



**IN PURSUIT OF VIRTUE:**

**The Moral Education of Readers  
in Eighteenth-Century Fiction**

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### **Declaration**

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university; nor, to the best of my belief, does it contain any material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text or in the footnotes.

Derek C. STAMOULIS.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying.

Date: August 29, 1991.

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## PREFACE

The aim of this dissertation is to establish that writers of mid eighteenth-century fiction had a definite didactic aim in their writing - that of inculcating virtue upon the minds of readers and attacking vice. Finding that the deficient method of sermons, tracts and instruction manuals had failed to persuade individuals either to maintain, or pursue, virtue, these writers developed a new form of writing which, while assimilating readers into the text, preserved the autonomy necessary for readers to decode the moral instruction. Only by presenting readers with narratives based upon real-life situations and allowing them, through the use of their own sagacity, the opportunity of working out the instruction for themselves, with some guidance from writers, could it be hoped that individuals would improve their own morality and, by so doing, help reform the corrupt behaviour and manners of contemporary society. Consequently, it would seem appropriate to describe such works, in which the moral instruction and narrative were "inseparable" for a full appreciation of the meaning of the text, as novels of moral instruction.

The dissertation is divided into two parts. The first part focuses upon the history and theory of moral education, the function of rhetoric and the impact that philosophers such as La Bruyère, La Rochefoucauld, Hobbes, Locke, Shaftesbury, Mandeville, Butler, Hutcheson and Hume had upon the development of a literature that concerned itself with developing individuals into more virtuous beings. The second part of the dissertation examines the part that the theory of moral education played in the following works: Richardson's *Pamela* and *Clarissa*, Fielding's *Miscellanies*, *Joseph Andrews* and

*Tom Jones*, Goldsmith's *The Citizen of the World* and *The Vicar of Wakefield*, and Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling*. Even though each of these writers wrote to entertain readers, his primary aim was to instruct readers to pursue "the excellency of virtue . . . and true wisdom". Only after this had been achieved could individuals be rewarded with true happiness.

In relation to the use of quotations, I have normally brought spelling and typography of primary sources into line with modern usage, except where it may obscure the meaning of the original. Punctuation has been kept as in the original. In reference to the works of Richardson, Fielding, Goldsmith and Mackenzie, I have cited the editions from which the quotations have been extracted both within the chapters and in the Bibliography.

In terms of writing this dissertation, I am indebted to the encouragement, guidance and help offered me by Dr. Michael Tolley of the University of Adelaide. Michael's acute insights into the literature of the period and his constant readiness to offer critical opinion proved invaluable to me during the period of writing this work. I am also grateful for the assistance given me by Dr. Michael Meehan of the Flinders University of South Australia, particularly in the initial stages of my work. Michael's knowledge of the literary history of, and criticism about, the period was greatly appreciated. Also, I am grateful for the assistance and encouragement accorded me by the staff of the Department of English Language and Literature at the University of Adelaide. Finally, I am most indebted to the members of my family for the encouragement and support they have given me over the time it has taken me to research and write this dissertation, even when this work has infringed upon family time. In particular, I would thank my grandmother, Elizabeth Ann Croser, for always providing the inspiration for the pursuit of my academic studies.