and serious husband; then she succeeded in breaking the formidable resistance of the nobility who were eager to keep her out of their elite circle. This is actually what made the host of Richardson's middle-class readers, especially the women, feel so enthusiastic about the heroine. Apart from the victory of her virtue, his readers eagerly applauded her social "promotion" as well. No wonder the middle-aged printer was lionized by so many class-conscious Englishmen of his time, and by so many intellectuals, and that the adventures of his heroine were discussed from pulpits or inspired painters to depict them in public buildings.<sup>24</sup> Pamela achieved her double triumph almost on her own. Her faith in God and her

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24. Diana Neill, *A Short History of the English Novel* (London: Macmillan, 1967), p. 63; also, Steeves, p. 53.

parents' sound moral principles helped her escape all dangers and temptations, and gave her the happiness she so much deserved.

Turning our attention once more to *Tom Jones*, we notice that category No. 1 characters are numerous and colourfully drawn. Mrs. Deborah is Tom's first enemy when he is but an innocent infant. Black George and his seductive daughter, Molly Seagrim, wrong Tom, later on, in the worst possible way despite the fact that he had been quite kind to both of them on several occasions, depriving himself of much-needed funds and dear objects which he generously gave them to assist them in their perennial penury and all manner of difficulties. Black George did not hesitate to purloin Tom's £500-note, and Molly did not hesitate to falsely declare him the father of her bastard. Partridge — an extremely successful character in his Sancho-Panza role when Jones acts like an itinerant and youthful Don Quixote en route to London — is of little help to him despite his concern. He is always with Jones, suffering or enjoying in their shared lot, but he lacks foresight and daring as he constantly urges the young hero to end his foolish (in Partridge's view) and dangerous trek and to return to the peace and safety of home.

Innkeepers, travellers, and soldiers are more or less equally divided in their friendly or hostile attitudes towards Tom Jones. One officer in particular is quite serious an enemy in the beginning of his adventure on the road. This pattern is maintained throughout the last part of the novel's tripartite structure — home, road, London.

We must consider the wonderful caricatures of Square, Thwackum, and Supple as belonging to the second category of characters — persons of equal social status to Tom's — since the adopted "foundling" cannot be classed with Allworthy's servants, nor can he be considered a member of the landed gentry on account of his, allegedly, dubious origin.

Like Richardson, Fielding, in the persons of these three pious hypocrites shows the prejudice of the religious and educational establishments — or at least of a part of them — against the poor and defenseless people who could not engage their professional services, and thus buy their loyalties. Square and Thwackum do not offer their "wares" gratis. When one cannot satisfy their greed — which is dramatized when they learn of the sums that the kindly Squire bequeaths to each of them — he is treated with contempt and hostility if the situation warrants it, according to their mercenary judgment.

As excellent defender of Tom, in the same category, is the righteous Mrs. Miller. Her speech to Mr. Allworthy shows her kindness of heart, gratitude, courage, and respect for justice. Nightingale and many other male and female characters — lovers or enemies of Tom — who may be classed as his social equals before the discovery of his identity, of course — add about

the same amount of fortune and misfortune; and although their numbers are large, they mutually neutralize each other rather easily. Again, the mercenary character, the man whose loyalty goes to the higher bidder, appears in the person of Mr Dowling, Allworthy's steward, who deems it advantageous to side with Blifil and become his tool to continue duping the gullible Squire.

*Tom Jones* is rich in high society characters and, in general, in individuals who rank higher than the hero. These characters belong to two distinct groups: the local "landed gentry," exemplified in the persons of the two Squires and their families; and in the persons of Lady Bellaston, Lord Fellamar, and the other aristocrats of the London milieu. As was the case in Richardson's *Pamela*, the latter are described in utterly unflattering terms; and their hypocrisy, criminal propensities, and affectation have become primary targets for Fielding's caustic satire.

One person in the first group whose weakness of character, callousness, and irresponsibility strike the reader as unbearable is Bridget Allworthy, the sister of the naive Squire and natural mother of Tom by an undiscussed father. None of her son's trials and tribulations would have taken place if she had the moral courage to confess her sexual escapade to her fond and generous brother instead of foisting the "foundling" on poor and helpless Jenny Jones. Couldn't this lady foresee the serious dangers and uncertain future she was forcing her own son to face inevitably by stigmatizing him as an illegitimate child of a socially-despised woman of a lower class? Even Miss Bridget's marriage to hypocritical Captain Blifil is an indication of this woman's weakness and poor judgment — both comparable to those of her brother whose kindness, however, she obviously lacked. Bridget is no vicious woman, but her behaviour toward unfortunate Tom constitutes the first wrong that he was to suffer from his social superiors, and, ironically, it had to come from his own irresponsible mother.

The two clan leaders, Allworthy and Western, a refined and an unrefined variations of the country-squire type, though diametrically different in idiosyncrasy, wisdom, and personal habits, treat Tom Jones with class-conscious severity when an opportunity arises. It is of little or no consequence to them that Tom had been bred and educated as a young gentleman; his naturally good manners, his thoughtfulness, his loyalty and respect for the families of the two Squires are easily put aside for the sake of safeguarding a narrowly conceived sense of social decorum. Even the fact that Tom had saved Sophia's life is forgotten by her rustic and ungrateful guardian. Not only is he not allowed to marry the girl he loves — who loves him, too — not only is he not forgiven for his brief affair with Molly and his *imbroglio* with the hypocritical Blifil, but he has to leave the place he has



known as his only home to embark on a life of insecurity, uncertainty, and all manner of dangers like an outcast, a scape-goat of Allworthy's unjustified ire and social prejudice.

Young Blifil's part in causing Tom's misfortunes is a remarkably large one. He is, as it were, the *primum mobile* that generates an almost endless series of ills to beset his half-brother. There is no worse, more wicked, and more disgusting character in the whole book; a "flat" character, indeed; one whose unchanging flatness provides a negative model for character comparison to underscore the natural goodness of Tom. Not exactly a "foil" to Tom in the Shakespearean sense of the term, Blifil is closer to the villain of Gothic and other melodramas that were to appear in the future.

On the other hand, the impetuous and often erratic Western is, basically, a sympathetic creature. Vivid, boisterous, rustic, imposing, this paradox of a mature man is perhaps a model of what Tom would have become if he had not been exposed to the salutary conditions of life that distinguished Allworthy's household from that of his "primitive" neighbour. Western and his sister are regular conservatives thus they could not be more flexible than the Allworthys when it came to allowing their only daughter to marry a shorttempered "foundling." Even the sweet and considerate Sophia cannot conceive of marrying the defamed youth, and strives hard to obliterate her warm feelings for Tom.

Squire Alloworthy, despite his many positive qualities, falls a victim to his gullibility and to the calumny and sadism of Blifil and his insensitive and unscrupulous tutors. Squire Western easily succumbs to his paternal affection and to his own social biases.

The second set of category No. 3 characters consists of the urban aristocrats — by contrast to the country squires — Lady Bellaston and Lord Fellamar of London. Fielding, not unlike his rival Richardson, reserves for these two nobles characterizations befitting incarnate devils. Their arrogance, corruption, and cruel selfishness are matched by their utter disregard for the basic human rights of those socially inferior to them. Lady Bellaston's machinations may remind us of Mr. B—'s ingenious stratagems to seduce Pamela. Lord Fellamar will use his money and influence to satisfy his ego and to inflict suffering on others. The ages of both further indict them as abusive and perverted social paragons, obviously more so than the gung and immature Mr. B— who, actually, does love Pamela and secretly admires the very qualities of the girl that his well-planned attacks fail to destroy. The utterly inimical behaviour of Bellaston and Fellamar to Tom Jones constitutes the last trial for the success or failure of the hero in his life adventure. Tom's ultimate triumph is the result of his natural kindness, and actually

crowns his struggle for a place under the sun after the climactic encounters in the morally-poluted milieu of urban intrigue.

In retrospect, we realize that Tom Jones manages to overcome a thousand-and-one obstacles of all kinds laid by people who belong to all three levels of the social hierarchy. He has very little help, if any, from others; in more than one ways he is more *alone* than Pamela was in the microcosm of Mr. B—'s manor house. Tom confronts, by comparison, a vast macrocosm. His geographic odyssey covers a considerable distance between the points of departure and of final vindication. Pamela's "agon" is staged in a static domestic setting, although its intensity matches that of Tom's. As a woman's champion Richardson has his heroine perform her homeric "aristeia" in a woman's natural environment (according to the belief of his times), the home. As a man's champion Fielding exposes his hero to the wide world of estate, the open road, and the imperial capital.

Just as Pamela's vindication is the result of her virtue, Tom Jones's generosity, chivalry, kindness, and bravery outbalance his juvenile mistakes and innocent sins. His love for, and interest in, his fellow men eventually bring to him his adored Sophy, the discovery of his identity, and the happy conclusion of his adventures. Fielding's book, just like that of Richardson, thus has a desirable and fitting end. After these observations and an analysis of the two protagonists' treatment by representative types of all social strata, we may draw a graph to illustrate our conclusions (see graph at end of paper)

Apparently there is a striking similarity in the way society in general treats the two young heroes, Tom Jones and Pamela Andrews. The fact must not mislead us to false conclusions as regards Richardson's and Fielding's conceptions of social justice and the need for reforms. When we look into their sociopolitical philosophies we find them once more opposing each other. Richardson, as Allen asserts, was a resolute Tory and did not conceive of justice in political terms. The class structure of the times did not bother him. "His protest was in the name of religion and morality."<sup>25</sup> Immoral and corrupt aristocrats bothered him, not aristocrats in general, nor England's social institutions. Fielding knew from his experience as a judge and from other sources that "the real canker of the age was: the prevalence, *at all levels of society*, of unconditioned and therefore *tyrannical power*"<sup>26</sup> (italics mine). His protest, we may say, was in the name of freedom from all manner of tyranny (educational, religious, political, and domestic) and equality under the law.

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25. Allen, p. 34.

26. Allen, p. 45.

The solution given in *Pamela*, from the social view point, seems revolutionary and provoking for its time. Yet Richardson did not advocate the abolition of class distinctions: his heroine was elevated, through her marriage, to a higher social rank. Her husband did not stoop to hers. As Professor Sale observes, Richardson's "new women were not looking for new men,"<sup>27</sup> that is, his heroine did not seek to marry a young man who had risen socially like herself. She was thankful to have married an aristocrat by birth.

Actually Pastor Peters acts as Richardson's mouthpiece in this respect when he explains that a man ennobles the woman he marries, be she who she will; and adopts her into his own social rank, be it what it will. This idea has limitations in its applicability, for, as we know, as late as in 1936 the popular King of England, Edward VIII, had to abdicate in order to marry the woman he loved, since her elevation to his rank was vigorously opposed by all political parties, including the socialist Labour Party of Clement Atlee.

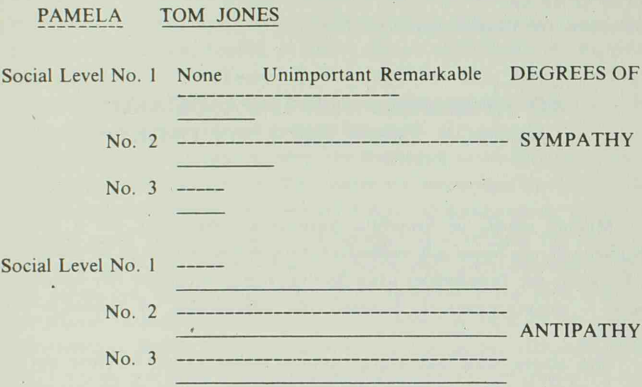
Fielding's solution in *Tom Jones*, on the other hand, is anything but revolutionary. A true Tory himself, like Richardson, Fielding would never have a foundling — no matter how talented and deserving — marry the daughter of a country squire. The young lady herself, though very much in love with the "foundling," does not dare think of such a radical step and she gives up all hopes and her beloved.

After all these observations and comments we come to the following overall conclusion: Tom Jones, badly mistreated by society in the beginning, in the end manages to win what he deserves in a sociopolitically neutral, if not conventional, way. He marries neither above nor below his true, natural rank as the nephew of a country squire. Pamela's marriage amounts to a promotion in the name of virtue. Tom's marriage amounts to a reward for proving what was his in the first place, his identity and decency.

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27. W.M. Sale, Jr., "Introduction", *Pamela*, p. xiv.

A Graph of Society's attitude towards the protagonists expressed in terms of sympathy and antipathy in three degrees.



It is noteworthy that Tom Jones passes through all three levels of society as an outcast, as a foundling, and finally as a squire's nephew.