

Prudes, Lusciousness and
Joseph Andrews

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It is not surprising that in selecting one kind of writing about sexuality as the occasion for his own counter-narratives Fielding created intractable difficulties for himself. Parody demands likeness, as the relationship between Richardson's novel *Pamela* and his own *Shamela* shows, and even the measure of liberation from parody that *Joseph Andrews* provides turns out to be minimal when desire and its deferment are engaged. The parodic nature of Fielding's project in his earliest novels almost guarantees that they will subvert themselves because of his commitment to exploring sexuality. Like Richardson he was a product of his own times and his writing is therefore partly determined by (as well as helping to define) eighteenth-century notions of sexuality, which can seem peculiarly alien to readers today. And these difficulties are compounded by the nature of prose fiction itself, to Fielding literally novel. He saw himself as an experimenter within a new form. Perhaps historically he was hardly in a position to realize that while protesting vigorously about voyeurism he had committed himself to an intensely voyeuristic medium.

The parodic *Shamela* overcomes voyeurism by robustly converting it into an opportunity for comedy. Fielding found his distinctive voice as a novelist from the beginning, as though his forced retirement from playwriting¹ made him value the novel as a form precisely because it gave him a direct presence as narrator not possible to him in the theatre, while still allowing theatrical presentations of a variety of selves. One of those personae used to be equated with Fielding himself, with common sense, robustness, heartiness and so forth² (less easy since the

1 See Martin C. Battestin with Ruthe R. Battestin, *Henry Fielding: A Life* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 222-34.

2 'What a genius! what a vigour! what a bright-eyed intelligence and observation! what a wholesome hatred for meanness and knavery! what a vast sympathy! what a cheerfulness! what a manly relish of life! what

Battestins' biography). And his parody of *Pamela* helped lead to the equation. The creator of Parson Oliver, in the introduction to *Shamela*, had identified one source of Richardson's enormous popular appeal with what would become hallmark Fielding clarity:

And notwithstanding our Author's Professions of Modesty, which in my Youth I have heard at the Beginning of an Epilogue, I cannot agree that my Daughter should entertain herself with some of his Pictures; which I do not expect to be contemplated without Emotion, unless by one of my Age and Temper, who can see the Girl lie on her Back, with one Arm round Mrs. *Jewkes* and the other round the Squire, naked in Bed, with his Hand on her Breasts, &c. with as much Indifference as I read any other Page in the whole Novel.³

The episode in *Pamela* to which these remarks refer is clearly voyeuristic as far as Fielding is concerned. He mocks Richardson by using the mask of an unexcitable elderly parson but in such a way that he casts doubt, by the very explicitness of his description of the naked Pamela in bed with Mr B----, on the parson's lack of excitation. And Fielding of course opens the way for heavy censure of Richardson by invoking the innocent figure of the 'Daughter'.

Parson Oliver's remarks amount to an advertisement for Fielding's own reworking of the scene in *Shamela*. Fielding is out to destroy Richardsonian voyeurism, and he does so by making his own heroine's innocence a sham. Her complicity in the scene turns desire and fearfulness into comedy:

We had not been a Bed half an Hour, when my Master came pit a pat into the Room in his Shirt as before, I pretended not

a love of human kind! what a poet is here!—watching, meditating, brooding, creating! What multitudes of truths has that man left behind him! What generations he has taught to laugh wisely and fairly!' 'Hogarth, Smollett, and Fielding', in *The Works of William Makepeace Thackeray*, 13 vols (London: 1907), VII, 584.

- 3 Henry Fielding, *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews And of his friend Mr. Abraham Adams AND An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews*, ed. Douglas Brooks-Davies, *The World's Classics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p.324. Further references are to this edition and appear in the text.

to hear him, and Mrs. *Jewkes* laid hold of one Arm, and he pulled down the Bed-cloaths and came into Bed on the other Side, and took my other Arm and laid it under him, and fell a kissing one my Breasts as if he would have devoured it; I was then forced to awake, and began to struggle with him, Mrs. *Jewkes* crying why don't you do it? I have one Arm secure, if you can't deal with the rest I am sorry for you. He was as rude as possible to me; but I remembered, Mamma, the Instructions you gave me to avoid being ravished, and followed them, which soon brought him to Terms, and he promised on quitting my hold, that he would leave the Bed. (*Shamela*, pp. 340-1)

By means of this parody Fielding amply makes the point that Richardson's scene is pornographic. His own description deflates excitement by its comic resilience and by its heroine's control over what is happening. Booby is the victim of his own desires. *Shamela* and Mrs *Jewkes*, for different reasons, wish only to inflame him further. Richardson, on the other hand, dramatizes attempted rape:

What words shall I find, my dear mother, (for my father should not see this shocking part) to describe the rest, and my confusion, when the guilty wretch took my left arm, and laid it under his neck as the vile procuress held my right; and then he clasped me round the waist!

... he kissed me with frightful vehemence; and then his voice broke upon me like a clap of thunder: 'Now Pamela', said he, 'is the time of reckoning come, that I have threatened!' I screamed out for help; but there was nobody to help me: and both my hands were secured, as I said.⁴

Only Pamela's fainting spares her, but not before modesty has been violated:

'O sir', exclaimed I, 'leave me, do but leave me, and I will do any thing I ought to do'. 'Swear then to me', said he, 'that you will accept my proposals!' And then (for this was all detestable grimace) he put his hand in my bosom.

4 Samuel Richardson, *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded*, 1740 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), p.241. Further references are to this edition and appear in the text.

With struggling, fright, terror, I quite fainted away, and did not come to myself soon; so that they both, from the cold sweats I was in, thought me dying. And I remember no more, than that, when, with great difficulty, they brought me to myself, she was sitting on one side of the bed, with her clothes on; and he on the other, in his gown and slippers.

When I saw them there, I sat up in my bed, nothing about my neck, without any regard to what appearance I must make: and he soothing me with an aspect of pity and concern, I put my hand to his mouth, and said, 'O tell me, yet tell me not, what I have suffered in this distress!' And I talked quite wild, and knew not what; for I was on the point of distraction. (p. 242)

Richardson's editors have shown that in subsequent editions he responded to charges of impropriety by de-emphasizing Pamela's nakedness and by limiting the number of times that Mr B---- succeeds in putting his hand in her bosom (before their marriage). But while this might have diminished verbal impropriety the central situation of male sexual appetite and female resistance until marriage was obtained remained. When Fielding decided to follow *Shamela* with *Joseph Andrews* it was this central situation that he wished to address. His first attack on *Pamela* had been conducted essentially in terms of a more realistic account of the master and (female) servant relationship, substituting for virginal fear experienced calculation. The title page announces Fielding's amendment of Richardson's unlikely representations: 'An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews. In which, the many notorious FALSHOODS 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' (*Shamela*, p.313).

Fielding has very different ambitions in *Joseph Andrews*. His elaborate Preface does indeed emphasize realism when it states that 'a Comic Writer should of all others be the least excused for deviating from Nature' because 'Life every where furnishes an accurate Observer with the Ridiculous' (p.4). Nonetheless Joseph is intended, in conjunction with Parson Adams, to represent Miltonic heroic virtue, uncloistered and unfugitive, in

contrast to Pamela's passivity. It is to be done comically, but Fielding is typical of his times in abhorring any idea of a moral vacuum. The 'true Ridiculous' derives from 'Affectation', which arises as a result either of 'Vanity, or Hypocrisy' (p.6). Fielding gravely concludes: 'Great Vices are the proper Objects of our Detestation, smaller Faults of our Pity: but Affectation appears to me the only true Source of the Ridiculous' (p. 8).

The theory 'concerning this kind of Writing, which I do not remember to have seen hitherto attempted in our Language' (p.3), has thus been set out with programmatic clarity before the 'Adventures' begin. However just before concluding the prefatory remarks, Fielding pauses to consider his actual practices. And it is here that difficulties insinuate themselves:

But perhaps it may be objected to me, that I have against my own Rules introduced Vices, and of a very black Kind into this Work. To which I shall answer: First, that it is very difficult to pursue a Series of human Actions and keep clear from them. Secondly, That the Vices to be found here, are rather the accidental Consequences of some human Frailty, or Foible, than Causes habitually existing in the Mind. Thirdly, That they are never set forth as the Objects of Ridicule but Detestation. Fourthly, That they are never the principal Figure at that Time on the Scene; and lastly, they never produce the intended Evil. (p.8)

As the second sentence suggests, realism demands the presence of vice. But its appearance and acknowledgement immediately subvert Fielding's theory, as he recognizes in his third point: ridicule, which he has just made the centrepiece of this new kind of literature is displaced, where vice is concerned, by detestation. Already therefore its presence in a work forces modifications. Fielding suggests a degree of control by stating that it is an 'introduced' presence, but admits quickly that vices are inevitable in a realistic text. His pursuit of 'a series of human actions' may result in the subversion of the moral structures he has attempted to put in place and human sexuality may prove to be the occasion of it.

The initial situation in *Joseph Andrews* is itself equivocal as parody and corrective. Instead of a Shamela who represents a

more likely version of Pamela, Fielding now provides a male variation. It appears to be intrinsically funny that Joseph defends his chastity as eagerly as did Pamela. The situation of an older woman pursuing an inexperienced young man seems to have been—and may still be—a subject for qualitatively different responses from that of older man seducing younger woman. ('The situation of Lady Booby trying to seduce her chaste footman Joseph Andrews is inherently very funny', according to C.J. Rawson).⁵ Longstanding conventions and social attitudes are in question here and it is no surprise that Fielding is unable to present Lady Booby with any consistency.

But Fielding does settle on one strategy early on to accommodate the tension between sexuality and repression which Joseph's characterization consists in. It would spoil the joke and rob the story of its dynamism were Joseph to suffer from diminished libido. Thus Fielding indicates that Lady Booby is not without some attraction for Joseph, although she remains an object of ridicule as she attempts to talk him into her bed: 'Are you not a Man? and without Vanity I may pretend to some Charms' (p.26). Lest there be any doubt as to the answer to the question of manhood Fielding inserts the response in Joseph's letter to sister Pamela:

'Mr. *Adams* hath often told me, that Chastity is as great a Virtue in a Man as in a Woman. He says he never knew any more than his Wife, and I shall endeavour to follow his Example. Indeed, it is owing entirely to his excellent Sermons and Advice, together with your Letters, that I have been able to resist a Temptation, which he says no Man complies with, but he repents in this World, or is damned for it in the next; and why should I trust to Repentance on my Death-bed, since I may die in my sleep? What fine things are good Advice and good Examples! But I am glad she turned me out of the Chamber as she did: for I had once almost forgotten every word Parson *Adams* had ever said to me'. (p.41)

Mrs Slipslop, by contrast, is no threat to Fielding's creation of a sexual identity for Joseph which comprises potent virility

5 *Henry Fielding* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), p. 27.

restrained by Christian chastity.⁶ She represents sexuality in a form apparently so grotesque that disgusted recoil is made to seem normative. She incorporates male fantasies of rapacious female sexual appetite. Gender, class and age combine to produce revulsion in the narrator's tones so that it can be readily imagined in Joseph's response:

She was a Maiden Gentlewoman of about Forty-five Years of Age, who having made a small slip in her Youth had continued a good Maid ever since. She was not at this time remarkably handsome; being very short, and rather too corpulent in Body, and somewhat red, with the Addition of Pimples in the Face. Her Nose was likewise rather too large, and her Eyes too little; nor did she resemble a Cow so much in her Breath, as in two brown Globes which she carried before her; one of her Legs was also a little shorter than the other, which occasioned her to limp as she walked. This fair Creature had long cast the Eyes of Affection on *Joseph*. (pp.27-8)

The attractive Betty obviously provides a greater challenge to Joseph's potency as virile youthful hero than either of the first two women. The episode in which her ardours, aroused by Joseph, are ultimately satisfied not by him but by Mr Tow-wouse runs the risk of making him into a humourless prig like Blifil in *Tom Jones* whom Fielding chastizes. He circumvents this in Joseph's case by technical expertise. He presents the aftermath of the incident first, the sudden broil between Betty and Mrs Tow-wouse—'a most hideous Uproar began in the Inn' (p. 73)—abruptly terminating the literary and theological discussions between Adams, Barnabas and the book-seller. This farcical eruption sets the tone of vulgarity and lewdness for a scene which begins with Joseph as the innocent occasion of indecency (by his inadvertent inflaming of the chamber-maid) and ends in Mr Tow-wouse's discovery by his wife with his pants down. By the time the shouting-match between Mrs Tow-wouse and Betty

6 'Joey, whom for a good Reason we shall hereafter call JOSEPH' (p. 24): Martin C. Battestin explains the 'allusion to the chastity of the biblical Joseph, who resisted the solicitations of Potiphar's wife (Genesis XXXIX. 7-20)' in his edition of *Joseph Andrews, The Wesleyan Edition of the Works of Henry Fielding* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), p. 29; and quotes the Abbé des Fontaines who commented on the allusion in 1743 (xxxvi).

is over, Joseph's rather passive role in the provocation of the affray has become peripheral. And Fielding introduces a new ploy here, on which he will increasingly rely. Joseph asserts virility despite sexual passivity by Fielding's displacing it on to his capacity for physical force: Betty 'had gone too far to recede, and grew so very indecent, that *Joseph* was obliged, contrary to his Inclination, to use some Violence to her, and taking her in his Arms, he shut her out of the Room, and locked the Door'. (p.76)

Joseph thus retains the desired mixture of virtue and potency, but Fielding's text has become noticeably less innocent of Richardsonian sexual excitement. The presentation of Betty is comic no doubt but nevertheless still erotic:

the vanquished Fair-One, whose Passions were already raised, and which were not so whimsically capricious that one Man only could lay them, though perhaps, she would have rather preferred that one: The vanquished Fair-One quietly submitted, I say, to her Master's Will, who had just attained the Accomplishment of his Bliss, when Mrs. *Tow-wouse* unexpectedly entered the Room. (p.77)

The joke about Betty's capriciousness is a good one, reversing expectations, but the text remains intimate. And its erotic potential is perhaps only limited by Fielding's presentation of it as a farce which features merely the lower orders. This is underlined when Mrs Tow-wouse rebukes her husband:

'Is this the manner in which you behave to one who brought you a Fortune, and preferred you to so many Matches, all your Betters? To abuse my Bed, my own Bed, with my own Servant: but I'll maul the Slut, I'll tear her nasty Eyes out; was ever such a pitiful Dog, to take up with such a mean Trollop? If she had been a Gentlewoman like my self, it had been some excuse, but a beggarly saucy dirty Servant-Maid'. (pp.73-4)

Fielding's own class attitudes, not unexpectedly, are not altogether dissimilar to Mrs Tow-wouse's. What is permissible in a 'Betty' (the generic name stands out) is not allowed to Fanny of course. While the latter's is a similarly contemptuous naming, her happy fate as wife of one of the rural gentry at the end of the novel precludes her from the pre-marital activities suggested by her name. Betty's liberated sexual history is a function of her

status as non-person in class terms: 'her not being entirely constant to *John*, with whom she permitted *Tom Whipwell* the Stage-Coachman, and now and then a handsome young Traveller, to share her Favours' (pp.75-6). For someone like her it is much the same as prostitution: she submits to 'the whole Artillery of kissing, flattering, bribing' (p.75). It is ironic that Betty should be so appealing a figure. Her graceful private identity comes at the expense of a social one.

The presentation of Betty's love-life contains elements of voyeurism, but there is nothing here or elsewhere that approaches, say, Cleland. Still, the attempt to offer an alternative to Richardson's kind of writing about sexuality clearly did not altogether succeed because a degree of voyeurism remains. And this is partly due to the nature of novel-writing itself. Fielding illustrates this when Betty retorts to Mrs Tow-wouse, 'if I have been wicked, I am to answer for it myself in the other World, but I have done nothing that's unnatural' (p.74). Betty's indulgence of appetite is contrasted with Joseph's path of Christian chastity, but she still acknowledges that sexual morality may have a spiritual dimension. More interestingly, she also defends herself metaphorically against the novel as a form, as well as against the wronged wife. For although she has just been discovered in a most intimate physical condition, she alone will account for her spiritual destiny in the other world where neither outraged marital virtue nor curious author can pursue her. Fielding's observations of her finally respect her spiritual confidentiality at least, while violating her sexual privacy.

Betty's story perhaps tempts the author's prurience but with the interpolated tale of Leonora, Horatio and Bellarmine in Book Three he is clearly back on safe ground, using affected manners as his target for ridicule in line with his prefatory declarations. It is noticeable, however, that Leonora and her aunt are the occasion of anxieties about female sexuality, and that Horatio represents a variation of Joseph's steadfast fidelity.⁷ Leonora

7 Fielding has not yet achieved the sophistication of *Tom Jones* in which Tom's adoration of the chaste female ideal in Sophie is combined with a measure of relaxing libertinism—for the male. Lady Bellaston, unlike Mrs Slipslop, is permitted to be attractive.

and her aunt are swayed by ostentatious display to neglect Horatio's true worth and such fickleness is duly chastized as Bellarmine rapidly decamps when the money is not forthcoming. However, by making the Leonora episode centre on the contemporary social world, Fielding ruthlessly exposes the fantasy elements of Joseph's and Fanny's successful union. Leonora's aunt voices the social conservatism which always threatens to overturn completely the slight, unlikely central love story:

'Yes, but, Madam, what will the World say?' answered *Leonora*; 'will not they condemn me?' 'The World is always on the side of Prudence', cries the Aunt, 'and would surely condemn you if you sacrificed your Interest to any Motive whatever. O, I know the World very well, and you shew your own Ignorance, my Dear, by your Objection. O' my Conscience the World is wiser. I have lived longer in it than you, and I assure you there is not any thing worth our Regard besides Money: nor did I ever know one Person who married from other Considerations, who did not afterwards heartily repent it'. (pp.98-9)

The whole episode creates a kind of vacuum in the text's observations of women which only Fanny can fill. Fielding has constructed an unsettling vision of fickle female appetite and moral emptiness (typically, the women fall out) which urgently requires Fanny's virtues to correct it, banishing these male anxieties by a more reassuring representation of womanhood. So Fielding now sets to work to create in Fanny images of female loveliness and virtue sufficient to earn some credibility for Joseph's heroic dedication to them. This is not the way of the world according to Congreve for whom the wit, as well as the attraction of Millamant and Mirabel, guarantees their happiness. With Fanny and Joseph, Fielding relies on the sheer erotic tensions that he can generate in the text, supplemented by the account of Mr Wilson's amatory follies which keeps the social world well in view.

It may be a little surprising that a text which uses an attack on *Pamela* as its pretext should first display its youthful heroine on the point of being raped. This seems like imitation rather than parody or ridicule, the excitation of virtue in distress generating

the narrative interest: 'Adams, who, on coming up to the Place whence the Noise proceeded, found a Woman struggling with a Man, who had thrown her on the Ground, and had almost overpowered her' (pp.122-3). The account Fanny gives to Adams of what led up to the incident dissipates the broad comedy of the parson's fight with her assailant — 'dashing his Head ... into the Stomach of Adams, he tumbled him on his Back (p. 123)—to focus on her sexual danger: "on a sudden, being come to those Bushes, he desired her to stop, and after some rude Kisses, which she resisted, and some Entreaties, which she rejected, he laid violent hands on her, and was attempting to execute his wicked Will, when, she thanked G—, he [Adams] timely came up and prevented him'" (p.125). There is none of the Richardsonian play of attraction and resistance here, no price set on virtue, but Fanny's body becomes none the less, if intermittently, the focus of interest from this point on—and the subject certainly tempers the monotony of the one it now accompanies, Joseph's retention of his chastity.

Fielding presents both subjects in tandem, of course, by this stage of the novel, titillating interest in different directions such as whether Joseph will remain chaste, Fanny secure from other men and even whether incest will become a real possibility. But for this development to work, Fielding seeks first to imprint on the reader Fanny's irresistible charms. He begins with an outright appeal to voyeurism, on behalf of the other characters at the alehouse, the reader and himself as narrator:

Fanny sat likewise down by the Fire; but was much more impatient at the Storm. She presently engaged the Eyes of the Host, his Wife, the Maid of the House, and the young Fellow who was their Guide; they all conceived they had never seen any thing half so handsome; and indeed, Reader, if thou art of an amorous Hue, I advise thee to skip over the next Paragraph; which to render our History perfect, we are obliged to set down, humbly hoping, that we may escape the Fate of *Pygmalion*.

Fielding is very aware of himself as the creator of Fanny's charms so that the classical image of the sculptor becomes the almost inevitable expression of the lasciviousness that seeks to create as well as to enjoy as perfect a female body as he can

devise.⁸ Reference to the other characters and to the reader attempts to universalize the narrator's response to the masturbatory image. It is one presented by as painterly an evocation as Fielding can achieve.⁹

Fanny was now in the nineteenth Year of her Age; she was tall and delicately shaped; but not one of those slender young Women, who seem rather intended to hang up in the Hall of an Anatomist, than for any other Purpose. On the contrary, she was so plump, that she seemed bursting through her tight Stays, especially in the Part which confined her swelling Breasts. Nor did her Hips want the Assistance of a Hoop to extend them. The exact Shape of her Arms, denoted the Form of those Limbs which she concealed; and tho' they were a little reddened by her Labour, yet if her Sleeve slipt above her Elbow, or her Handkerchief discovered any part of her Neck, a Whiteness appeared which the finest *Italian* Paint would be unable to reach. (p.136)

There is more in this vein—and it is interesting that Fielding at the outset implies that women do have a 'Purpose' by moving swiftly from 'tall and delicately shaped' to plumpness and 'swelling Breasts': babies of course, after necessary and pleasing preliminaries. When he eventually desists from the description he develops the scene into an extraordinary rendering of proxy sexual intercourse by means of Joseph's song. 'This lovely Creature was sitting by the Fire with *Adams*, when her Attention was suddenly engaged by a Voice from an inner Room, which sung the following Song': it is as though Joseph himself had also been present at the novel's initial presentation of the beautiful *Fanny*, just completed, and is excited into a musical appreciation. *Chloe's*—or *Fanny's*—'Beauties' have expectedly 'undone' the young swain, but once again the visual memory of her rescues desire: '*Nor she, nor no Tyrant's hard Power, / Her Image can tear from my Breast*' (p.137). The novel itself must be contented with this displacement of desire, in a double sense, because not only does it consist merely of words and their associated images

8 'We do not wish to imitate; we wish to perfect', Kenneth Clark, *The Nude: A Study of Ideal Art* (London: John Murray, 1956), p.4.

9 Cf. John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London and Harmondsworth: BBC and Penguin, 1972), pp.45-64.

but even in the form of words expectancy is heightened only to be disappointed:

*Transported with Madness I flew,
And eagerly seiz' d on my Bliss;
Her Bosom but half she withdrew,
But half she refus' d my fond Kiss.*

*Advances like these made me bold,
I whisper' d her, Love,—we're alone,
The rest let Immortals unfold,
No Language can tell but their own.*

*Ah! Chloe, expiring, I cry' d,
How long I thy Cruelty bore?
Ah! Strephon, she blushing reply' d,
You ne'er was so pressing before.*

The punning climax to this yields a rich comic effect. Adams looks up from his Aeschylus: 'casting his Eyes on *Fanny*, he cried out, "Bless us, you look extremely pale." "Pale! Mr. *Adams*," says she, "O Jesus!" and fell backwards in her Chair' (p.138). For a moment the liaison between the song and the main narrative is suggestive and funny, but *Fanny*—we quickly realize—is of course not *Chloe*, and *Fielding* rapidly switches to her reunion with *Joseph* who now enters the room. Once again, though, it is striking both how intimate is the scene and how aware of onlooking *Fielding* is:

... he saw her open her beloved Eyes, and heard her with the softest Accent whisper, 'Are you *Joseph Andrews*?' 'Art thou my *Fanny*?' he answered eagerly, and pulling her to his Heart, he imprinted numberless Kisses on her Lips, without considering who were present.

If Prudes are offended at the Lusciousness of this Picture, they may take their Eyes off from it, and survey *Parson Adams* dancing about the Room in a Rapture of Joy. Some Philosophers may perhaps doubt, whether he was not the happiest of the three; for the Goodness of his Heart enjoyed the Blessings which were exulting in the Breasts of both the other two, together with his own. (pp.138-9)

The witty obscenity of the lead-in and *Fielding's* references to 'Prudes' and 'Lusciousness' indicate some awareness of

fiction's voyeuristic qualities,¹⁰ yet there is also something of a wedding atmosphere in Adams's delighted capering. Later on he is shown in the role of auditor—or reader—'licking his Lips' (p.198) in delight when he hears of Mr and Mrs Wilson's love match. In both instances love and sexuality are witnessed, watched over, made into spectacle, and these moments merely anticipate Fanny's being brought to bed at the novel's climax. However this reunion occurs when the novel is only just at its half-way point, near the end of Book Two. Sterne was soon to demonstrate unequivocally in *Tristram Shandy* (1759-67) that the novel as a form exists by deferment, and this imaginary coupling of Fanny and Joseph as Chloe and faithful swain operates as an earnest of the novel's climax in their eventual union (when, ironically, another kind of deferment is adumbrated because the reader is removed as a spectator). Meanwhile the sexual adventures can continue, prompted by the eroticism promised by this scene and pursued hereafter.

Fielding reanimates the novel's sexual adventures in the renewal of Mrs Slipslop's comic designs on Joseph, not very amusingly equated by the narrator with Fanny's near-rape shortly before (p.143). But in Book Three the novel's interest in sexuality takes a different turn, showing the influence of Hogarth more markedly than ever in the account of Mr Wilson's progress and eventual rescue. This sorry story of the abuse of women and the pains of incontinence is pornographic in one strict sense, in its account of Mr Wilson's transactions with prostitutes,¹¹ but the emphasis on disease and disappointment dispels the salacity noticeable elsewhere. However, when he reaches the account of the Wilsons' married life, Fielding puts in place the domestic ideal ultimately reserved for Fanny and Joseph. The placement allows an account of the ideal not possible, for reasons of space and timing, at the novel's conclusion. It defines perfect relations

10 Anthony Powell's use of his Candaules and Gyges legend in *Temporary Kings* (London: Heinemann, 1973), wittily explores voyeurism in art and sexual relations (pp. 82-90). Powell presents a recessive effect by ironizing the curiosity of Nick Jenkins, his narrator. Fielding as narrator sanitizes his text by means of Adams's innocence.

11 The *OED* shows that the term derives from writing about harlots.

between man and wife—at the end of the scene Adams declares ‘that this was the Manner in which the People had lived in the Golden Age’ (p.204)—while Fielding still has leisure to explore them. By using Wilson, and Adams who listens and responds, Fielding stresses equality:

I am neither ashamed of conversing with my Wife, nor of playing with my Children: to say the Truth, I do not perceive that Inferiority of Understanding which the levity of Rakes, the Dulness of Men of Business, or the Austerity of the Learned would persuade us of in Women. As for my Woman, I declare I have found none of my own Sex capable of making juster Observations on Life, or of delivering them more agreeably; nor do I believe any one possessed of a faithfuller or braver Friend. (p.201)

This staunch declaration is perhaps the best illustration of the work’s official code of understanding between the sexes. It is noticeable that it emerges from conventional classical similes: ‘That beautiful young Lady, the *Morning*’ (p.200), ‘that gallant Person the Sun’ (p.201). It is as though Fielding’s conception of the novel’s potential for realism and for describing practicable ideals for harmony between women and men required a process of differentiation between the norms of classicism and the possibilities of what he saw as this radically new form of literature, the novel. The Preface may stress continuities between his new form of writing and the classical heritage, but the subsequent adventures depend for much of their comedy on mock-heroic disjunction. In this sense Mr Wilson’s view of relations between the sexes makes a break with the past. However the domestic ideal proposed does not remain by any means radically new in terms of equality, as the men soon make clear. For although Adams says that he often laments that his wife does not understand Greek, Mr Wilson is anxious not to be misunderstood: ‘The Gentleman smiled, and answered, he would not be apprehended to insinuate that his own had an Understanding above the Care of her Family, on the contrary, says he, my *Harriet* I assure you is a notable Housewife’ (p.202).¹²

12 Cf. Fielding’s line in his poem *To a Friend on the Choice of a Wife*, ‘Nor Wit, nor Learning proudly may she boast’, quoted by the Batestins: *Henry Fielding*, p.187.

This suave reassurance about women's education keeps them in their place. The central emphases remain erotic and maternal, as the narrative of Fanny's progress underlines. Her passive characterization is central to the second half of the novel, as the object of many and various attacks on her person with which the narrative colludes. The voyeuristic tone lingers: '*Joseph ... turned towards Fanny, and taking her by the Hand, began a Dalliance, which, tho' consistent with the purest Innocence and Decency, neither he would have attempted, nor she permitted before any Witness*' (p. 210). This passage shows very precisely the licence granted to the novel as a distinctive genre in Fielding's hands. It becomes ruthless in its annexation of private, intimate behaviour and here quietly celebrates the privileges it has claimed. Those very activities which in Fielding's own social world 'neither he would have attempted, nor she permitted before any Witness' are indeed witnessed now, by narrator and reader in collaboration. Social proprieties are sacrificed to fiction's need to know. The exposure and enjoyment of Fanny's body become the narrative's central thread as when she distracts attention from the parson-hunt and herself becomes the new prey in Book Three (pp. 215-17). The counter-narrative to *Pamela*, the story of Joseph's virtue, is demoted.

The text plays with desire and its deferment as Fanny escapes unwelcome attentions momentarily only to be attacked again, this time successfully. Her abduction by the Squire's men is immediately followed by the 'Discourse between the Poet and Player: of no other Use in this History, but to divert the Reader' (p. 231). The deliberate titillation of Fielding's procedure here, which prompts the reader's interest in Fanny's fate but refuses to satisfy it, is reinforced in the next chapter by transferring the frustration to Joseph, who is tied to the bed-post at the inn. He must listen to Adams's homily, which incites rather than assuages anxiety. It even suggests a kind of complicity in imagining what may happen to the woman at the mercy of the men:

'Be comforted, therefore, Child, I say be comforted. It is true you have lost the prettiest, kindest, loveliest, sweetest young Woman: One with whom you might have expected to have lived in Happiness, Virtue and Innocence. By whom you might

have promised yourself many little Darlings, who would have been the Delight of your Youth, and the Comfort of your Age. You have not only lost her, but have reason to fear the utmost Violence which Lust and Power can inflict upon her. Now indeed you may easily raise Ideas of Horror, which might drive you to Despair'. (pp. 235-6)

Joseph's response to Adams's long speech focuses on his own feelings of sexual possessiveness: 'O tell me', cries *Joseph*, 'that *Fanny* will escape back to my Arms, that they shall again inclose that lovely Creature, with all her Sweetness, all her untainted Innocence about her' (p. 236). The impression of complicity in *Fanny*'s discomfort and Joseph's distress is confirmed by the opening of the chapter which follows, where Fielding shows clearly that his policy has been to titillate and tease the reader:

Neither the facetious Dialogue which pass'd between the Poet and Player, nor the grave and truly solemn Discourse of Mr. *Adams*, will, we conceive, make the Reader sufficient Amends for the Anxiety which he must have felt on the account of poor *Fanny*, whom we left in so deplorable a Condition. We shall therefore now proceed to the Relation of what happened to that beautiful and innocent Virgin, after she fell into the wicked Hands of the Captain. (p. 238)

The episode and its commentary demonstrate how much the anti-pornographer resembles his target Richardson in his excitation over the spectacle of the defenceless woman. The novel's superego, as it were, finally exercises control when *Fanny* is saved, but not before the dark forces of the id have enjoyed their rape fantasy of 'the utmost Violence which Lust and Power can inflict upon her' (pp. 235-6), the prospect of arrival at the Squire's house 'where this delicate Creature was to be offered up a Sacrifice to the Lust of a Ravisher' (p. 238).¹³ Even *Fanny*'s rescuers, presumably with their eyes on the spectacle of 'a River of Tears' which 'ran down her lovely Cheeks, and wet the Handkerchief which covered her Bosom',

13 The text looks at the prospect of "'a little Stripping and Whipping'" (p. 258) as well, and later invokes Oedipus as it plays with incest as a possibility (pp. 293, 303).

share some of the inclinations of the would-be ravishers:¹⁴ 'That's a charming Wench! *Jack*; I wish I had been in the Fellow's Place whoever he is' (p. 239). Fanny is certainly no Pamela, but Fielding at times seems simply to make use of voyeuristic possibilities suggested by Richardson.

Book Four continues the process, and it seems to be the object of the text not only to accomplish Joseph's and Fanny's union but to undress Fanny for the reader's delectation, and to take him (Fielding, however conventionally, explicitly and expectedly refers to a male reader) as far as the nuptial bed before the curtains are drawn around it. Fielding wants to close the novel with Joseph and Fanny's union and the prospect of a child to it so he must insert before the ending a proleptic glimpse of the carnal pleasures in store for Joseph, if he is to indicate them at all, just as he has introduced the wedded contentment of Mr Wilson as an emblem of the happiness expected in his son's marriage. The setting now is the supposed safety of the novel's home village under Parson Adams's protection. Even here, though, Fanny is assaulted twice, by a Beau and his servant: Didapper 'caught her in his Arms and endeavoured to kiss her Breasts, which with all her Strength she resisted; and as our Spark was not of the *Herculean Race*, with some difficulty prevented'. The servant, left behind with Fanny to entreat further, proceeds to business on his own account: 'At last the Pimp, who had perhaps more warm Blood about him than his Master, began to sollicit for himself' (p. 272). Only Joseph's intervention saves her: 'coming up just as the Ravisher had torn her Handkerchief from her Breast, before his Lips had touched that Seat of Innocence and Bliss, he dealt him so lusty a Blow in that part of his Neck which a Rope would have become with the utmost Propriety, that the Fellow staggered backwards' (p. 273).

In the novel's customary manner violence now displaces sexuality as Beau Didapper's man and Joseph fight, but is itself displaced as sexuality recurs. Fielding becomes as explicit as he dares now that the text approaches consummation. It is noticeable that the polite term 'neck' gives way to 'bosom' so that the object of Joseph's stare is unambiguous:

14 As does Justice Frolick later on (p. 260).

... you may remember, Reader, that the Ravisher had tore her Handkerchief from *Fanny's Neck*, by which he had discovered such a Sight; that *Joseph* hath declared all the Statues he ever beheld were so much inferiour to it in Beauty, that it was more capable of converting a Man into a Statue, than of being imitated by the greatest Master of that Art. This modest Creature, whom no Warmth in Summer could ever induce to expose her Charms to the wanton Sun, a Modesty to which perhaps they owed their inconceivable Whiteness, had stood many Minutes bare-necked in the Presence of *Joseph*, before her Apprehension of his Danger, and the Horror of seeing his Blood would suffer her once to reflect on what concerned herself; till at last, when the Cause of her Concern had vanished, an Admiration at his Silence, together with observing the fixed Position of his Eyes, produced an Idea in the lovely Maid, which brought more Blood into her Face than had flowed from *Joseph's* Nostrils. The snowy Hue of her Bosom was likewise exchanged to Vermillion at the instant when she clapped her Handkerchief round her Neck. *Joseph* saw the Uneasiness she suffered, and immediately removed his Eyes from an Object, in surveying which he had felt the greatest Delight which the Organs of Sight were capable of conveying to his Soul. So great was his Fear of offending her, and so truly did his Passion for her deserve the noble Name of Love. (p. 274)

Joseph remains chaste until the very end but is now obviously on a promise. It might seem that there is little left for the narrator but to move swiftly to the climax, yet delay and deferment still characterize the narrative. In the next chapter Fielding switches from forbidden fruit to Parson Adams's house and his homily to Joseph. The text, Adams states, is from Matthew: '*Whosoever looketh on a Woman so as to lust after her*'. He elaborates a caution against physical passion and excessive attachment to Joseph, which is ironized when Adams is shown at once to be unable himself to bear the pain of loss with equanimity. But Fielding has suppressed the second part of the verse, as Adams states: 'The latter Part I shall omit, as foreign to my Purpose' (p. 277). The continuation reads: '*Whosoever looketh on a woman so as to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart*'. The concept of adultery in the heart is material for confession, a means to emphasize intention as much as action. It

is particularly relevant to masturbatory incitement, of which Fielding had shown such keen awareness in *Shamela* that he might well wish to de-emphasize it now when the novel as a form seems to compel him to its practice, as it does in the eventual possession of Fanny. The text has pursued this goal ever since its virtual relinquishment of the joke about Joseph's possible seduction by older women:¹⁵

How, Reader, shall I give thee an adequate Idea of this lovely young Creature! the Bloom of Roses and Lillies might a little illustrate her Complexion, or their Smell her Sweetness: but to comprehend her entirely, conceive Youth, Health, Bloom, Beauty, Neatness, and Innocence in her Bridal-Bed; conceive all these in their utmost Perfection, and you may place the charming *Fanny's* Picture before your Eyes. (p. 311)

There could hardly be a more explicit invitation to commit adultery in the heart, to voyeurism, to enjoy those secrets of sex which Michel Foucault has contextualized within the mass of confessional literature (sacred and secular) since the Middle Ages.¹⁶ Fielding's attack on Richardson distracts attention from their complicity in the wider historical movement outlined by Foucault:

The society that emerged in the nineteenth century—bourgeois, capitalist, or industrial society, call it what you will—did not confront sex with a fundamental refusal of recognition. On the contrary, it put into operation an entire machinery for producing true discourses concerning it. Not only did it speak of sex and compel everyone to do so; it also set out to formulate the uniform truth of sex. As if it suspected sex of harboring a fundamental secret. As if it needed this production of truth. As if it was essential that sex be inscribed not only in an economy of pleasure but in an ordered system of knowledge. (p. 69)

Joseph Andrews adumbrates control of sexuality in its restraint of Joseph and by its implied regulation of reader

15 Although Lady Booby and Mrs Slip-slop re-appear, their interest in Joseph is comparatively played down.

16 *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, 1976 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), pp. 58-65.

response, developing a space for itself between prudishness and lusciousness. Yet Fielding also resists this historical development in part. While he toys with the limits of polite discourse as far as sexuality is concerned, he also values a Protestant reticence where conscience and confession are concerned. Betty was permitted to retain her spiritual privacy, designated as a matter between her and her God, whatever material harm Mrs Towwouse might do to her. Appropriately, it is Parson Adams whose entire characterization carries the standard for this emphasis on inner sanctity. He embodies the principle of naïveté, of trusting in people until trust is betrayed. He is temperamentally, therefore, in direct opposition to the prying temperament which conceives him and everyone else in the text: Adams, we are told, 'never saw farther into People than they desired to let him' (p. 129). It is as though *Joseph Andrews* contains its own prophylactic, not against desire but against the desire to know. Innocence like Adams's is the glimpse of an unfallen world permitted to the corrupted curiosity of fiction.