



Joseph Andrews

BY HENRY FIELDING

EDITED BY Martin C. Battestin



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Henry Fielding

J O S E P H A N D R E W S



EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY

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INTRODUCTION

MARTIN C. BATTESTIN

A NOVEL, like any of its characters, has its own story — its own origins, its own shape and spirit, its own meaning. The story of *Joseph Andrews* is one of the most curious and significant in the history of English letters. In the early 1740's, after years of gestation which led it through the realistic allegories of Bunyan, the satiric fantasies of Swift, and the fictional biographies of Defoe, the English novel came all at once into being as an art form, its two main directions — inward, toward the individual personality, and outward, toward the panorama of society — arising from the conflicting temperaments and literary motives of two very different men, Samuel Richardson and Henry Fielding. It could hardly be called a marriage, but from the rude and often hilarious conjunction of Richardson's feminine sensibilities and Fielding's robust masculinity, the modern novel was born. Richardson's *Pamela* began it all. Reaching the bookstalls in November 1740, it enjoyed almost immediately a popularity so vast and vociferous that Fielding, who despised the book, could describe the commotion only as an "epidemical phrenzy" that needed to be checked and cured. In his brilliant parody, *Shamela* (April 1741), he set about the destructive task of exposing, uproariously, the absurdities of Richardson's work. In *Joseph Andrews* (February 1742) he offered his own alternative conception of the art and purpose of the novel.

In his fifties when he wrote *Pamela*, Fielding's rival was another sort of man, another sort of writer, entirely. Whereas Fielding was tall and hale, with a lusty, open-hearted zest for life and a sharpness of vision that could penetrate its masks and gaudy surfaces, Richardson was short and round in stature, shy and fastidious and a little inclined to a quiet pomposity. He preferred the salon and the society of the ladies, whose hearts he understood (or so they liked to think) better than they did themselves. He was a man who lived so much in a world of pose and posture that, in *Pamela* at least (*Clarissa* is another and a better story), he could mistake for truth the artifice and pretense of his own creation. By profession he was a master-printer, not an author,

but from his childhood he had developed his hand at the art of letter writing — and a noble art it was, esteemed by his contemporaries but nowadays unhappily lost! Always a little self-righteous, at the tender age of ten he had written an anonymous letter to an elderly widow castigating her for being a malicious gossip; and at thirteen he had taken to “ghost-writing” the love notes of the older girls of the neighborhood. As a writer of letters, he achieved such skill and local fame that in 1739 he was approached by booksellers who persuaded him to compose a practical little volume known as the *Familiar Letters*, a kind of correspondent’s guide and conduct book for all occasions, intended not only to furnish the illiterate with model letters, but also to teach them, by examples, “how to think and act justly and prudently in the common concerns of human life.”

It was while he was engaged in writing this work that Richardson hit upon the idea of expanding one of the illustrative situations it contained (in Letters 138 and 139, “A father to a daughter in service, on hearing of her master’s attempting her virtue” and the reply) into that celebrated first novel, which he called, in the expansive and explicit manner of his day, *Pamela: or, Virtue Rewarded. In a Series of Familiar Letters from a Beautiful Young Damsel, to her Parents. Now first Published in order to cultivate the Principles of Virtue and Religion in the Minds of the Youth of Both Sexes*. Briefly, his story tells of the conspicuous chastity of a pretty young servant girl who — ubiquitously, in summer-house, closet, or bed — preserves her “virtue” from the hot assaults and clumsy intrigues of her ardent master, bringing him at last to his knees in capitulation and marriage. The plot is certainly simple enough and timeless, a variation, as one critic has remarked, on the old tale of the Beauty and the Beast, transformed by an eleventh-hour metamorphosis into the charming Prince. And to Richardson’s age, an age in which a cash- and property-conscious middle class was beginning more and more to assert itself, an age that tended to equate a young woman’s virtue and her virginity and to view the latter as a kind of saleable commodity to be exchanged as dearly as possible for the social advancement of both daughter and family, the theme struck a sympathetic chord. Although it was not original with him, Richardson’s method of narration also helps to explain the book’s extraordinary appeal. To tell his story, he used the epistolary form most natural to him, having his heroine describe the events and confess her sentiments in candid letters to her parents. In

this way, Richardson achieved a curious and fascinating effect: the reader becomes a kind of *voyeur* and eavesdropper, overhearing Pamela's private thoughts, as it were, and seeing into her life with an intimacy made possible by the detail and expansiveness of Richardson's manner. At times, indeed, as in Pamela's accounts of Mr. B.'s fruitless attempts to ravish her in her bed, the narrative becomes almost too vivid for comfort: it was all doubtless done, as Richardson impatiently insisted, in the cause of morality, but he had managed to evoke his scenes so graphically that he had teased and titillated his readers as much as he had chastened them.

It is no wonder, then, that *Pamela* became, almost overnight, the sensation of London, running through five editions in less than a year. By January 1741 *The Gentleman's Magazine* could observe that it was already "in town as great a sign of want of curiosity not to have read *Pamela*, as not to have seen the French and Italian dancers." The simple, as well as the sophisticated, took Richardson's heroine to heart, trembling over her trials and exulting in her triumph. In the country the villagers of Slough gathered at the smithy to hear her story read aloud, and they communally celebrated her marriage by ringing the church bells. "Like the snow, that lay last week, upon the earth and all her products," Richardson's friend, Aaron Hill, wrote to the author not two months after the novel had appeared, "[Pamela] covers every other image, with her own unbounded whiteness." It was this claim — the "whiteness," the moral purity, of Richardson's shrewdly chaste young servant maid — that especially irked Henry Fielding. Even the clergy, the custodians of the public morality, were broadcasting their approval: there was, for example, the exasperating case of Dr. Benjamin Slocock, who sounded Pamela's praises from the pulpit of St. Saviour's, Southwark, as if, it must have seemed to Fielding, Richardson had written not a mere romance after all, but another book of Scripture. And Alexander Pope, England's greatest living poet and a man from whom he might have expected better sense, had also been taken in by Pamela's "virtue": the novel, he was reported about town as saying, "will do more good than many volumes of sermons." In the midst of this uproar, it would have been hard indeed for Fielding to hold his peace about a book he deplored.

Richardson had thus unintentionally set the spark that kindled Fielding's real genius as a writer, driving him in a spirit half amused, half indignant, to discover for himself the rich possibili-

ties of the art of fiction. But in other ways, as well, the time was right for him to try his hand at something new. To see his situation in 1741 more sharply, let us briefly turn to certain salient and significant features in the background. Born on 22 April 1707 into the younger line of an old and distinguished family, Fielding had grown up in the green fields and fresh country air of Dorsetshire, storing memories that he later contrasted in his writings, nostalgically, with the dirty streets and noxious vapors of the town. After learning his accidence from a kindly neighborhood curate named Parson Oliver, whom he seems to have remembered in the good clergyman of *Shamela*, he received his formal education first at Eton and then, after a brief interlude in London, at the University of Leyden, across the Channel in Holland. At these schools he developed a respect for useful learning (as distinguished from empty pedantry) and a love of classical Greek and Latin literature that is evident in nearly everything he wrote: Parson Adams' impromptu critique of the *Iliad* delivered in Mr. Wilson's parlor is, for example, only one of many instances in *Joseph Andrews* where Fielding's impressive knowledge of the classical authors and their critics serves to enliven the characterization and the comedy.

Fielding's family connections and his education notwithstanding, there was little money available to him, and the young man had to make his own way. His choice of a career lay, as he liked to say, between being a hackney writer or a hackney coachman. At the age of twenty-three he returned from Leyden with a play in his pocket and the ambition to make his mark in the London theater as a dramatist vaguely in the comic tradition of William Congreve, the genius of the Restoration stage. As a playwright, however, the disciple was no match for the master: in general, Fielding's comedies lack the brilliant repartee and the sense of situation and structure that distinguish Congreve's best work; today most of them seem rather dry and lifeless. But in the lesser modes of farce and burlesque he excelled, creating, for example, in *The Tragedy of Tragedies: or The Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great* (1731) one of the true masterpieces of dramatic burlesque, a travesty so skillful and amusing that it enjoys the distinction of having made Jonathan Swift laugh for the second time in his life! (or so the Dean himself supposedly declared, doubtless with a touch of hyperbole). One clear reason why Fielding's plays succeeded on the London stage is that they sparkled with timely and spirited satire, much of it at the expense

of contemporary "pollitricks," as he used to say, and of Sir Robert Walpole, the prime minister, in particular. For at the height of his theatrical career in 1736, Fielding, in search of a patron for his purse and of an honest government for England, had enlisted on the side of Chesterfield, Lyttelton, Pulteney, and the rest of the self-styled Patriots who led the noisy and vigorous Opposition to Walpole's administration. He became, in fact, his party's principal satirist, his pen one of its sharpest weapons against the minister. His "squibs and crackers," delivered to the delighted audiences that packed The Little Theatre in the Haymarket, were "let off in the country and sometimes at Court," exploding everywhere to Walpole's embarrassment. Unfortunately for Fielding, however, his heavy-handed ridicule of the ministry in *Pasquin* (1736) and *The Historical Register* (1737) proved too successful, since it stirred the government, irate and uneasy over the immense popularity of these farces, to put an end to such abuse and, incidentally, to the career of the man mainly responsible. The result was the passing in June 1737 of the Theatrical Licensing Act, which placed the playhouses under the Lord Chamberlain's strict control and shut the doors of Fielding's theater against him. "Like another Erostratus," sneered Colley Cibber with metaphors typically mixed, Fielding had "set fire to his stage, by writing up to an Act of Parliament to demolish it."

This was indeed a dark time for Fielding. In 1734, during his more prosperous days, he had married Charlotte Cradock, a remarkably pretty young woman whom he had loved and courted for four years; she was, he later said, the "one from whom I draw all the solid comfort of my life," and his deep affection for her is embodied in the good and charming women of his novels—Mrs. Wilson, Sophia, Amelia—for whom she was the model. By 1737, when the Licensing Act had cut him off from his livelihood, Fielding had two infant daughters as well as a wife to support. In near desperation he began to search for other means of providing comfortably for himself and his family. In November he entered the Middle Temple, but, though eleven years later he was to become one of London's most effective and prominent magistrates, the law was at first an inadequate solution. To supplement a meager income, Fielding was forced to turn hackney author in earnest and to resume his labors—now as Captain Hercules Vinegar, editor of *The Champion*—on behalf of the Opposition. The number of miscellaneous and fugitive productions—translations, poems, essays of every description—that came

from his pen during the little more than two years preceding the appearance of *Joseph Andrews* suggests that his need was urgent. In Mr. Wilson's doleful account of his brief and unprofitable career in London, we may see something of his author's own plight.

In the midst of these gloomy, arid days, the storm over *Pamela* broke. Clearly, there were ample reasons, more practical than moral and artistic indignation, that prompted Fielding's response. A "spoof" of Richardson's immensely popular book was sure to be financially rewarding, and Fielding desperately needed the money. But it would be a serious and rather cynical distortion to underestimate the importance of those other, less mercenary motives, which, after all, are the ones that chiefly matter to us as expressions of Fielding's art and his thought. To Fielding, London had gone wild over an egregiously bad and pretentious book — a book morally contemptible and technically incompetent. To sense the full force of these sentiments in the genesis of *Shamela* and *Joseph Andrews*, we must first understand how Fielding, together with the best of his contemporaries, looked upon the job of the writer, especially the writer of satire. It is a mode and an attitude somewhat strange to our own times. Fielding wrote when the English Augustan Age — the Age of Satire, as it has been called — was not long past and when the greatest of its wits, Swift and Pope, were still living. To these men the satirist's craft was a responsible one: he wrote with the Horatian design to instruct, as well as to delight, his readers; he acted, in a real sense, as the arbiter and custodian of the good manners, morals, and taste of his society. Though laughter is his mode, the satirist is, then, fundamentally a moralist; though he makes us wince as he wields the knife of ridicule, he is, Fielding declared, "to be regarded as our physician, not our enemy." Solidly in this tradition, Fielding chose, as he variously put it, to speak truth with a smiling countenance, to laugh mankind out of their favorite follies and vices, to tickle them into good manners. Richardson's fatuous performance — as the noise of applause, even from those who should have known better, convinced him — needed to be exposed and corrected. Later, in 1748, Fielding would write his rival a warm and generous letter praising *Clarissa*, but *Pamela* was another matter entirely. It was bad morality and bad art. In *The Champion* Fielding had set himself up as Captain Hercules Vinegar, "great champion and censor of Great Britain," arraigning an old antagonist, the laureate-comedian Colley Cibber,

before the bench of the Court of Censorial Inquiry on the charge of murdering the English language; now, as parodist, he would bring Richardson to justice.

Thus, early in 1741, Fielding interrupted his work as journalist for the Patriots to write the first, and by far the best, of the anti-*Pamela*'s — as the spate of "spoofs" and satires and criticisms spawned in reaction to Richardson's novel has come to be called. Published pseudonymously on April 4th,¹ the full title of this brilliant and bawdy parody suggests the line of attack that he hilariously pursues:

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

By the time the burlesque has run its course, the absurdities and pretensions of *Pamela* have been exposed once and for all. Fielding's skill at this delightful bathetic art had been developed and sharpened on several previous occasions and in several different genres: in the drama, for example, there were *The Covent-Garden Tragedy* and *The Tragedy of Tragedies*; in poetry there were the mock-epic *Vernoniad* and *Juvenal's Sixth Satire Modernised in Burlesque Verse*; and in *The Champion*, more crudely, there were amusing imitations of the "ultra sublime" style of Colley Cibber's *Apology*. With *Shamela* Fielding brought the art of parody near to perfection. What he provides, in some seventy pages, is a comic abridgement, down to the smallest details, of the very form and substance of *Pamela*. Richardson, for example, maintained the ruse of posing as an editor of Pamela's letters; so Fielding has his Parson Oliver purvey the "authentic" correspondence of Shamela, of which Richardson's version is said to be the grossest misrepresentation. Richardson had indulged his vanity

¹ It was not until well into this century that Fielding's authorship of *Shamela* was established beyond any reasonable doubt. The story of the accumulation of evidence that has led to the general acceptance of the work as Fielding's is interesting in itself, but too long to rehearse here. The best single discussion of the subject is Charles B. Woods' article, "Fielding and the Authorship of *Shamela*," *Philological Quarterly*, XXV (1946), 256-72.

by prefixing to the second edition of his novel some twenty-four pages of commendatory letters and a poem; so Fielding includes his own "puffs," one, appropriately enough, from the editor to himself. Richardson, at times somewhat clumsily and at the expense of probability, had his heroic servant maid relate her adventures in long, detailed, and quite literate letters, often employing the present tense for greater immediacy of effect; so Shamela — her pen, even in bed, never out of hand — tells her story in the same epistolary fashion, but eschewing (with a vengeance!) her rival's delicacy of phrase. Richardson's best scenes are all here, but they are impudently imaged in the parodist's fun-house mirror. Pamela's mock drowning to cover her attempted escape from Mrs. Jewkes now becomes Shamela's device to divert attention from an amorous tryst with Parson Williams. In the novel Mr. B., out for a drive with his bride-to-be and her father, comes upon Williams taking a solitary walk and reading in a book, and thereupon, in a magnanimous gesture of reconciliation with the man who has interfered with the progress of his libertinism, he invites him to enter the carriage and sit beside Pamela; in the parody Williams is caught poaching hares in the squire's meadow, but Booby, choking down his ire in fear of a display of tears from his wife, relinquishes his place in the coach to her lover and takes to his horse. Best of all, of course, is the rough and uproarious handling of the bedroom scenes. Indeed, at every turn Fielding has taken his cue from his original: already in the novel, for instance, there is Mr. B.'s suspicion that Parson Williams' interest in Pamela is not entirely dutiful; there is Pamela's happy knack of fainting away whenever the emergency requires; there is, despite her prodigious virtue, Pamela's own embarrassment at her secret admiration for the handsome rake who has been trying to ravish her; and she ends, after all, by consenting to marry the villain on her own terms.

Fielding's mimicry is complete and it is devastating. By changing the perspective of vision — by taking a hostile and sardonic view of Richardson's triumphant virgin, seeing her chastity (so wonderfully profitable to her!) as artful rather than innocent — he has inverted, and subverted, Richardson's whole design. Take, for instance, the bedroom scenes, two episodes that point to the real cause of Fielding's quarrel with his rival. Fielding has caught the contradiction implicit in the presence of such "inflaming descriptions" in a book professedly intended to inculcate "the principles of virtue and religion." In these scenes, to use the

phrase of the appreciative Parson Tickletext, he saw *Pamela*, girl and novel both, "with all the pride of ornament cast off": what is revealed is the sham of Richardson's whole pose and performance, and the Sham, as the theory of the Ridiculous set forth in the Preface to *Joseph Andrews* attests, was Fielding's special province as a satirist. Delighted to catch the prude staging a peep show, Fielding has turned Richardson's drama into a bawdy game of cat and mouse — exchanging only the identity of the predator! Worst of all, of course, was the naïve moral assumption that underlies the novel and glares forth garishly from the subtitle: the notion that virtue is rewarded, not in the Christian hereafter, but in the here and now, and with pounds and social position — a comfortable doctrine, Fielding observed in *Tom Jones*, "to which we have but one objection, namely, that it is not true." A morality based on such mercenary motives was a kind of prostitution masquerading as virtuousness. As Shamela wryly declares to her mother: "I thought once of making a little fortune by my person. I now intend to make a great one by my vartue." With such absurdities already latent in the novel, the distorted image mirrored in the parodist's glass is somehow closer to the truth than the original.

But Richardson and *Pamela* are not the only game that come under fire in *Shamela*, and most of these targets are fixed again in *Joseph Andrews*. There are hits, for example, at Fielding's old adversary, Colley Cibber, whose autobiography, *An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber, Comedian* (1740), not only offended Fielding's taste by the violence it committed upon the English language, but also revived their old quarrel by calling him names. The title of *Shamela* humorously mimics that of Cibber's book, and the pseudonym, Conny Keyber, was sure to call him to mind.² Conny was also meant to evoke Conyers Middleton, whose *Life of Cicero* (published in February, little more than a month before *Shamela*) had disparaged the work of Fielding's friend, George Lyttelton. In his own Dedication, Fielding mocks Middleton's, which was fulsomely addressed to the effeminate Lord Hervey, a political ally of Walpole and a man known to his enemies, since Pope's famous gibe, as "Lord Fanny." In John Puff's letter, Walpole (or "his Honour") himself comes in for some rather indelicate abuse in reference to the

² Conny, a colloquialism for dupe, looks and sounds like Colley; and in the *Apology* Cibber had alluded to himself as "Minheer Keiber," a name given him in *Mist's Weekly Journal*

prime minister's inability to keep his wife at home. All these cuts add to the fun and variety of Fielding's satire.

More pervasive and significant, however, is the irreverent treatment accorded the clergy, whose critical social function in preserving the public morality made them the special objects of Fielding's concern, defending them when they were unjustly condemned, rebuking them when they failed in their office. The importance of this theme in *Shamela* explains why Fielding chose to frame his story in an exchange of letters between two clergymen, one the naïve Parson Tickletext, the other the wise Parson Oliver, who corrects his friend's misapprehensions about *Pamela* and supplies him with the "genuine" papers; and it further accounts for the prominence of Parson Williams, to whom Richardson had assigned a relatively minor role. More than anything else, what seems to have set Fielding to work in this vein was the crass enthusiasm of clergymen like Dr. Slocock who encouraged that "epidemical phrenzy" raging in town over a silly and immoral book by making it, in Tickletext's words, their "common business here, not only to cry it up, but to preach it up likewise." By so doing, they were, however unwittingly, betraying their public trust and giving cause to that regrettable contempt of their order which was "the fashionable vice of the times." In the spring of 1740, Fielding had published in *The Champion* a series of leaders which he called an "Apology for the Clergy," four essays designed to correct the general contempt of the priesthood and to define the qualities of the true and the false clergyman. The same motives are evident in *Shamela* and, as we shall see, in *Joseph Andrews*.

The substance of Fielding's satire of the clergy in *Shamela* is embodied in Parson Williams, who is the very type of the false divine: As Oliver admonishes his brethren, "if a clergyman would ask me by what pattern he should form himself, I would say, Be the reverse of Williams." A consummate hedonist and hypocrite, Williams has every vice imaginable, but Fielding has given his portrait special point by making this scoundrel an admirer of the fiery evangelist, George Whitefield, who, along with John Wesley, was just then founding a new sect, Methodism. Fielding, himself an Anglican of the latitudinarian school that made religion a matter rather of the performance of good works than of belief or ceremony, distrusted Methodism from the start and continued to attack it throughout his career. He saw in its Antinomian emphasis upon salvation through grace and faith and

the imputed righteousness of Christ a doctrine potentially pernicious to social morality. In general, he was among those who were appalled by what seemed to be the import of Whitefield's message: "So you say you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you may live the life of devils." Thus, with the aid of Whitefield's works and Williams' counsel, Shamela rationalizes her frequent fornication — the pleasures of which, "tho' not strictly innocent, are . . . to be purged away by frequent and sincere repentance" — and her paramour is made to preach upon the text, "*Be not righteous over-much,*" the subject of a sustained and heated controversy between Whitefield and Dr. Joseph Trapp. Into Williams, Fielding poured all the faults of which the Methodists were popularly accused — in particular, their alleged claims of a special dispensation of grace, exempting them from good works and excusing sinful self-indulgence since salvation was a matter of confidence, not performance. Thus Shamela relates the gist of Williams' casuistry:

Well, on Sunday Parson Williams came, according to his promise, and an excellent sermon he preached; his text was, *Be not righteous over-much*; and, indeed, he handled it in a very fine way: he showed us that the Bible doth not require too much goodness of us, and that people very often call things goodness that are not so. That to go to church, and to pray, and to sing psalms, and to honour the clergy, and to repent, is true religion; and 'tis not doing good to one another, for that is one of the greatest sins we can commit, when we don't do it for the sake of religion. That those people who talk of virtue and morality, are the wickedest of all persons. That 'tis not what we do, but what we believe, that must save us, and a great many other good things; I wish I could remember them all.

Later, as they ride together in the coach, the learned parson subtly expatiates to Shamela on the matrimonial implications of the separateness of the Spirit and the Flesh, demonstrating with a supple logic the moral justification of adultery. An extension of the campaign begun in *The Champion*, Williams stands as the embodiment of the corrupt priest, not as an indictment of his whole order, as some readers, mistaking Fielding's motives, suppose — Parson Oliver, we recall, has in effect the last word and laugh — but as an object lesson of abuses to be avoided and corrected.

Shamela is superbly the inspiration of Fielding's antic muse: the jester's spirit, and something of his very mode, prevails in the droll mimicry of this brilliant burlesque. But if Fielding

preferred the cap and bells to the preacher's somber gown, he wore them wisely — like Shakespeare's clowns — and in the service of truth. There is bite and purpose in his laughter. One after another, Richardson, Cibber, Middleton, Walpole, Whitefield, the corrupt or incompetent among the clergy — all feel the sting of the satirist's lash. To speak of such a coarse and bawdy book as serving the cause of morality and good taste may seem a contradiction to the fastidious, but Fielding's sexual comedy is free and open and hearty, unlike the pornographic melodrama of Richardson's bedroom scenes, for example, in which a sensual leer hides beneath the mask of gravity. Of all the remedies against a hyperactive libido, there is none better than laughter. Though one can scarcely imagine its being recommended from the pulpit, there is something essentially healthier in *Shamela's* lusty good humor than in the prurient sobriety of *Pamela*. In its own right and of its kind, *Shamela* is a remarkable performance — perhaps even, as Sheridan Baker would have it, “the best parody in English literature.” It enjoys, furthermore, the distinction of being, so far as we know, the first prose fiction that Fielding wrote, the work that began his transformation from a second-rate playwright and hackney scribbler to one of the greatest of novelists. It stands as a kind of fulcrum between *Pamela* and *Joseph Andrews*, the two works that gave direction and shape to the English novel.

But *Shamela*, despite its virtues, could have done little to ease the straitened financial circumstances in which Fielding found himself during 1741. Indeed, by the late fall and winter, when he was hard at work on his first novel, his own private gray skies seem to have darkened with the season. In March, just before *Shamela* appeared, Fielding's poverty had driven him into debt; and in June the death of his father, a distinguished soldier but rather improvident with his money, only added to his misfortunes without augmenting his income. Before the year was out, his troubles were made more acute by the sickness that ravaged his family and eventually, in March 1742, took the life of his favorite daughter, Charlotte.

In June, furthermore, Fielding had made a puzzling decision when he severed his long-standing connection with *The Champion* and also, it seems, with the Opposition, whose cause that journal was supporting. This was a crucial election year in England, and the Patriots were marshalling all their forces in an effort — successful, as it proved in February of 1742 — to depose