

The Man of Feeling II

This lecture will look at the notion of the 'man of feeling' as it relates to Richardson and Fielding themselves and, more importantly, to the characters they created; we'll look at the woman of feeling in a subsequent lecture but there will inevitably be a degree of overlap.

Richardson

Richardson's ideas became increasingly popular in the latter half of the 18th century. If women were to be educated companions as opposed to simply breeders of heirs, men had to adapt their behaviour and at least appear to be more civilised. Increasingly, virtues such as tenderness, kindness and sensibility, traditionally associated with women, became regarded as attractive, indeed necessary in men if they were to be good husbands; hence the rise of the 'man of sentiment'.

Eva Figes notes sensibly that although writers like Fielding were scornful of Richardson because he didn't have a classical education and therefore couldn't indulge in classical allusions in his fiction, his embracing of the idea of the man of sentiment and a strong moral code, made his work attractive not only to women but their fathers who, if they had to open up the family library to their daughters, would presumably prefer them to read Richardson than the racier Fielding.

It has to be said that *Joseph Andrews* has strong elements of the man of sentiment and the moral code associated with it but Fielding's exact moral position is unclear: he is ostensibly lampooning Richardson but they have some common ground. Fielding was suspicious of Pamela but it is her possible hypocrisy and unconvincing virtue that he lampoons, not the concept of virtuous behaviour per se. In *Joseph Andrews* he considers quite seriously the nature of true moral feeling for both men and women, arguing that outward and active expressions such as charity are important: virtue, for Fielding, consists not so much in not doing something but in being actively engaged with the world, cheerfully doing good.

Richardson objected strongly to Fielding's work, in particular *Tom Jones*, on moral grounds. Johnson appeared to support Richardson's moral stand in fiction, writing in *The Rambler*, 31st March, 1750 that although vice had to be presented in fiction, it should 'always disgust' and that virtue should always be presented as 'the highest proof of understanding, and the only solid basis of greatness'. Richardson's *Clarissa* may pass this test but *Pamela* is rather less clear cut.

The enigma of *Pamela* contains too many unresolved moral issues and as such caused concern to later writers, seeking literary models and traditions to work with. Steeves sums up critical disquietude about *Pamela* when he comments in his very useful book, *Before Jane Austen*: 'Controversy has settled principally upon 3 questions, whether its 'morality' is really moral, or despicable; whether Richardson's characters resemble humanity as most of us know it; and whether he writes badly because he didn't know better or because almost nobody wrote well at that time'.

Richardson did not invent the sex and suffering novel, although he did take it to new heights - or depths - depending on how you look at it. Plot constructions such as abduction, seduction and rape attempts are common even in the earliest novels. There is, however, a marked difference in the way in which male and female writers approach the same narrative motifs. Male novelists' heroines often suffer provocatively, attractively helpless and dependent on the hero to defend and rescue them. Women novelists are not averse to dashing young heroes but their heroines are usually capable of spirited defence; they may suffer at the hands of aggressors but, in sentimental and comic novels at least, they usually resist actively and escape, triumphing over evil not simply through passive virtue, as Richardson appears to advocate in *Pamela* at least, but through strength of mind, bravery and ingenuity, qualities which many in the 18th century saw as primarily masculine.

In *Life and Adventures of the Lady Lucy* (1726), Penelope Aubin presents women's vulnerability in a masculine world, typified in sexual assault. Lucy is somewhat unfortunate, to say the least, facing several rape attempts. When Constantine attempts to rape her he threatens that if she cries out and a servant comes, 'I'll kill him in your sight, and lay his dead Body by you; so that your Reputation shall be blacken'd, tho you are innocent'(p.112). Lucy courageously defends herself by stabbing him in the thigh with his sword and shows surprising presence of mind in explaining the rope ladder and blood on the balcony, by saying that she has defended herself against a thief. Lucy is perhaps an early vision of the empowered woman; not politically emancipated but strong and crucially, victorious. Aubin reclaims a potentially tragic scene by humour, enabling the reader to enjoy Lucy's actions and encouraging her or him to identify with this strong and yet virtuous character. Such heroines are light years away from Pamela and her ineffectual giggling struggles.

Fielding lampoons such vigorous defence of chastity in *Shamela* (1741), where Shamela openly discusses her defence techniques: 'After having made a pretty free Use of my Fingers, without any great Regard to the Parts I attack'd, I counterfeit a Swoon'(p.330). The implicit criticism of Pamela is evident but we must remember that Richardson himself was aware of the ambiguities inherent in blushing, and swooning; Sir Simon articulates this rather more cynical approach in *Pamela*, quoting Swift: 'They blush, because they understand.'

The seduction and courtship plot hybrid carried certain inherent ambiguities which problematise attempts to moralise. However, its potential complexities made it an interesting and worthwhile form for writers to experiment with. Eva Figs argues that it 'provided a viable female alternative to the male picaresque, as long as certain constraints were observed: the heroine must not lose her virtue, and must act in an unconventional manner only under duress'(p.57). This is an entirely valid point but Figs locates the beginnings of such plots with Richardson, whereas they were common in women's novels in the 1720s, 20 years before *Pamela* was published. Richardson was indeed tremendously influential to writers in his own time and later in the century but he too inherited literary traditions. It is impossible to determine to what extent Richardson was influenced by early writers, be they male or female, but what is clear is that Richardson did not invent either the plot motifs, the character types or the epistolary form he uses in *Pamela*, all of which may be found in fiction by earlier writers such as Penelope Aubin, Jane Barker and Eliza Haywood.

Richardson's skill lies not in inventing these things but in deploying them in a more complex and subtle manner; Richardson's work is deeper and darker than that of Aubin and Barker but to be Freudian for a moment, the darker elements in Richardson's writing may well owe more to his psyche than to his literary intentions; the sub text of *Pamela* is in some respects more interesting and certainly more disturbing than the 'official' text as it were.

Pamela is problematic in that Richardson at times appears to dwell with perhaps unconscious enjoyment on the feeble struggles of his young heroine, arms pinioned to her sides, sitting on her master's knee! Richardson is a man of contradictions: he genuinely wrote with a moral purpose in mind but the way in which he presents issues such as seduction and rape suggests a degree of prurient interest he would presumably not have wanted to admit to himself, let alone his readers - a kind of relish of the forbidden; some critics would go so far as to say that there are elements of sadism in his work - all I would say is that there are aspects of his writing which are deeply troubling and seemingly inconsistent with his much vaunted moral enterprise. One has to be very careful when suggesting that a writer may reveal more of him or herself than they are aware but Richardson's work is perhaps an area where such inquiry is legitimate.

***Pamela* (1740)**

In this lecture I want to highlight some of the ambiguities in *Pamela*; I'll be slightly kinder to her next time (but only slightly!) One of the reasons the immensely popular *Pamela* was so widely criticised was that it was thought to encourage young women of the lower classes to make a great show of chastity and rather than remaining chaste for moral reasons, to do so in order to try to ensnare their employer. Fielding's Parson Oliver articulates such objections in his letter to Parson Tickletext at the beginning of *Shamela*, playing on the fact that Richardson argued that the novel provided moral teaching suitable for young women: 'The Instruction which it conveys to Servant-Maids, is, I think, very plainly this, To look out for their Masters as sharp as they can. The Consequences of which will be, besides Neglect of their Business, and the using all manner of Means to come at Ornaments of their Persons, that if the master is not a Fool, they will be debauched by him; and if he is a Fool, they will marry him. Neither of which, I apprehend, my good Friend, we desire should be the Case of our Sons'(p.324). Pamela's behaviour and running commentary on her chastity seems in itself somewhat inappropriate and rather too 'knowing'; she jokes about the 'closet scene' and thus Mr B's seduction attempt in letter 25, writing: 'Now I come to the presents of my dear virtuous master; Hay, you know, closet for that, Mrs Jervis!'(p.110).

Pamela appropriates the genteel behaviour of women from a higher social sphere. She often uses the refined emotionally charged language of sentiment, for eg 'My heart is full'(p.116). This could be interpreted as a form of social pretension, something she 'puts on' just as she puts on different kinds of clothing in order to promote the image she chooses (pp.76-7). Fainting is also associated with romantic heroines and respectable 'ladies', not servants. As such, Mr B is both amused and frustrated by it.

The convention of heroines fainting is worth noting briefly as the objective correlative of

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

Pamela's narrative is rather self-conscious, for eg, 'my story, surely, would furnish out a surprising kind of novel'(p.281). Mr B also likens the narrative of their lives to novels, for eg. pp.268-9; indeed he blames Pamela's novel reading as encouraging her to misinterpret his behaviour, eg. p.124. Ironically, if Pamela's interpretation of his behaviour comes from reading novels, then those novels are accurate because he is trying to seduce her. Richardson is encouraging us to think about novel reading here, albeit rather amusingly, playing with the fact that we are reading a novel with characters who speak as if they are real people wondering what sort of novel their lives would make.

Pamela is always aware of her 'audience' and her propensity for fainting could be seen as playing to that audience: Mr B comments, 'she has a lucky knack of falling into fits when she pleases'(p.98). Indeed Pamela admits to her reader that there are times when she acts a part. She tells Mr B, 'I want no husband', commenting in an aside to the reader, 'I thought I would a little dissemble'(p.118).

If Pamela is the locus of moral feeling, as the Preface would have us believe, deceit of any kind is problematic; is this the embodiment of feminine virtue promised by the Preface? If we take it at face value, with its assertion that Pamela's behaviour is designed 'to give practical examples, worthy to be followed' by women in various stages of life, what does it tell us about Richardson's notions of feminine virtue? Is a degree of deceit inevitable? Does virtue consist in hiding one's true feelings and if so, when does virtuous concealment of feeling become hypocrisy? Austen addresses the same issues later in the century in works such as *Sense and Sensibility*, albeit without the unintentional moral ambiguity of *Pamela*.

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

The discussion concerning the nature and protection of virtue ran throughout the century. *Pamela*, *Shamela* and *Joseph Andrews* are only three of the novels involved in this debate. In *Shamela*, Fielding exposes the problem of hypocrisy inherent in the reduction of virtue to physical chastity, as embodied by Pamela, but he does not suggest an answer; in *Joseph Andrews*, he explores the possibility of an answer. Richardson was also wrestling with the problem of what constituted true virtue. In *Clarissa* (1747-8), he created a profoundly Christian heroine with none of the potential ambiguities of Pamela's behaviour; but his ultimate answer appears to lie in a male character, Sir Charles Grandison.

In *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753-4) Richardson moves beyond the traditional notion of rake or would-be rake, eschewing the notion that reformed rakes such as Mr B make good husbands. Novelists, particularly male, had traditionally conspired with society's double standards in relation to virtuous behaviour; characters such as Tom Jones whizz around cheerfully sowing their wild oats and only repenting and marrying after they've dallied with half the women they meet. Sir Charles travels and has adventures but wouldn't dream of seducing the servants. Richardson suggests that Grandison is chaste but, in order not to compromise his status as hero, he is presented as adventurous and, unlike Joseph Andrews, he is flirtatious at times, which lessens the impact.

The essential difference between the two heroes lies in their social status. Grandison is an aristocrat and so can express his virtue actively: he can use his power and status for good and thus appear as the rescuing hero. Richardson is thus able to reconcile the demands of literary heroism with his concerns regarding virtuous behaviour in an often hypocritical social environment. Joseph, on the contrary, appears to come from a lower social echelon and cannot express his virtuous standards equally

publicly. The narrative strategy of the novel underlines this: whereas Grandison consistently rescues people, Joseph sometimes needs to be rescued, for example when he is in trouble with the law. Grandison represents an ideal held by many during the period. Joseph Andrews has the same potential in terms of moral goodness but his behaviour, his sometimes excessive language, his apparent low social status and his blundering naivete render him a comic figure rather than an ideal. Joseph is described in ch.8, pp.33-4 - this is the sort of physical description one usually associates with heroines, not heroes - reflects the fact that Joseph is amorously pursued as well as pursuing!

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

Joseph Andrews (1742)

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

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

Joseph resists Lady Booby's sexual advances in a neat parody of Pamela's behaviour. In I, ch 5 Lady Booby is lying in bed and comments hopefully, 'I have trusted myself with a Man alone, naked in Bed; suppose you should have any wicked Intentions upon my Honour'. Joseph protests, somewhat fatuously, 'that he never had the least evil Design against her'(ch.5, p.25).

Joseph's letter to Pamela parallels her letters to her family in Richardson's novel: it is apparently modest but the detail is inappropriate to true modesty and suggests some vanity. He comments, like Pamela, 'I never loved to tell the Secrets of my Master's Family'(I, ch.6, pp.26-7) but proceeds to do just that. Were it not for his constant protestations of innocence, we might be tempted to assume that the prurient detail suggested a rather more knowing character, as has been suggested of Pamela. Joseph writes: 'she ordered me to sit down by her Bed-side, when she was in naked Bed; and she held my Hand, and talked exactly as a Lady does to her Sweetheart'(p.27) which, he assures us, he only knows from seeing plays.

Lady Booby expostulates angrily, 'Did ever Mortal hear of a Man's Virtue! Did ever the greatest, or the gravest Men pretend to any of this Kind!(I, ch.8, p.36). Clearly the answer to her rhetorical question is 'yes'. While seriously considering the issue of virtue, Fielding seems amused by the idea of male chastity and enjoys playing with the incongruity. Fielding's Tom Jones, a likeable and slightly roguish character, does not 'pretend to the gift of chastity, more than [his] neighbours'(p.668).

Fielding exposes this double standard satirically but never fatally. He presents playfully an issue which he knows will provoke amusement but serious questions are implied about masculine and feminine chastity. Joseph, being male, is less problematic than a female character and provides an alternative forum for discussion. Fielding is able to avoid the social implications of female chastity and can give free rein to his humour. Joseph's comment 'I hope, I shall have more Resolution and more Grace than to part with my Virtue to any Lady upon Earth'(I, ch.10, p.41) satirises Pamela and the strict notion of virtue as chastity which she embodies but its comic context precludes us from taking him too seriously.

Joseph's position as a serious commentator on virtue is undermined by his comic presentation: he

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

The novel of sentiment was, at least in theory, deeply concerned with moral issues. *Joseph Andrews* questions the definition of virtue, clearly bearing its property basis in mind. Sometimes playfully, sometimes seriously, Fielding advocates the importance of male virtue in Christian terms: charity, long-suffering, even chastity.

Fielding plays with sentimental conventions regarding heroines too in the figure of Fanny, who is described in II,ch.12,pp.136-7. She is plump, has slightly uneven teeth and a complexion marked, albeit not badly, by smallpox. Her complexion is 'a little injured by the Sun, but overspread with such a Bloom, that the finest Ladies would have exchanged all their White for it'. She's not perfect in terms of romantic conventions of beauty but she has a natural, healthy beauty and, crucially for those of you enthusiastically studying the literature of sensibility, 'a Sensibility [which] appeared almost incredible; and a Sweetness...beyond either Imitation or Description', together with 'a natural Gentility'.

Sentimental constructs of character are related to debates concerning nature versus nurture in terms of character determination. In Bk IV, ch 7 Fielding addresses the issue of whether or not femininity is a social construct. The delightfully named Slipslop provides a humorous view of a different side of feminine sexuality to that embodied by Fanny - have a look at Bk 1, ch 6. Fielding reveals some common ground with Richardson, arguing that women need masculine protection: 'Learn...my fair countrywomen, to consider your own weakness, and the many occasions on which the strength of a man may be useful to you'(III, ch 2). Yet going by his presentation of Slipslop, Joseph would appear to be the one in need of protection!

Sentimental literature considered a variety of moral issues as it sought to present ideal moral behaviour for both men and women. Chastity was the primary personal virtue but charity was the quintessential public virtue.

In *Joseph Andrews* we find Trulliber, who talks a lot about charity but does nothing, embodying a criticism of contemporary society and its concern for talking about virtue and social goodness but its lack of action. Bk II, chs 14 and 15 is important in this context because Adams debates Christian behaviour, in particular charity, with Parson Trulliber, who is 'reputed a Man of great Charity: for tho' he never gave a Farthing, he had always that Word in his Mouth'(II,ch.15,p.152). We have an example of this kind of hypocrisy earlier in the novel when Joseph is robbed and stripped and thrown in a ditch; a coach passes and the passengers don't want to have anything to do with him but the poor postillion gives Joseph his coat, which Fielding tell us is his 'only garment'; he chooses to suffer the cold to protect Joseph. Interestingly, this lad is subsequently transported for robbing a hen-roost, underlining his lack of social respectability but also his poverty, not to mention the lack of moral perspective in a legal system which will transport a fundamentally good young man for something so trivial.

Fielding felt very strongly about active expressions of virtue such as charity and often lampoons the contemporary obsession with propriety and the appearance of virtue; the passengers on the coach would regard themselves as considerably more respectable than the postillion, and would have a better social reputation, but their morality is at best skin deep, something they confuse with propriety, merely an appearance of virtue.

To put things in a modern context, it's the equivalent of expensively dressed people walking past the Big Issue sellers and complaining that they lower the tone of the neighbourhood, or people complaining to organisations such as Childline for dealing with child abuse because it isn't 'proper'; it isn't 'nice'. Charity may be a familiar construct of moral literature of sentiment but it is also a genuine expression of social concern in an age of brutal poverty contrasting with almost unimaginable riches and

privilege.

Sheridan satirises such attitudes in *School for Scandal* - look at Act 5 sc i in particular. Rowley comments that Joseph Surface 'appears to have as much speculative benevolence as any private gentleman in the kingdom, 'tho' he is seldom so sensual as to indulge himself in the exercise of it'. Sheridan is lampooning the notion of the importance of a strong feeling response to distress; at its best, it may be expressed in charity but all too often, it is simply indulged as an emotion with no practical moral response - the equivalent in our own time to people crying when they see children dying due to famine on TV but failing to do anything about it.

Sheridan's comedy is lighter than Fielding's because Sheridan focuses on the absurdity of hypocrisy rather than the social evils it can engender; Joseph Surface seems to see his hypocrisy as a social skill, commenting proudly, 'there needs no small degree of address [or skill] to gain the reputation of benevolence without incurring the expense. The silver ore of pure charity is an expensive article in the catalogue of a man's good qualities - whereas the sentimental French plate I use instead of it, makes just as good a show, and pays no tax'. Note the association of artificial and superficial sentiment with the French - the English never miss an opportunity to blame the French! Joseph, described by Rowley as 'a man of sentiment', is forever spouting moral 'sentiments' which conveniently cost nothing. Sir Peter perhaps speaks for us all when he expostulates, 'if you have any regard for me, never let me hear you utter anything like - a sentiment - I have had enough of *them* to serve me the rest of my life!'(end Act 5 sc ii).

Sterne also satirises such attitudes in *Sentimental Journey*. Yorick initially rationalises his lack of charity to the monk, later admitting 'A better reason was, I had predetermined not to give him a single sous'(p.30). The narrative is full of such self-conscious irony, undercutting the narrator but also those around him, for eg, he reveals the basis of some charity to be self-interest: think of the beggar in Paris who gains charity by flattering people (p.133). Jean Paul Sartre commented, 'The poor don't know that their function in life is to exercise our generosity'.

Sterne employs the conventions of sensibility but simultaneously questions them by exposing them to humorous analysis. 'What a large volume of adventures may be grasped within this little span of life by him who interests his heart in everything' - this is central to the notion of the man of feeling - the ability to interest his heart in what he sees. The experience of travel is inevitably important in that it provides opportunities for wider experience of life or the opportunity to react voyeuristically to other people's problems, to live vicariously, reacting emotionally to their experiences, rather than having experiences of one's own.

What do you make of passages such as that on p.66: 'with what a moral delight will it crown my journey, in sharing in the sickening incidents of a tale of misery told to me by such a sufferer? to see her weep! and though I cannot dry up the fountain of her tears, what an exquisite sensation is there still left, in wiping them away from off the cheeks of the first and fairest of women'.

I'm not going to tell you what to make of this - it's a genuine question - I want you to think about what YOU make of it. Bad luck!

Sensibility, with its focus on proper behaviour, could be interpreted in 1 of 2 ways: Richardson appears to be asking us to take its moral concern seriously; Fielding approaches it with a rather more cynical eye, recognising its potential for moral teaching but also its potential for hypocrisy and absurdity.

For example, Fielding lampoons the teachings of conduct books, which contained moral advice for young people, particularly women, often warning against masculine wiles. Richardson's *Pamela* is in some respects a fictional conduct book. Fielding lampoons such teaching in *Joseph Andrews*: 'at the Age of seven or something earlier, Miss is instructed by her Mother, that Master is a very Monstrous kind of Animal, who will, if she suffers him to come too near her, infallibly eat her up, and grind her to pieces...that she must never have any Affection towards him; for if she should, all her Friends in Petticoats would esteem her a Traitor, point at her, and hunt her out of their Society'(IV,ch 7,p.268).

Fielding's comic irony can render his exact moral position unclear at times but he addresses some 'sentimental' issues such as charity, moral feeling and marriage with a degree of seriousness, for eg the question of whether or not economic factors should be taken into account in one's choice of partner. Think of the story of Leonora, which acts as a warning against mercenary marriage choices, with Leonora left with neither her beloved Horatio nor Bellarmine's fortune. See II,ch.4,pp.90-104;ch.6,pp.111-5.

Just as Pamela embodies feminine ideals of conduct appropriate to her status as conduct book heroine, Joseph embodies ideals of masculine moral conduct, at times in spoof form but at others very seriously. His choice of marriage partner is based on love and virtue, not materialistic concerns and of

course he spends much of his time discoursing on virtue.

Joseph's insistence on chastity leaves him open to the criticism that his virtue is passive and negative, consisting simply in 'not doing something'. During his adventures on the road, adventures we would associate with a picaro (hero of the picaresque novel with its panorama of life and the associated 'spice'), Fielding is able to show that Joseph has a more active side to his virtue: he shows charity and what Fielding refers to as 'good nature'. Tom Jones is perhaps Fielding's ultimate embodiment of 'good nature', that is, the ability to empathise with others and feel their joys and their misfortunes. Tom doesn't have Joseph's chastity or his spiritual standards but, like Joseph, he cares for people and actively helps them.

In *Joseph Andrews* Mr Wilson learns to appreciate this active virtue (III,chs.3-4,pp.179-204) and marries someone who embodies charity: he fell in love with a coquette but learns to value (not surprisingly!) the goodness of the daughter of the man who bought his lottery ticket. It wins and she sends him £200 when he is destitute - huge amount of money in those days. They marry and live in peaceful and virtuous retirement.

This idea of virtue as charity is related to the latitudinarian teaching that salvation is earned by good works. Fielding uses Adams as a mouthpiece for such ideas when he argues against Whitfield's 'detestable Doctrine of Faith against good Works' in Bk I,ch.17,p.72 and Bk III,ch.13,pp.244-6. Fielding is commenting on the contemporary debate about faith versus works. The well known preacher Whitfield angered those who were concerned with being 'respectable' because he taught that all men were equal and all were sinners who could only be saved by repentance and faith. Some misinterpreted this to mean that works are irrelevant. Whitfield followed biblical teaching that faith alone saves but that faith will be expressed in good works so they do matter but as an expression of faith, not as something which can save mankind, the point being that if humans could get to heaven by good works, there would have been no need for Christ to come and die. Fielding had some sympathy for the Latitudinarian focus on good works; hence both Joseph and Adams are actively engaged in them.

However, Fielding approaches most things with a mixture of cynicism and humour and we certainly see this in this novel. Fielding's attitude to relationships is much more blunt than Richardson's, which caused some offence, but it is perhaps more honest. Even the virtuous Joseph Andrews experiences desire for his beloved. We see this clearly in Bk IV,ch.7,p.274: the Ravisher 'tore her Handkerchief from Fanny's Neck' and so she stands 'bare-neck'd in the Presence of Joseph'. He is divided between 'the greatest Delight which the Organs of Sight were capable of conveying to his Soul' and respecting her embarrassment, 'so truly did his Passion for her deserve the noble Name of Love'. Adams lectures Joseph about his desires: 'All Passions are criminal in their Excess, and even Love itself, if it is not subservient to our Duty, may render us blind to it'(p.277). Adams tells him his love 'savours too much of the Flesh'(p.279) but Mrs Adams retorts, 'A Wife hath a Right to insist on her Husband's loving her as much as ever he can', reminding him, 'I am certain you do not preach as you practise...you have been a loving and a cherishing Husband to me'(p.280).

Fielding is humorous and direct with regard to sexuality, something which is perhaps closer to the ideals of the 1990s than the 1740s. Richardson didn't approve of this but then Fielding didn't approve of what he saw as the latent hypocrisy in Richardson's work.

It is perhaps difficult to do justice both to Fielding's humour and to his moral and socio-legal concerns, but we need not see them as incompatible: Fielding uses humour to gain the reader's sympathy for his ideas, to sustain interest, to surprise and of course to entertain. Fielding seems to see the humorous potential in most situations; but although he revelled in comic irony, he also wrestled with the most serious socio-legal problems of his day, not only as a magistrate but as a writer.

Joseph Andrews is a satire influenced by the picaresque and, as such, provides the reader with a variety of diverting adventures, through which Fielding is able to comment on social issues: marrying for money (Leonora), gambling (Mr Wilson) inheritance (Wilson) and of course charity (Adams versus Trulliber), the social divisions of rank and the attendant privileges, ineptitude and corruption within those representing the legal system and injustice manifested within the laws themselves.

On the one hand, Fielding wants us to laugh at our follies and those of our fellow man; on the other, he expects us to be moved by the injustices he presents. We can try to pin this novel down and find its 'meaning' but if we concentrate on it too much, we will miss the playful humour. If we simply enjoy the comedy, we will miss some very serious and useful socio-legal comment. We just can't win - and I'm not sure Fielding would want us to.

