

= Amelia (novel) =

Amelia is a sentimental novel written by Henry Fielding and published in December 1751 . It was the fourth and final novel written by Fielding , and it was printed in only one edition while the author was alive , although 5 @, @ 000 copies were published of the first edition . Amelia follows the life of Amelia and Captain William Booth after they are married . It contains many allusions to classical literature and focuses on the theme of marriage and feminine intelligence , but Fielding 's stance on gender issues cannot be determined because of the lack of authorial commentary discussing the matter . Although the novel received praise from many writers and critics , it received more criticism from Fielding 's competition , possibly resulting from the " paper war " in which the author was involved .

= = Background = =

Fielding began writing Amelia in the autumn of 1749 . He turned to his own life for inspiration , and the main character , Amelia , was possibly modelled on Fielding 's first wife , Charlotte , who died in November 1744 . Likewise , the hero , Captain Booth , was partly modelled after Fielding himself . It was advertised on 2 December 1751 by the publisher , Andrew Millar , in The General Advertiser . In it , Millar claimed that " to satisfy the earnest Demand of the Publick , this Work is now printing at four Presses ; but the Proprietor not @-@ withstanding finds it impossible to get them bound in Time without spoiling the Beauty of the Impression , and therefore will sell them sew 'd at Half a Guinea a Sett . "

Millar ordered William Strahan to print the work on two of his printing presses to produce a total of 5 @, @ 000 copies for the first run of the work (in comparison , only 3 @, @ 500 copies of The History of Tom Jones , a Foundling were printed for the first and second edition) . This amount proved to be enough for Millar to sell , although he had to back down from a second printing of 3 @, @ 000 copies immediately after the first edition to ensure that the originals were completely sold . The work had two German translations published in 1752 , a Dutch translation in 1756 , and a French edition in 1762 .

It finally went into a second edition in 1762 . However , this edition was posthumous and in Millary 's Works of Henry Fielding . In the prefatory essay , the Works editor , Arthur Murphy , claimed that " Amelia , in this edition , is printed from a copy corrected by the author 's own hand . The exceptionable passages , which inadvertency had thrown out , are here retrenched ; and the work , upon the whole , will be found nearer perfection than it was in its original state . " Although most critics agree that Murphy was telling the truth , it is possible that only some of the alterations were completed by Fielding and that other alterations were by Murphy or another editor employed by Murphy .

= = Plot summary = =

Amelia is a domestic novel taking place largely in London during 1733 . It describes the hardships suffered by a young couple newly married . Against her mother 's wishes , Amelia marries Captain William Booth , a dashing young army officer . The couple run away to London . In Book II , William is unjustly imprisoned in Newgate , and is subsequently seduced by Miss Matthews . During this time , it is revealed that Amelia was in a carriage accident and that her nose was ruined . Although this brings about jokes at Amelia 's behalf , Booth refuses to regard her as anything but beautiful .

Amelia , by contrast , resists the attentions paid to her by several men in William 's absence and stays faithful to him . She forgives his transgression , but William soon draws them into trouble again as he accrues gambling debts trying to lift the couple out of poverty . He soon finds himself in debtors ' prison . Amelia then discovers that she is her mother 's heiress and , the debt being settled , William is released and the couple retires to the country .

The second edition contains many changes to the text . A whole chapter on a dispute between doctors was completely removed , along with various sections of dialogue and praise of the

Glastonbury Waters . The edition also contains many new passages , such as an addition of a scene in which a doctor repairs Amelia 's nose and Booth remarking on the surgery (in Book II , Chapter 1 , where Booth is talking to Miss Matthews) .

= = Themes = =

= = = Virgilian = = =

There are strong Virgilian overtones in *Amelia* . Fielding claimed , in his 28 January *The Covent Garden Journal* , that there were connections of the work to both Homer and Virgil , but that the " learned Reader will see that the latter was the noble model , which I made use of on this Occasion . " The parallels are between more than the plot , and the novel follows a " twelve @-@ book structure " that matches the *Aeneid* .

Even the characters have Virgilian counterparts , with Booth being comparable to Aeneas and Miss Mathews Fielding 's version of Dido . Fielding does not shy away from such comparisons , but embraces them with his use of the line " *Furens quid Foemina possit* " (translated as " what a woman can do in frenzy ") , in Book IV , Chapter Five ; this line is directly taken from the *Aeneid* . Likewise , Fielding 's bailiff misstates Virgil 's " *dolus an virtus , quis in hoste requirat* " (translated as " whether deceit or valour , who would ask in the enemy ") when he says " *Bolus and Virtus , quis in a Hostess equirit* " in Book VIII , Chapter One . However , these are not the only quotes , and Fielding cites many passages of Latin and Greek while not providing direct translations for them . To these Virgilian parallels , Samuel Richardson claimed that Fielding " must mean Cotton 's *Virgil Travestied* ; where the women are drabs , and the men scoundrels . "

= = = Feminine intelligence = = =

Although the novel deals with marriage and life after marriage , it also gives three " histories " : the history of Miss Mathews , Mrs Bennet , and Mrs Atkinson . It is the third story , that of Mrs Atkinson , which demonstrates feminine intellect . According to her story , she received her understanding of the classics from her father . To demonstrate her knowledge , she quotes from the *Aeneid* , an action that Fielding describes , in Book VI , Chapter 8 , as her performing " with so strong an Emphasis , that she almost frightened Amelia out of her Wits . " However , Fielding follows that by claiming she spoke on " that great Absurdity , (for so she termed it ,) of excluding Women from Learning ; for which they were equally qualified with the Men , and in which so many had made so notable a Proficiency " and this idea was not accepted by either Amelia or Mrs. Booth . Unlike the two women , Dr Harrison criticises Mrs Atkinson and declares , in Book X , Chapter One , that women are " incapable of Learning . "

A dispute forms between the various characters on the issue , and Sergeant Atkinson , Mrs Atkinson 's husband , tries to stop the fight . Although his words provoke a harsh reaction from his wife , they soon come to accept each other 's intellectual capabilities . However , Mrs Atkinson 's status as a woman educated in the classics and as an advocate for other women to be educated , could have provoked deeper tension between herself and her husband . Her feminine intellect was described by Jill Campbell as a " threatening " force which her husband once reacted violently against , even though his violence was contained to him acting on it only in a dream @-@ like state . The actual nature of the plot lacks a certainty that would allow an overall stance on women 's issues to be determined , and it is not even certain as to where Fielding stood on the issue . His lack of authorial comments seems to reinforce a possible " anxieties about gender confusion " in the plot , and the characters ' sexual identities are blurred ; the dispute between Mrs Atkinson and Dr Harrison continues until the very end of the novel . Fielding did not comment on the gender roles , but Richardson 's friend , Anne Donnellan , did , and she asked , " must we suppose that if a woman knows a little Greek and Latin she must be a drunkard , and virago ? "

= = Critical response = =

John Cleland was one of the first reviewers of the novel , and in the December 1751 Monthly Review , claimed the work as " the boldest stroke that has yet been attempted in this species of writing " and that Fielding " takes up his heroine at the very point at which all his predecessors have dropped their capital personages . " However , he also stated that parts of the novel " stand in need of an apology . " A review in the London Magazine in the same month claimed that there were too many anachronisms . This piece was also the first to mention Amelia 's nose , and on it the writer claims that Fielding " should have taken care to have had Amelia 's nose so compleatly cured , and set to rights , after it being beat all to pieces , by the help of some eminent surgeon , that not so much as a scar remained . " John Hill soon attacked Amelia in the London Daily Advertiser on 8 January 1752 where he claimed that the book 's title character " could charm the World without the Help of a Nose . "

During this time , personal works , such as Fielding 's Amelia , became targets for a " paper war " between various London writers . Fielding was quick to respond , and on 11 January 1752 in a piece published in The Covent @-@ Garden Journal , he ironically stated : " a famous Surgeon , who absolutely cured one Mrs Amelia Booth , of a violent Hurt in her Nose , insomuch , that she had scarce a Scar left on it , intends to bring Actions against several ill @-@ meaning and slanderous People , who have reported that the said Lady had no Nose , merely because the Author of her History , in a Hurry , forgot to inform his Readers of that Particular . " However , Hill was not the only one to attack during this time ; Bonnell Thornton wrote satires of Amelia in the Drury @-@ Lane Journal . Thornton 's satires were first published on 16 January 1752 and included a fake advertisement for a parody novel called " Shamelia " , playing off of title of Fielding 's parody Shamela . He later parodied the work on 13 February 1752 in a piece called " A New Chapter in Amelia . " Tobias Smollett joined in and published the pamphlet Habbakkuk Hilding anonymously on 15 January 1752 . Although there was much criticism , there was some support for the work , and an anonymous pamphlet was written to attack " Hill and ' the Town ' " and praise the novel . On 25 January 1752 , Fielding defended his work again by bringing the novel before the imaginary " Court of Censorial Enquiry " , in which the prosecutors are Hill and the other critics and it is they , not Amelia that are truly put on trial .

Fielding 's rival , Samuel Richardson , declared in February 1752 that the novel " is as dead as if it had been published forty years ago , as to sale . " Previously , he attacked the " lowness " of the novel and claimed that " his brawls , his jarrs , his gaols , his spunging @-@ houses , are all drawn from what he has seen and known . " However , Richardson also claimed to have never read Amelia but , years later , Sir Walter Scott argued that Amelia was " a continuation of Tom Jones . " The second edition of Amelia was criticized for its various changes to the text . Some aspects of the revision , such as removing of Fielding 's Universal Register Office , were seen as " damaging " the work , although they were intended to remove anachronisms . In The Bible in Spain (1843) George Borrow , describing his first visit to Lisbon , wrote : " Let travellers devote one entire morning to inspecting the Arcos and the Mai das Agoas , after which they may repair to the English church and cemetery , Pere @-@ la @-@ chaise in miniature , where , if they be of England , they may well be excused if they kiss the cold tomb , as I did , of the author of Amelia , the most singular genius which their island ever produced , whose works it has long been the fashion to abuse in public and to read in secret . "

In recent years , critics have examined various aspects of the novel that were previous ignored ; on the Virgilian images in Amelia , Ronald Paulson claimed that they " elevate the domestic (marriage) plot and to connect it with public issues of a degenerating society and nation . " However , those like Peter Sabor do not agree that the themes create " an elevating experience " .