ISSN 1799-2591
Theory and Practice in Language Studies, Vol. 13, No. 2, pp. 454-462, February 2023
DOI: https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1302.21

# Virtue and Progressive Ideology: Destabilizing Social Class in Richardson's *Pamela* and Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*

Tariq Jameel Alsoud
English Department, Tafila Technical University, Jordan

*Abstract*—**This essay investigates Richardson and Fielding's projection of social mobility and the intrinsic conditionality of virtue and honor that is essential for social transformation. Maintaining a virtuous status among morally corrupt people destabilizes the established stereotypical view of social hierarchy and incites some aristocratic people's passion for their servants, violating the consolidation of social class boundaries. Pursuant to the principles of the progressive ideology, some members of the upper class authoritatively thwart endeavors for upward mobility, except for social progression coupled with moral standing and good reputation that is propitiously received with communal acceptance and approbation. Therefore, the novels entail that values of good ethics, chastity, and piety become fundamental requirements for maintaining and enhancing social standing regardless of any prospective deterioration in the material situation. Both novels resist the ideology that honor as virtue is an inherited value that is vested in a certain class by ancestry and heredity. Contrary to this supposition, both contexts associate moral corruption with social degradation and document it historically to reform sinful practices and immodesty. Finally, the authors aspire for ideal societies where the holders of virtue and honor should be rewarded for resisting moral corruption, the allure of materialism, and the greed of capitalism.**

*Index Terms*—**temptation, chastity, transformation, stratification, hypocrisy**

## I. Introduction

Some eighteenth-century literature addresses issues of social mobility and class inequality that dominated the writings during that period, which Michael McKeon exclusively labels as "absolutism." This epoch distinctly indicates the transformation from late feudalism to early capitalism and the emergence of the middle class as a prominent incident that documents the spirit of the age. In *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740* (1987), McKeon investigates some discourses of social change that respond to the gray period between feudalism and capitalism and that destabilize social categorization and elude the dogmatism of stereotypes. He classifies the aspects of this transition under three indicative categories, which are "aristocratic ideology," "progressive ideology," and "conservative ideology" (McKeon, 1987, p. 21) that refer to disparate social stances on that change. This essay extends the discussion to include the relationship between socioeconomic transformation and the question of virtue and chastity as essential factors for social change, societal acceptance, and class resentment and resistance. It also investigates social mobility as a distinctive feature of the age that controversially distinguishes the English novel on its first inception, and it reflects on virtue, intact honor, and stigma avoidance as principal causes for changing social or professional status. The essay targets Samuel Richardson's *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded* (1740) and Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* (1742) as incentive subjects of the study and sheds light on the major characters who manage to find their way into other social levels, whether upward or downward mobility. The effects of the transformation in the economic system and changing powers are reflected in some social practices that synchronize with the disruption of social positions and relative ranks. The perceptions of this destabilization and the evolution of social systems heavily rely on new standards and criteria essential for organizing facts in this epistemological revolution that enable people to keep pace with the spirit of the age. Some of these perspectives are marked with indulgence and approbation regarding climbing the social ladder contingent on the availability of the required causes and conditions for this change, such as maintaining virtue and honor during confronting the depraved forces of evil and resisting the allure of materialism.

The eighteenth century was a critical period that witnessed a major shift in the development of the novel as a genre, where both Richardson and Fielding added remarkable contributions to the origin of the English novel through engaging in sensitive topics that deal with the provisional social mobility for instance. Although both authors did not create the long fiction form, they renovated the form, motivating some genre key devices, such as the combination of satire and ridicule follies, the incorporation of psychological realism, and the abundance of concrete details. As for the subject of virtue and piety and their relevance to sociological evolution, McKeon suggests three possible ideologies that debate the social situation prevailing in the eighteenth century and try to frame the attempts of enhancing the standard of living. The first concept for social distinctions is the "aristocratic ideology" in which "birth equals worth," and sometimes there is a closely related correlation, dislocation, or absence of equilibrium between them (McKeon, 1987, p.

© 2023 ACADEMY PUBLICATION

21). As stated in this ideology, "honor as virtue is an inherited characteristic" (McKeon, 1987, p. 131) and refers to a moral distinction among social classes. Based on this conception, if someone is wellborn, then this person is supposed to be virtuous by ancestry and heredity, so the entanglement of this proposition manifests in its presupposition that aristocracy is predetermined and is not possibly acquired.

Then, pursuant to "progressive ideology" (McKeon, 1987, p. 21), certain members of the upper class usually resist and thwart any endeavor and aspiration for switching social class upwardly. According to Caesar (2010), when Goldoni adapted *Pamela* for theatrical staging in Italy in 1750, he changed Pamela's class and background to present the audience with less radical inflection (p. 25), whereas Feilla (2002) documents jailing the author Neufchâteau and the theatrical staff after a spectator confused a monologue on virtue and religious tolerance for political moderatism when staging the novel in France in 1793 (p. 286). Despite everything, both novels show how crossing the frontier of social stratification has become approachable but immensely conditional. This newly emerging ideology responds to the dynamics and complexity of the new socioeconomic system but undermines the cohesive principles of the aristocratic ideology. It also indicates a self-determined act that is not predestined on human beings, where the virtuous person gets rewarded for maintaining virtue and honor in confronting morally corrupt powers and licentious people. While the aristocratic ideology focuses on birth and inheriting gentility and its superiority, the progressive ideology targets proper conduct and merits that become more substantial than the value of high birth. McKeon (1987) also debates stories of the successful "younger son" (p. 218) who disinherits legally but can claim an inheritance from his corrupted elder brother after death, or he can earn wealth in his own way and regain his aristocracy such as Orlando in Shakespeare's *As You Like It* (1623). Finally, the expression "conservative ideology" (McKeon, 1987, p. 21) responds to the aristocratic ideology but operates the same as the progressive ideology in terms of separating birth from worth. It states that elevated birth usually achieves or gets better education, companionability, and chances that are hardly possible for lowered birth. This ideology acknowledges that people from different classes are similar, but various circumstances and variables create a multiplicity of stratification; based on the ideal principles of the economic system, it is equal for all, so people should have equal chances.

## II. Discussion

According to the premises of the progressive ideology, both Richardson and Fielding address issues of social mobility, emphasizing the values of virtue and chastity as vital sources for social progression that is practically received with communal recognition and admiration. Gooding (1995) concludes that "there are signs that Richardson fears that he may have established a new model for the socially ambitious" (p. 113). However, Fielding's work is a counter-narrative that reproduces and cynically complements *Pamela*, which emphasizes virtue as a single source for social advancement amid a social circle that hardly ever acknowledges or appreciates the virtues of lower class members. Thus, *Joseph Andrews* is a satirical completion but also a negation of *Pamela*. Richardson's idealization of the virtuous Pamela Andrews burdens her with many immaculate merits that implicate elements of fairy tales, while Fielding's narrative seems more realistic that addresses the issue of virtue moderately in accordance with people's religiosity and public decency. Holm thinks that Fielding's parody responds to Richardson's enthusiastic attempts of reconstructing modernistic moral categories; therefore, "Fielding sees Richardson's Pamela as just such an idealized person, and little more than the animated projection of the author's own prejudice falsely legitimated with claims of authenticity" (Holm, 2010, p. 273). Fielding satirizes *Pamela* for the excessive virtues that would suggest sociopathic roguery and insinuate Machiavellian chicanery; he proposes that a human being may err and repent but to remain virtuous is preferable and generally desired.

Both writers endeavor to "tell the truth in narrative" (McKeon, 1987, p. 20) and reflect a realistic image of a new open-minded society that accepts change and keeps in line with the spirit of the age but with varied epistemological and technical strategies. Sorlin (2020) investigates Fielding's courteous treatment of readers as a soft communicative strategy and affirms that the narrator in *Joseph Andrews* tries to convince the reader with the narrative and ethical themes and assessments (p. 64). Telling the truth in narrative manifests when both novels tend to incorporate realistic images that contradict the involvement of romance and fairy tale elements when engaging in issues about destabilizing social classes. Richardson utilizes the epistolary style as dialogic that alters the mood of the novel and reveals the sincere intentions of the characters, so the narration flows directly without external intervention or omniscient agenda-setter. In contrast, Fielding employs the satirical technique to draw readers' attention to follies and faults, and much of his criticism and satire focuses mainly on the vices of the aristocrats who are constricted to some pseudo ideals. Eagleton (2005) evaluates Fielding's realistic narrative, clarifying, "When he assures the reader of *Joseph Andrews* that 'everything is copied from the Book of Nature', he means that his story is realistic precisely because it conveys general truths about men and women" (p. 57). Telling about a true history is an anti-romance feature that the eighteenth-century novel adopted, and it distinguishes the novel from the previous romance genre. Nevertheless, during the transformation process, some features still persist and indicate elements of romances as history since, generally, when a new genre emerges, it conditionally adopts some characteristics of the previous one even if temporally.

The procedures of acquiring and sustaining a virtuous status constitute one of the major authentic causes for social transformation in these novels, and what promotes virtue is maintaining noble morality after resisting ethical corruption, particularly withstanding sexual advances, lascivious attention, and sexual gratification. McKeon (1987) states that "the

© 2023 ACADEMY PUBLICATION

novel emerged in early modern England as a new literary fiction designed to engage the social and ethical problems the established literary fictions could no longer mediate" (p. 133). Therefore, *Pamela* and *Joseph Andrews* give prominence to chastity and modesty but from different perspectives despite the similar ending that emphasizes the nobility of the virtuous people. Holm converses about the question of morality in Fielding's works that renders them moral doctrines essential for the eighteenth-century reader. She thinks, "Questions of morality and understanding are familiar territory to Fielding scholarship, yet they are frequently approached with a view to articulating how Fielding attempts to indoctrinate his reader into specific moral doctrines" (Holm, 2010, p. 264). The conception of progressive ideology as a gate for socioeconomic prosperity is exemplified in the social mobility of the characters based on comprehending and embracing the codes of virtue, honor, and public decency as well as the ideals of the higher class. However, the novels reflect the persistence of status distinction alongside those of class, but sometimes the focus is not on the distinction itself, it is on the vices that engender or endanger it. Ultimately, the holder of virtue is usually rewarded for maintaining it in facing the greed of capitalism, the allure of materialism, and the corruption of morals, which are usually coexistent and compatible in these texts.

In confronting the moral turpitude of masters and ladies, both Pamela and Joseph Andrews analogously affirm a strict adherence to virtue and honor regardless of the wretched consequences. For example, Pamela assures her father, "I never will do any thing that shall bring your grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. I will die a thousand deaths, rather than be dishonest" (Richardson, 1740/2021, p. 7). On the other hand, Joseph says that "he would never imagine the least wicked thing against [his lady], and that he had rather die a thousand deaths than give her any reason to suspect him" (Fielding, 1742/2001, p. 71). As a contradiction to the moral hypocrisy that Fielding senses in *Pamela*, Joseph emulates Pamela's insistence on chastity through the emphasis on his ascetic premarital sexual orientation against the seduction of his lady, Lady Booby, and other sexually voracious women such as Mrs. Slipslop and Betty. Lady Booby's attempts of checking Joseph's sexual inclinations are analogous to Mr. B.'s efforts with Pamela, in which Joseph's reluctance stems from religious tendencies while Pamela's repudiation emanates from "virtuous education" (Richardson, 1740/2021, p. 19). In an advising letter with moral teachings from her parents, Pamela feels vulnerable to their suspicions regarding commitment to virtue and chastity, so she vows to die rather than sacrifice honor and become a victim of lust or commit any ethical vice. Harol (2004) associates exaggeration with hypocrisy, so she states that "Fielding and other satirists deem Pamela's own account of her virtue an unreliable body of evidence" (p. 199). Ideas about protecting honor do not come holistically from her parents; she acknowledges, "[M]y lady's goodness had put me to write and cast accounts, and made me a little expert at my needle, and otherwise qualified above my degree" (Richardson, 1740/2021, p. 3). In fact, Mr. Andrews cultivates Pamela's honor, she nurtures it, Lady B. patronizes it, and Mr. B. tries to abuse it.

Pamela and Joseph's similar ideological vein of thinking across different social and moral orientations exemplifies the first convergence between Richardson and Fielding regarding representing good manners in truthful narratives. The authors try to dissociate their narratives from the recursive elements of romances by engaging topics that consolidate the authentic truth in narration. Richardson's work tends to refute romance idealism and responds to absolutism, which is the transformation stage. McKeon (1987) thinks, "We are wrong to indict Richardson for naively depending on the fictions of romance. But just as he generally shares with Pamela a primary commitment to the truth of documentary historicity, so he inevitably participates … toward extreme skepticism" (p. 363). By "extreme skepticism," McKeon means rejecting the ideal romance elements in narrative even though some of these elements unintentionally slip into novels' structures. Hershinow (2014) attributes *Pamela*'s narrative and its major subject to "credulity," and wonders if readers can believe Pamela's account due to its "naive virtue" subject when a reformed rake becomes the most suitable husband (pp. 370-371). On another level, both authors insist on maintaining virtue in the face of capitalism through narratives, which began to slip gradually to dominate people's minds and shape their thinking and behavior accordingly. Moreover, they expose the follies and corruption that exist among upper class members and the remnants of the squires' authoritative attitudes toward servants.

Pamela and Joseph's adherence to virtue and good manners is one of the principal reasons that incites the love of the master or mistress, and they perform this commitment by breaking what Soni (2015) calls, "the confines of domesticity" (p. 162). McKeon evaluates the relationship between the existence of love stories in the new genre and how the power of name signifies lineage: "Like 'romance love,' the striking importance of naming in romance may be associated with 'telling the truth' by means that are rooted in the empirical but empowered by an essentialist authority" (McKeon, 1987, p. 38). Richardson and Fielding comply with the standards of the new genre but also by utilizing some elements of romance love. Therefore, Mr. B. and Lady Booby violate the stereotypical gentry practices and cling more to their servants when they notice their increasing ethics and adherence to integrity, especially when the spiritual aesthetic is accompanied by physical beauty. Mr. B. confirms to Mr. Brooks, "[H]er person made me her lover, but her mind made her my wife" (Richardson, 1740/2021, p. 325). Furthermore, the four ladies, Lady Arthur, Lady Brooks, Lady Towers, and the one with a hard name for Pamela to remember (Richardson, 1740/2021, p. 41), who only decide to visit Pamela after hearing of her beauty, acknowledge Pamela's excessive beauty and associate it with a genteel background and the suitability for social and economic uplift. Indeed, physical and spiritual beauties supplement each other in an idealized way, and this amalgamation renders Mr. B. and Lady Booby oblivious to the origins and legacy of their servants. This

© 2023 ACADEMY PUBLICATION

purposive harmony destabilizes social hierarchy and inherited traditions related to miscegenation and the incentives of intermarriage.

Lady Booby professes her deep passion for Joseph but remains quite nonchalant about the social or moral consequences of establishing an illegal relationship. In fact, "she loved him much more than she suspected" (Fielding, 1742/2001, p. 360), and her inclination exacerbates after "she viewed him in the dress and character of a gentleman" (Fielding, 1742/2001, p. 360). She postulates that Joseph's loyal relationship with Fanny Goodwill is the fundamental cause behind his refrain from indulging in a new affiliated love affair; therefore, she conducts a plan to separate them, using her social power and threatening that she will not gentrify the Andrews family. Toise (1996) believes that Joseph's rejection of his mistress's manipulation results from his commitment to Fanny, not to chastity (p. 411). Indeed, Mr. B. and Lady Booby exemplify the traditional flaw of the aristocrats in that they have a lack of restraint and are full of ignominious snobbery and excessive egoism. Progressive ideology targets the rapprochement between members of different stratification and the possibility of their convergence and marriage that entails social mobility when someone elevates his or her social class and demands inclusion in the new social circle.

Roxburgh (2012) supposes that Pamela's comportment of rejecting Mr. B.'s gifts and resisting his seduction is a shrewd technique to avoid involving in an illicit affair as a favorite mistress (p. 412), in which the prospect of establishing a sexual liaison can consolidate her low status permanently. Thus, suspecting her virtue insinuates the enterprise that "Mr B was duped into marrying beneath him by a woman only pretending virtue in order to achieve social mobility" (Roxburgh, 2012, p. 412). In contrast, Booker (2014) confirms that "Pamela's … marriage to Mr. B is (pointedly) the direct result of her refusal to attempt to transcend her station—in other words, what makes her worthy of social elevation is her 'virtuous' contentment with her place" (p. 42). Booker correlates Pamela's refrain from indulging in materialistic thinking and worldly matters with the entitlement to a leading social status as compensation for self-restraint and sacrifice of lustful desires. Nevertheless, Pamela uncovers her dark side of thinking when she reveals: "[I]f I was the lady of birth, … I don't know whether I would have him" (Richardson, 1740/2021, p. 36); therefore, accepting him as a life partner despite his debauchery traits becomes associated with social-climbing intentions. The Richardsonian ideology in the novel calls for the abolition of the stratification that is contingent on economic conditions and inheritance. Instead, Richardson proposes institutionalizing new divisions based on the moral state of a community accompanying the good material conditions as if the morals of the lower class have become a rare commodity. Preserving morality while confronting lascivious attentions and sexual hankerings idealizes servants in the eyes of their masters and becomes a new standard for the emergence of multiethnic marriage that shakes the foundations of customary stratification.

Fielding diverges from Richardson regarding intersectional marriage among different classes when he prevents the virtuous working class members from entering the corruptive realm of the aristocrats. Pamela's social and economic success constitutes a great and sudden change for her status and even for her family, and this advancement represents an example of the "progressive narrative" that invests her personality with discrete moral traits. She is a maidservant who finds her way into the upper class and becomes a source of endowment for the servants whom she firsthand feels their suffering and perceives their needs. Notably, "[b]y the end, Pamela comes to see her whole life justified by the final end of family continuance and beneficence" (Flint, 1989, p. 489). Moreover, as a drastic change that represents intragenerational mobility resulting from the beneficial repercussions of Pamela's marriage, Mr. B. appoints Mr. Andrews as an estate administrator in Kent after discharging his debts, so such a decision would establish his gentry status. This elevation in social rank becomes a model source of threat to the stability of the master-servant relationship since it involves the possibility of disobedience as a revolutionary act that would undermine the western metaphysics of hierarchy. Parkes (2007) argues that "Lady Booby's estate is indeed a confused space where social roles are muddled and the classes not properly distinguished" (p. 22). However, Fielding deliberately thwarts intermarriage and never grants Lady Booby an opportunity to marry Joseph since such marriage implicates degradation and blurs social boundaries. Instead, he designates Joseph to marry Fanny who is believed to be an orphan before discovering her real origins. Interclass marriage poses a major obstacle to inheritance and legacy, where if Mr. B. and Lady Booby supposedly get children from servants, their progeny will need legal recognition to inherit their parents' estates and properties. Mr. B.'s fears about his offspring's disinheritance dispel thinking about indulging in a sham marriage, and this concern frames his relationship with Sally Godfrey, his renounced mistress. Lady Booby wantonly makes sexual overtures to Joseph that set her an example of aristocratic moral corruption. Anyways, Joseph fails to reform her as Pamela does to Mr. B. when she succeeds in ceasing all his rakish tendencies by resistance and sexual advances through marriage.

The early death of Sir Thomas Booby and Lady B. provides free space for Lady Booby and Mr. B. to escape the legitimacy of familial or custodial authority and project their amorous intentions freely without censorship on morality. Yet, Lady Booby remains more sexually wicked and libidinous than Mr. B. as she sought gratification while her husband was still alive. Promptly after Sir Thomas's death, she "trusted [herself] with a man alone, naked in bed" (Fielding, 1742/2001, p. 71), but she can dissemble her lustful motives through manipulation and accusation. As a sarcastic turning point, his death also terminates her publicly "agreeable walks" (Fielding, 1742/2001, p. 70) with Joseph in Hyde Park, and it provides her with spatial freedom to make flirtation limited to the private sphere and render it secretive except for the servants. Her motives are purely sexual, which is an issue that Fielding dares to raise more

© 2023 ACADEMY PUBLICATION

openly than Richardson does, who is "essentially conservative, despite the upward mobility of his heroine" (Folkenflik, 1972, p. 585). Eagleton (2005) notices that "Fielding is renowned for his broad-mindedness: he can joke about sex as Richardson cannot" (p. 58). Fielding's narrative is characterized by honesty and frankness, and he exposes the corruption of the gentry when Lady Booby at some point does not intend to marry Joseph; unlike Mr. B. who expeditiously declares his marriage publicly after being attracted to Pamela's morality and beauty. Differently, Lady Booby's carnal love for Joseph reduces him to an object and indicates her concupiscence, dissimilar to Mr. B.'s real love that elevates Pamela on a human level as well. Fielding satires the vices of the upper class and focuses the incidents on Joseph's adventures and suffering as an underclass member, while Richardson emphasizes Pamela's prosperity and happiness when the nuptial ceremony takes place early in the novel, considering the fact that the speedy "marriage need not bring narrative to a halt" (Pritchard, 2017, p. 529). Nonetheless, Pamela needs to consolidate her marriage and maintain the new status by learning some social skills such as self-defense and by resisting the social snobbery that is represented by Lady Davers's arrogance.

Almost all of the sudden incidents that happen at the end of *Pamela* and *Joseph Andrews* imply the existence of the romance fairy tale elements since all complications are resolved promptly in unexpected ways. Despite Richardson and Fielding's attempts to move the English novel to a new different level, the endings of their novels succumb slightly to the romance elements. Eagleton (2005) states, "Whenever a new literary form appears on the scene, there are two main ways in which it can try to legitimate itself. Either it can point to its very newness as the source of its value, or it can appeal to tradition" (p. 53). In *Joseph Andrews*, the fairy tale elements manifest at the end through the sudden and mystifying appearance of the poor pedlar in several scenes to miraculously demystify vagueness and sharply manipulate the plot. For example, according to the pedlar's account who seems supernaturally omniscient, Joseph discovers his noble origin that he is not the successor of the Andrews; Fanny, the one who has suffered many unsuccessful sexual assaults like Richardson's Pamela, discovers that she is a sister of Fielding's Pamela. Fielding alters the ending when Joseph discovers his original high birth to balance the expectations of the eighteenth-century reader and the projection of the new genre elements. This new elite origin also elevates Fanny morally through marriage, as her sister, but not materialistically. This privilege marks her reward for experiencing the anguish of abduction and withstanding attempted molestations. By allocating Joseph among the gentry at the end, the narrative slips into the trap of traditionalism when Fielding vests good morals in members of the upper class. Such procedure does not bring justice to other virtuous characters such as Fanny who is rewarded for virtue by upward social mobility only through marriage, not by personal achievements.

Fielding makes a crucial connection between Joseph's virtue and his origin, and this relevance manifests in the pedlar's comment on Joseph's ancestry. The pedlar assures Joseph that "his parents were persons of much greater circumstances than those he had hitherto mistaken for such; for that he had been stolen from a gentleman's house" (Fielding, 1742/2001, p. 400). Fielding correlates honor to nobility and emphasizes religion as a source of virtue, so as the narrative proceeds, Joseph's ethics unfold to originate from a noble family that should be religious and chaste by default. Cruise (1997) explains how Fielding's heroes find their origins, proposing, "But whereas Pamela can positively earn her induction into the aristocratic sphere, Fielding's champions earn theirs by default" (p. 537). Different from Richardson's methodology, Joseph is rewarded for incorruptibility and rectitude through discovering his assets that descended from a decent lineage, not from gypsies as he has been misleadingly believed for a lifetime. In *Joseph Andrews*, parents recognize their sons only by birthmarks despite the existence of other marks and facts that exist all along. This great juncture in the events of the novel is analogous to the sudden changes in Pamela and her parents' lives and lineage, so these narratives support the theory of genre and the emergence of the novel due to engaging such elements.

Both novels excessively focus their thematic discourses on virtue and turpitude and give them a priority over any other subtopics; thus, Harol (2004) reduces *Pamela* to one central theme which is "the repeated attempts of the aristocratic Mr B. to rape his servant" (p. 197). The subject of maintaining virtue and honor can be extended to include the range of other characters than Pamela and Joseph in both works, who show their interest in this issue as well irrespective of whether they are socially rewarded or not. For example, the Andrews fear setting their daughter above her real social status, suspecting that this procedure may taint her chastity and lead to possible futuristic vices. Harol (2004) argues that even the "editor, like Pamela and her parents, initially uses 'virtue' as a synonym for virginity" (p. 208). The Andrews's suspicion represents the distrust of the upper class values and ideals; therefore, Mr. Andrews refrains from spending the four guineas until he substantiates that Pamela has not been paid for committing illegal or immoral actions that would hurt her chastity and thus endanger their reputations. Ingrassia focuses most of her study on how good reputation is conditionally essential for good credit in society. She believes that Pamela looks "like a trader in stocks, she scrupulously guards her reputation" (Ingrassia, 1998, p. 308), and any intimate encounters would threaten her credit. Receiving payment instead of shelter and other accommodation within the squire's domain of responsibility denotes Pamela's probable social mobility, so even though the idea of compensation obliges her to remain within the realm of her employer's properties, it insinuates experiencing some kind of financial independence as a precursor for capitalism.

Additionally, Mrs. Jervis, the housekeeper of Bedfordshire house, remains a virtuous woman and patronizes Pamela's morals as a more liberal extension of Lady B.'s attention. She once insists on escorting Pamela when Mr. B.

© 2023 ACADEMY PUBLICATION

gives her a closet of clothes lest her chastity is endangered if she remains unchaperoned with the squire. Although Pamela always connects old clothes with moral integrity that is essential for a good reputation, accepting the possessions of Lady B. indicates the substitution of her role and foreshadows her social transformation. Mrs. Jervis attributes the value of Pamela's physical beauty in the classy clothes as "the prettiest wench … ever" (Richardson, 1740/2021, p. 49) to an authoritative source of danger that equally threatens herself and jeopardizes the morals of men who interact with her. She confides her concerns to Pamela: "I believe truly, you owe some of your danger to the lovely appearance you made" (Richardson, 1740/2021, p. 49). Mrs. Jervis fears that Pamela's beauty can unintentionally enchant men and drag them to commit vices, and thus she confirms that Pamela is "too pretty to live in a bachelor's house" (Richardson, 1740/2021, p. 8). In accordance with Mrs. Jervis's misgivings, physical beauty is a double-edged sword; it can be a reason to elevate a social status, but it is possible to hurt self and others. As a resolution to the problem, Mrs. Jervis suggests that Pamela should live in the Davers' household as a sort of somatic exclusion and a precautious procedure to prevent any opportunity for a moral crime.

In *Joseph Andrews*, some characters emphasize the importance of public decency and proper appearance over other considerations such as charity. For instance, when two ruffians rob Joseph's money and strip his clothes, a lady on the stage-coach refuses to let him in as long as he is naked. Füger (2004) speculates about the coachman's reluctance to let Joseph in and associates the incident with "inveterate philanthropy" that is contingent on "moral scepticism" as a "cognitive double standards" technique of Fielding's narrative (p. 279). The lady who rejects nakedness represents a public opinion that considers propriety and prudery as leading priorities over survival. By broaching the codes of decent dress, Fielding reveals that immodesty is unforgivable even if it happens coercively, and he emphasizes people's religiosity as a major source of decency and ethics. Similar to Pamela who receives moral and social-behavioral education from Lady B., Joseph learns through Mr. Abraham Adams's lessons of self-discipline and piety. Mr. Adams tests Joseph's knowledge of the Bible and discovers that he has been a well-informed autodidact because of having received formal education. Receiving formal education is exclusively accessible to upper class members, and accessing it signals the notions of good "birth and worth." Through one of Mr. Adams's sayings, Fielding proclaims a major theme: "[A] virtuous and good Turk, or heathen, are more acceptable in the sight of their Creator, than a vicious and wicked Christian, tho' his faith was as perfectly orthodox as St. Paul's himself" (Fielding, 1742/2001, p. 126). Fielding proposes his theory by vesting certain races and ethnicities with certain traits; then he stresses the existence of virtue and nurturing it as self-esteem in a personality to receive respect or elevation in society.

On the contrary, Richardson excessively rewards virtue, and every virtuous person equitably takes his or her share. Pamela gets married and becomes a lady among the gentry after learning their ideals and behavioral etiquette. Nevertheless, before marriage, she connects refinement with possible moral corruption and laments acquiring it while living at the squire's estates. In this regard, Flint (1989) thinks, "Pamela learns that her identity derives from two clear and opposed sources of behavior, one teaching the value of bourgeois industry, 'honesty,' and 'virtue,' the other establishing her aristocratic achievements—grace, learning, honor, and philanthropy" (p. 490). Although Pamela feels that social refinement is unfit for her as a servant, she achieves many of the aristocrats' privileges before marriage. For example, she proves a progression on an individual level as well as the communal level when Mr. B. commands that the mansion where he is sending Pamela to as a prison should be under her will except for leaving it. Indeed, Pamela's ordeal in the new social space ironically grants her freedom of speech through "scribbling" and "narration" that no other servant has ever experienced, whereas Mr. Longman enacts the role of the godfather of this freedom and sponsors it by providing the necessary tools to ensure its sustainability.

After Mr. B.'s multiple unsuccessful attempts to penetrate Pamela's body, he directs his efforts to unobtrusively infiltrate her letters instead. Therefore, Leiman (2009) explains, "It seems, then, that Mr B. will replace Pamela's words with his act of sexual violence, silencing the oral and written narrative of her resistance by compelling her sexual submission" (p. 230). Mr. B. hopelessly designates Pamela as a lady, and Mrs. Jewkes who believes in the absolute service to the master receives her as a "madame" at Lincolnshire estate. Ironically, Pamela becomes used to this sort of imprisonment for moral purposes as it indicates seclusion from the harassment of the squire: "I was loath to leave the house. … I felt something so strange" (Richardson, 1740/2021, p. 171). Folkenflik (1972) thinks that Pamela perceives Mr. B.'s advent to Lincolnshire as "invading a place where he does not belong" (p. 585). Contrary to Joseph who does not flinch to leave due to the more options available to males, Pamela substantially feels reluctant to leave the estate because that entails returning to the realm of the lower class again. The procrastination in leaving after becoming exposed to multiple harassment endeavors indicates self-acclimation to the new prosperous life and the new status of being a madam.

On the other hand, again, Fielding rewards virtuous people differently from Richardson by emphasizing the lack of interaction with the corrupted upper class members. For instance, Cruise (1997) states that some characters' rewards, such as Fanny's, are not defined by materialistic means but by kinship and joyfulness (p. 548). Fielding insinuates a deep-laid skepticism about authoritative hierarchy and expresses his displeasure and frustration with the bad manners and hypocrisy that establish and maintain a noble background. Joseph remains virtuous by not engaging in a kinship relationship with spoiled aristocrats, so he is rewarded by discovering his chivalrous origins and lost gentlemanship. Mr. Wilson, Joseph's true father, is neither poor nor rich, so Fielding is keen to make his social status fit the middle class whose emergence coincides with the rise of the novel. Parkes describes Joseph's unprecedented social status: His "new

© 2023 ACADEMY PUBLICATION

estate may appear to be a liminal space much like the one he inhabited as a servant—one between rich and poor …—because here he is both a farm laborer and an estate owner with a two-thousand pound" (Parkes, 2007, p. 27) wealth. Lady Booby indirectly helps establish Joseph's cultural status for egoistic purposes. To meet her socially, but more importantly to satisfy her pleasures, she does not favor Joseph to remain a servant; thus she permits him to learn Latin "which means he might be qualified for a higher station than that of Footman" (Fielding, 1742/2001, p. 67) to become suitable either for marriage or, at least, for dishonest maneuverings. This permission destabilizes social equilibrium so she can serve her needs and philander with him freely and securely. In the early stages of his service, Joseph has been oblivious to his lady's lascivious attentions and remains ignorant about her sexual avidity. This indicates his high expectations of her demeanor and his presuppositions of the gentry that they cannot be corrupted morally. When he lately recognizes "the drift of his mistress" (Fielding, 1742/2001, p. 88), he writes a letter to his sister Pamela, emphasizing a lesson from Mr. Adams, "that chastity is as great a virtue in a man as in a woman" (Fielding, 1742/2001, p. 89). Fielding alludes to Richardson's Pamela's indirect influence on Joseph's virtue besides the religious and moral guidance of Mr. Adams. Campbell (1988) seizes nuanced moments to propose the idea of feminizing the main hero and aligns Joseph with "the guise of a cross-dressed Pamela" (p. 645) due to his excessive concern for chastity and piety.

Both novels expose the cynicism of society, which is represented by self-absorption and deviant people from all classes to prove the spontaneity and realism of the narrative. Those greedy and sinful people undergo physical punishments, suffer psychological torment, or experience social degradation as retribution for iniquities. The novels also embrace the possibility of downward social mobility for those who fail to maintain a moral or financial good standing, while other reasons remain intentionally unknown in the narratives. First, Leonora's digressive anecdote involves the theme of marriage of convenience, and it exemplifies a new ideological trend among the young that stands for pragmatism and its importance for promoting social progression. While deference is absent, superiority and ego are present in Leonora's conviction in autonomy and social power, regardless of means. Stephanson (1992), who discusses power and response to authority in narrative, suggests that the interpolated stories have metafictional significance and paradigmatic value (pp. 1-2). He states that "the danger of a selfish autonomy … is present in 'The History of Leonora' in which, guided not by affection but vanity, Leonora rejects mutuality and embraces power" (Stephanson, 1992, p.6) in her discourses on marriage. Leonora, who forsakes Horatio for Bellarmine, has a tragic moral flaw when she sacrifices love for wealth and suffers the "unfortunate jilt" ultimately.

Then, Sally is also excluded socially and emotionally for illegal pregnancy even though she finds prosperity again but in Jamaica. Finally, Mrs. Jervis was a woman of gentle birth and high social position but ended up working as a housekeeper at Mr. B.'s estate due to undergoing a misfortune during her youth that remains unknown to readers (Richardson, 1740/2021, p. 9). She is rewarded when she becomes a good servant who is loyal to her master and to Pamela as well at the end. Peter Pounce's character sets an example of a person who tries to improve his social status with his own efforts and looks for chances equality and social inclusion, so he thinks that wealth is the basic mainstay for materializing his dream and climbing the social ladder. Since his character represents the false philanthropist, Parkes (2007) states that "he is … a character who shows the need for a better class of patriarch" (p. 24). Peter boasts that he has made his wealth and achieved prosperity by his efforts, not by inheritance, so he guards them in a greedy and parsimonious way, believing that bringing relief to the poor is a superfluous deed. He counts himself as a gentleman and even better than the aristocrats themselves because, according to him, they do not know how to make a fortune from the ground up. Therefore, his character contradicts Mr. Adams's whose social class is degraded because of benevolence and constant loss of money.

Fielding is keen to depict social hypocrisy in dealing with moral crises based on a person's class. For example, Betty, the chambermaid at Mr. Tow-wouse's house, is "a young woman [who] cast[s] off all regard to modesty" (Fielding, 1742/2001, p. 130) and discloses her sexual insatiability. She used to flirt with her master before turning to Joseph, "taking him in her arms, and devouring him with kisses" (Fielding, 1742/2001, p. 130). In fact, Betty raises "a flame in her" which is a venereal disease as a "consequence of her former amour" (Fielding, 1742/2001, p. 129) and hypersexuality. The metaphorical description of the flame in her renders her attributes to match the personality of Mrs. Slipslop who is metaphorically depicted as a "hungry tygress" searching "the woods" for a "lamb" (Fielding, 1742/2001, p. 75). Fielding's employment of specific images and terminology as well as the fierce and peaceful natural elements such as flame, tigress, and lamb determine the nature of the relationship between the two sexes in this context and intensify the sexual voraciousness of these two women. Attributing Joseph to a lamb and describing Mrs. Slipslop as a tigress suggest his innocence and her rapacious erotic nature that attempts to spoil his purity in a similar way to Betty's attempts when "she thought of stabbing Joseph" (Fielding, 1742/2001, p. 130) for resisting her temptations and desires. The intrinsic feature that distinguishes Mrs. Slipslop and Betty from Lady Booby is that they do not publicly pretend sexual modesty and appear morally or religiously virtuous. This moral hypocrisy and social double standard also manifest in Mrs. Tow-wouse's ideology when she sets the accepted interpersonal boundaries of the gentry's wrongdoings after discovering her husband's betrayal with Betty. Mrs. Tow-wouse conditionally deprecates, "To abuse my bed, my own bed, with my own servant" (Fielding, 1742/2001, p. 127). Then she acknowledges prejudicial criteria for handling sins and misdeeds, stating, "If she had been a gentlewoman like my self, it had been some excuse" (Fielding, 1742/2001, p. 127). Holm (2010) argues that "*Joseph Andrews* presents hypocrisy as 'an Endeavour to avoid Censure by concealing our Vices under an Appearance of their opposite Virtues'" (p. 263). Mrs. Tow-wouse's

© 2023 ACADEMY PUBLICATION

assumption reveals class discrimination and manipulation of religion for the benefit of a certain class of people when she emphasizes that if Betty belonged to a prestigious social rank, her infidelity with Mr. Tow-wouse would be excused.

## III. Conclusion

Despite preaching for tolerance and peaceful coexistence, both authors depict the strictness of puritan communities that do not tolerate sins and outraging public decency. The texts associate moral corruption with social degradation and document it historically to highlight and reform sinful practices and unethical misconduct. For instance, Mrs. Jervis descends from a noble background but remains passive in defending Pamela's virtue, contrary to Mrs. Jewkes who is depicted as sexually ambiguous and "wicked procuress" (Richardson, 1740/2021, p. 83) when she facilitates Pamela's sexual assault and patronizes it as a kind of self-gratification. However, the authoritative powers formulate societal values for regional and factional interests, and the zero-tolerance policies under the religious cover become obstacles in the way of advocating moral reform when consolidating the culture of religious intolerance in people's minds. For example, similar to Mrs. Jervis's destiny, originally Mrs. Slipslop "was a maiden gentlewoman …, who having made a small slip in her youth had continued a good maid ever since" (Fielding, 1742/2001, p. 74). Eternal servitude and spinstership manifest as aspects of communal intolerance; therefore, Lady Booby agonizingly realizes that "her dear reputation was in the power of her servants" (Fielding, 1742/2001, p. 87), and only "bribery" can sustain this secrecy. Similarly, Miss Goodwin's character reveals the hidden story of her mother, Sally, who represents an analogous image of Pamela in case Pamela surrenders to Mr. B.'s lasciviousness and temptation. Leiman (2009) thinks that Mr. B.'s "strategic depiction of Sally Godfrey [has] important implications for his campaign to seduce and silence Pamela" (p. 231). As punishment for her moral fall, Sally is excluded physically for engaging in an extramarital affair.

Finally, Fielding suggests convergence among social classes where the characters, who are near the top of the servant class, adopt many ideals and attitudes of the people who belong to the bottom of the upper class. This is true in the case of Lady Booby and Mrs. Slipslop when they acquire from each other's manners and attitudes. Similarly, Richardson proposes this ideology through the marriage of Mr. B. to Pamela. *Pamela* and *Joseph Andrews* show that social mobility can be possible contingent on the person's virtues and ethics and on learning the customs and traditions of the higher class. The authors aspire for ideal societies that do not defy the progressive ideology as long as there are rules and controls for social transformation to reward worthy people with prestigious positions. Conversely, the novels as discourses on morality reveal these agendas through the threat of the downward mobility that remains retribution for morally corrupt people as a call to put an end to such practices. Virtue remains the principal factor for any kind of transformation that is considered a valid genuine qualification over any other criteria for social mobility.

## References


[1] Booker, K. (2014). Richardson's Pamela, Defoe's Roxana, and emulation anxiety in eighteenth-century Britain. *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, *14*(2), 42–62. https://doi.org/10.1353/jem.2014.0019

[2] Caesar, A. H. (2010). Richardson's Pamela: Changing countries, crossing genres. *Journal of Romance Studies*, *10*(2), 21–35. https://doi.org/10.3167/jrs.2010.100202

[3] Campbell, J. (1988). "The exact picture of his mother": Recognizing Joseph Andrews. *ELH*, *55*(3), 643–664. https://doi.org/10.2307/2873187

[4] Cruise, J. (1997). Precept, property, and "bourgeois" practice in Joseph Andrews. *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, *37*(3), 535–552. https://doi.org/10.2307/451048

[5] Eagleton, T. (2005). *The English novel: An introduction*. Blackwell.

[6] Feilla, C. (2002). Performing virtue: *Pamela* on the French revolutionary stage, 1793. *The Eighteenth Century*, *43*(3), 286–305. https://doi.org/10.2307/41467909

[7] Fielding, H. (2001). *Joseph Andrews*. (P. A. Scanlon, Ed.). Broadview Literary Texts. (Original work published 1742)

[8] Flint, C. (1989). The anxiety of affluence: Family and class (dis)order in Pamela: Or, Virtue Rewarded. *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, *29*(3), 489–514. https://doi.org/10.2307/450652

[9] Folkenflik, R. (1972). A room of Pamela's own. *ELH*, *39*(4), 585–596. https://doi.org/10.2307/2872701

[10] Füger, W. (2004). Limits of the narrator's knowledge in Fielding's Joseph Andrews: A contribution to a theory of negated knowledge in fiction. *Style*, *38*(3), 278–288. https://doi.org/10.5325/style.38.3.278

[11] Gooding, R. (1995). Pamela, Shamela, and the politics of the Pamela vogue. *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, *7*(2), 109–130. https://doi.org/10.1353/ecf.1995.0021

[12] Harol, C. (2004). Faking it: Female virginity and Pamela's virtue. *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, *16*(2), 197–216. https://doi.org/10.1353/ecf.2004.0030

[13] Hershinow, S. I. (2014). When experience matters: Tom Jones and "virtue rewarded". *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, *47*(3), 363–382. https://doi.org/10.1215/00295132-2789084

[14] Holm, M. D. (2010). "O vanity!" Fielding's other antisocial affectation. *Philological Quarterly*, *89*(2/3), 263–281.

[15] Ingrassia, C. (1998). "I am become a mere usurer": Pamela and domestic stock-jobbing. *Studies in the Novel*, *30*(3), 303–323. Retrieved August 20, 2018, from http://www.jstor.org/stable/29533276.

[16] Leiman, J. L. (2009). "Booby's fruitless operations": The crisis of male authority in Richardson's Pamela. *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, *22*(2), 223–248. https://doi.org/10.3138/ecf.22.2.223

[17] McKeon, M. (1987). *The origins of the English novel: 1600-1740*. John Hopkins University.


© 2023 ACADEMY PUBLICATION

[18] Parkes, C. (2007). Joseph Andrews and the control of the poor. *Studies in the Novel*, *39*(1), 17–30. https://doi.org/10.2307/29533797
[19] Pritchard, W. (2017). Pamela's wedding night. *SEL Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, *57*(3), 521–539. https://doi.org/10.1353/sel.2017.0022
[20] Richardson, S. (2021). *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded*. Global Grey Ebooks. (Original work published 1740)
[21] Roxburgh, N. (2012). Rethinking gender and virtue through Richardson's domestic accounting. *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, *24*(3), 403–429. https://doi.org/10.3138/ecf.24.3.403
[22] Soni, V. (2015). Judging, inevitably: Aesthetic judgment and novelistic form in Fielding's Joseph Andrews. *Modern Language Quarterly*, *76*(2), 159–180. https://doi.org/10.1215/00267929-2865008
[23] Sorlin, S. (2020). Readerly freedom from the nascent novel to digital fiction: Confronting Fielding's Joseph Andrews and Burne's "24 hours with someone you know". *Narrative*, *28*(1), 62–82. https://doi.org/10.1353/nar.2020.0005
[24] Stephanson, R. (1992). "Silenc'd by authority" in Joseph Andrews: Power, submission, and mutuality in "The history of two friends". *Studies in the Novel*, *24*(1), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.2307/29532833
[25] Toise, D. W. (1996). A more culpable passion: Pamela, Joseph Andrews, and the history of desire. *CLIO*, *25*(4), 393–419.

**Tariq J. Alsoud** is an assistant professor, who is currently a researcher and faculty member in the English Department at Tafila Technical University, Jordan.

© 2023 ACADEMY PUBLICATION