

A NEW SPECIES OF WRITING

A study of the novels of Samuel Richardson

by

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Durban 1978.

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor
of Philosophy in the Department of
English, University of Natal, Durban.

1978.

Page references to *Pamela* and *Clarissa* are to the Everyman editions of the works: in the case of *Clarissa*, the volume and letter numbers of the Shakespeare Head edition, which are the same as Richardson's own numbering, are given in brackets after the Everyman references. Page references for *Sir Charles Grandison* are to the Oxford English Novels edition.

Except for quotations specifically indicated in the text, and such help as I have acknowledged in the preface, this thesis is wholly my own work.

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PREFACE

I should like to thank all my friends, colleagues and teachers who have helped me in my work on this thesis. I am especially grateful to my supervisor, Mr Terence Edgecombe, for his interest and help.

Chapter 1

Richardson's famous claim, that in writing *Pamela* he hoped to introduce a new species of writing,¹ has become obscure to the Twentieth Century reader, who tends to assume that he was claiming to have invented the epistolary mode. His own contemporaries, who, though they generally read his novels with eager attention, were by no means universally admiring of them, understood that their originality was not merely a matter of technique, though the technique of presentation was important to the matter and purpose of the novels.

The greatest critic of the day, Dr. Johnson, praised the novels highly and was able to see exactly why they were so much more important than the novels of Fielding and his imitators. It is unfair to compare his judgments with those of men and women who read each work as it came out and pronounced on the books separately: it is clear that the Johnson who is quoted by Boswell is speaking of the whole oeuvre, and perhaps especially of *Clarissa*.

'Sir, (continued he) there is all the difference in the world between characters of nature and characters of manners, and *there* is the difference between the characters of Fielding and those of Richardson. Characters of manners are very entertaining; but they are to be understood by a more superficial observer than characters of nature, where a man must dive into the recesses of the human heart.'²

Johnson has understood the reason why Richardson's novels are so much more important, so much greater than Fielding's. The range of Fielding the novelist is never much wider than that of Fielding the comic playwright, simply because he has restricted himself, in *Tom Jones* and *Joseph Andrews*, to the creation and presentation of

1. Correspondence, i, l xix - l xxxvi (1741) *Selected Letters of Samuel Richardson*, p 41.

2. *The Life of Samuel Johnson* by James Boswell. Vol I, p 343.

characters of manners. Both books are admirable, but they do not go beyond the range of comedy at any point. When, in *Amelia*, Fielding attempts to draw from his reader non-comic responses and to persuade him into a greater degree of involvement with his characters, he is unsuccessful because his characters, though not for the most part comic, still remain types. None of his personages convince us (those of *Tom Jones* and *Joseph Andrews* are not intended to do so) that they have an inner life more complex than their surface behaviour; what they seem, they are, and it is therefore pointless to probe beneath their surfaces in order to know them better.

Johnson's term, 'characters of nature' reveals to us the far greater humanity of Richardson's characters who possess, as we know ourselves to possess, an inner, hidden life as well as a surface of 'manners'. Richardson's great discovery was that this inner life, those desires, hatreds, fears and impulses which may never be revealed in action, are of supreme interest to a reader. We are interested because when we are allowed to know a heroine's inner self, we feel that we know her as we know ourselves, and our involvement with her and her fate is consequently much greater. She becomes, in fact, another area of ourselves, rather than (as in the case of Fielding's characters, for example) a friend, during the reading of the book. We can be sure that Richardson was consciously encouraging his readers' sense of closeness to the heroines, since he frequently devised plots which isolated them, as in *Pamela* and *Clarissa*, so that the flood of letters became a monologue of self-analysis, kept up for their own benefit and shared only with the reader.

In all three of the novels, though most of all in *Clarissa*, the 'dive into the recesses of the human heart', which Johnson describes as an activity of the reader, is first of all the heroine's act. Richardson's epistolary mode allows for no dissection of a character by the author.

The reader therefore follows the heroine as she travels towards greater and greater understanding of her nature and learns to recognise in herself the elements lying at the roots of impulses to which, on the surface, names like chastity, obedience and punctilio are given.

A contrast between a passage in *Tom Jones* where Fielding describes Blifil's lust for Sophia with one from Richardson where Lovelace talks of his dealings with women will illustrate this point:

'Tho' Mr. Blifil was not of the complexion of Jones, nor ready to eat every woman he saw, yet he was far from being destitute of that appetite which is said to be the common property of all animals. With this, he had likewise that distinguishing taste which serves to direct men in their choice of the objects, or food of their several appetites; and this taught him to consider Sophia as a most delicious morsel, indeed to regard her with the same desires which an ortolan inspires into the soul of an epicure. Now the agonies which affected the mind of Sophia rather augmented than impaired her beauty; for her tears added brightness to her eyes, and her breasts rose higher with her sighs. Indeed no one hath seen beauty in its highest lustre, who hath never seen it in distress. Blifil therefore looked on this human ortolan with greater desire than when he had viewed her last; nor was his desire at all lessened by the aversion which he discovered in her to himself. On the contrary, this served rather to heighten the pleasure he proposed in rifling her charms, as it added triumph to lust; nay, he had some further views, from obtaining the absolute possession of her person, which we detest too much even to mention; and revenge itself was not without its share in the gratifications which he promised himself. The rivalling poor Jones, and supplanting him in her affections, added another spur to his pursuit, and promised another additional rapture to his enjoyment.'¹

'I own with thee, and with the poet, that sweet are the joys that come with willingness - but is it to be expected that a woman of education, and a lover of forms, will yield before she is

1. *Tom Jones*, pp 316. 317.

attacked? And have I so much as summoned this to surrender? I doubt not but I shall meet with difficulty. I must, therefore, make my first effort by surprise. There may possibly be some *cruelty* necessary: but there may be *consent in struggle*: there may be *yielding in resistance*. But the first conflict over, whether the following may not be weaker and weaker, till *willingness* ensue, is the point to be tried. I will illustrate what I have said by the simile of a bird new-caught. We begin, when boys, with birds, and, when grown up, go on to women; and both, perhaps, in turn, experience our sportive cruelty.

Hast thou not observed the charming gradations by which the ensnared volatile has been brought to bear with its new condition? How, at first, refusing all sustenance, it beats and bruises itself against its wires, till it makes its gay plumage fly about, and overspread its well-secured cage. Now it gets out its head; sticking only at its beautiful shoulders: then, with difficulty, drawing back its head, it gasps for breath, and, erectly perched, with meditating eyes, first surveys, and then attempts, its wired canopy. As it gets breath, with renewed rage it beats and bruises again its pretty head and sides, bites the wires, and pecks at the fingers of its delighted tamer. Till at last, finding its efforts ineffectual, quite tired and breathless, it lays itself down and pants at the bottom of the cage, seeming to bemoan its cruel fate and forfeited liberty. And after a few days, its struggles to escape still diminishing as it finds it to no purpose to attempt it, its new habitation becomes familiar; and it hops about from perch to perch, resumes its wonted cheerfulness, and every day sings a song to amuse itself, and reward its keeper.¹

Both passages are excellent of their kind, but their effect is quite different: whereas Fielding is trying to produce in his reader a revulsion from Blifil's sexual sadism and a sense that such feelings are monstrous and inhuman, Richardson's intention is that the reader should understand and respond to Lovelace's perverse pleasure to the extent of discovering in himself similar impulses. The association of sexual sadism in an adult with the childish pleasure of owning a pet bird is made several

1. *Clarissa*, Vol 2, pp 245, 246. (4.4)

times in *Clarissa*, in order that the reader may associate the pleasure of wielding power, present in us all, even as children, with Lovelace's excessive and abnormal love of tyrannising over others. It is interesting to see that the pet bird appears in *Tom Jones* too, but with its significance reversed: Blifil, the sadist, frees Sophia's bird to annoy her and Tom tries to recapture it for her. Since Blifil claims the loftiest motives — love of freedom, detestation of imprisonment — for his action, which we are intended to see as malicious and hypocritical, it is tempting to see the whole incident as an attempt by Fielding to deny the existence of the kind of link between normal and perverse behaviour which so interests Richardson.

It is to a great extent on this relationship between normal and abnormal that the interest of *Pamela* and *Clarissa* depend, for although good and evil are clearly identified within the novels, their effect is never merely to produce a love of virtue and a hatred of vice — hatred, in fact, is the last sentiment likely to be produced, because the novels are above all concerned with understanding, with the kind of investigation and analysis which precludes hatred because it involves the reader in the same kind of self-discovery as the hero or heroine.

Richardson's interest in the inner life made him unique among his contemporaries: not until Jane Austen was it to be shared to an equal extent by a novelist. During the discussion between Johnson and himself on the rival merits of Richardson and Fielding, Boswell praises Fielding in terms which show what contemporaries expected of writers and which could be applied to almost all novelists of merit in the century.

'I will venture to add, that the moral tendency of Fielding's writings, though it does not encourage a strained and rarely possible virtue, is ever favourable to honour and honesty, and cherishes the benevolent and generous affections. He who is as good as Fielding would make him, is an amiable member of society and may be led on by more regulated instructors to

a higher state of ethical perfection.'¹

Boswell sees Fielding's novels as possessed of moral purpose, no doubt, but in a very limited kind of way: they may inculcate social virtues, but the reader must turn to a different kind of writing, presumably books of sermons or moral essays, in order to achieve the deeper knowledge of the self and its possibilities which will make possible 'a higher state of ethical perfection'. The fact that he sees this lesser kind of moral teaching as quite sufficient for a great novelist to offer shows a failure to understand the great potential of the genre: he is very close to the attitude, 'Oh! it is only a novel!'² which Jane Austen attacks so ably in *Northanger Abbey*.

It is his emphasis on social virtues — honour, honesty and generosity — which makes his praise of Fielding suitable for so many Eighteenth Century writers and which distinguishes Richardson from them. Even Fanny Burney's *Evelina*, in many respects as different from Tom Jones as the Eighteenth Century thought a woman should be from a man, has as her primary task the learning to be 'an amiable member of society'.

Samuel Richardson, despite the period in which he lived, pursued interests which were completely different. Although he was capable of rewarding a heroine by promoting her to a place of influence in her society, the real triumphs of Pamela, Clarissa and Harriet occur within themselves, not in their group. Pamela and Clarissa have chastity as their greatest value: both are made to explore its meanings to the full, within their own natures. Harriet Byron's great virtue has not the same pre-eminence in her nature: it is her generosity, which is present from the beginning of the novel in all her dealings, especially with women and which is finally tested in the Clementina affair and rewarded in her marriage to Sir Charles. She

1. *The Life of Johnson*, Vol I, p 344.

2. *Northanger Abbey*, p. 38

too learns the cost of making a social attitude extend itself into a moral quality which she will preserve even though it may involve her in great sacrifice.

All three heroines begin with values which they have learned from their society; since all three are exemplary, in the sense that their society expects them to embody its values to the highest degree, there can be no compromise or sacrifice of principle for them. Each girl learns within her own nature what dangers and sacrifices are involved in the pursuit of excellence.

Richardson's contemporaries, besides Dr. Johnson, seem to have been aware that in choosing the inner secret self as his subject matter he was revolutionary: Fielding's statement that only words and actions were accurate informers as to the state of mind of another¹ implies his disapproval though he was too generous not to praise when he read *Clarissa*.² At our greater remove of time, we can see that Richardson's concentration on the inner life exploits for the first time a special capability of the novel: more than any other genre, it can explore all levels of the human mind.

The relationship between Richardson's achievement in this area and the epistolary mode is not the simple one which it is sometimes claimed to be — people do not reveal their inner selves in letters, even to their intimates, no matter how introspective or egocentric they may be. Jane Austen's letters to her sister Cassandra are a good example³ of the real correspondence of intimates and make us aware that the persuasive power of Richardson's work does not lie in any serious attempt to convince the reader that the letters are genuine and not fictional.

1. *The Champion* (11th December, 1739) quoted in *Novelists on the Novel*, p 275. Miriam Allott.

2. Letter to Richardson, quoted in *Samuel Richardson: A Biography* pp 294-295. T. Duncan Eaves & Ben D. Kimpel.

3. Perhaps rather an unfair one, since Cassandra destroyed all those which she considered too personal.

Yet there is a connection, which is partly an historical one, between subject matter and the epistolary mode. The conduct books of the time very frequently combined instruction in letter writing with analysis and criticism of behaviour and Richardson claimed that his first novel grew out of such a conduct book. Writing to his friend and fellow-writer, Aaron Hill, in 1741,¹ the year after the publication of *Pamela*, he claims that the novel owes its epistolary form to the fact that its plot, in the form of an anecdote told him by a friend many years before, came to his mind when he was engaged in writing a book of familiar letters on 'the useful concerns of life',² at the request of two friends, John Osborne and Charles Rivington. He decided to make the subject of some of the letters the proper behaviour of maidservants, and recollected the story told him by his old friend about a girl in whom the lady of the manor interested herself. The girl was beautiful, intelligent, virtuous and 'prudent'-- this last being an extremely important quality in the fictional *Pamela*. After the death of her patroness, the young squire attempted to seduce her.

'That she had recourse to as many innocent stratagems to escape the snares laid for her virtue; once, however, in despair having been near drowning; that at last her noble resistance, watchfulness and excellent qualities subdued him and he thought fit to make her his wife.'³

A certain amount of doubt is cast upon this anecdote by the very details which Richardson recollects; it was told him, he says, twenty-five years before, yet the drowning incident and the fact that the girl's parents had been ruined by suretyships and had tried unsuccessfully to start

1. Correspondence, i, l xix - l xxxvi (1741), *Selected Letters of Samuel Richardson*, pp 39-42.

2. *Ibid*, p 41.

3. *Ibid*, p 40.

a small school are still fresh in his mind. It seems likely that the fictional story of *Pamela* has grafted its details on to the anecdote during the writing of the novel: the process would be a very natural one.

Richardson's memories of the story led him first of all to compose two letters, Nos 138 and 139, counselling a young female servant to whom her master is making advances, and then to put aside the book of *Familiar Letters* (eventually finished after *Pamela* had been completed, and published in 1741) in order to allow himself the scope of a novel in which to explore the possibilities of the story.

We can easily accept that his first novel was written in epistolary form because of the circumstances in which he conceived of it, but the novelty of the writing did not lie in its form, nor did Richardson expect his readers to believe that it did. Robert Adams Day's book, *Told in Letters*¹ traces the evolution of the epistolary novel from 1660 to the publication of *Pamela* in 1740: he shows that letters as a means of allowing characters to present themselves or of advancing the plot have been used in fiction throughout its history (the letters in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* are an excellent example of the former use) and that in the late Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, fictions with a high proportion of letters, or entirely written in letters, were very popular. Women writers like Eliza Haywood and Mary Manley produced a large number of these works.

But their writings represented for Richardson something which he must not imitate and from which he must dissociate his work, as his letter quoted previously shows. Since he was himself a printer and therefore extremely familiar with the world of London booksellers who might almost be called the employers of hack writers like Mrs Haywood and Mrs Manley, he could not have been unaware of

1. *Told in Letters*. Epistolary Fiction Before Richardson. University of Michigan Press, 1966.

their work, nor of the form it had frequently taken. Even if one assumes that he had not cared to read such books, (and he expresses unwillingness to read or at least to complete *Tom Jones* and *Amelia* because of moral objections against them¹) surrounded as he was by women, some of them with literary interests, others unpretendingly ordinary, it seems impossible that he should not have a fair idea of the content and form of popular novels, since, as Pope implies in *The Rape of the Lock*, a large proportion of their readers were women. Significantly, he also implies that serious people were contemptuous of such novels: Richardson's statements about the conception of *Pamela* emphasise that the source of its plot was a series of real-life incidents and that it was closely connected in its origin to the impulse to supply moral guidance via a conduct book. These claims acquire new meaning when we contrast them with the intentions of the immensely prolific hack writers of the early Eighteenth Century. Whatever minor intentions informed the work of a Mrs Haywood, the primary one was that of earning a living; the charge of the *Dunciad* against her is ultimately, that writing for pay was responsible for volumes of rubbish.

Richardson's impulse was to explain that the moral teaching of *Pamela* was allied to its epistolary form: he claims elsewhere² that the letter had always been an attractive form for him and that he had written love letters for young women as a thirteen year old boy. It is important, however, to see that the moral seriousness of his fictions was not achieved by the only great novelist who preceded him, Daniel Defoe, and that this failure was closely related to a journalistic concept of his hero- and heroine-narrators, whom he presents (the title page of *Moll Flanders* makes this clear) as monsters, interesting

1. See letters to Astraea and Minerva Hill, dated 4.8.1749, and to Anne Donnellan, 22.2.1752. *Selected Letters*, pp 127, 196.

2. In a letter to Johannes Stinstra, dated 2.6.1753. *Selected Letters*, p 231.

because of the strangeness of their personal histories rather than because of their humanity. Defoe's own sense of the realities of life is by no means absent from his fictions: he is at great pains to give concrete reality to his narrators and to the settings in which they move. Even more striking is the way in which his sense that the real basis of life is economic pervades them all.

Many critics of Eighteenth Century fiction writing¹ have commented on his tendency to sacrifice moral teaching to his concept of realism. It is interesting to look at the Preface to *Moll Flanders* (published in 1732) to see the very considerable gap which existed between his declared intentions and his actual practice. He begins by saying that the immense popularity of Romances and Novels (words interchangeable in the meaning at this date)² has made it 'hard for a private History to be taken as Genuine where the names and other Circumstances of the Person are concealed'.³ It is his own problem which he is discussing, since he makes it clear that he intends his fiction to be taken as fact. In terms of this intention, he is obliged to make his 'private histories', that is, *Moll Flanders* and his other fictions of this type, lean heavily away from the moral fable towards the frankness and minuteness of the autobiographer, or at least its appearance. All Defoe's heroes and heroines confess unselfconsciously their discreditable actions.

Throughout his Preface he draws attention to his efforts to draw helpful morals from Moll's story, but this is very misleading: the artistic merit of the book depends

1. eg Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, pp 104-132, and John Preston, *The Created Self*, pp 17-37.

2. See *The New World of Words*, by Edward Phillips, 6th edition, 1706, quoted on p 12 in *English Theories of the Novel*, Vol II: the Eighteenth Century, ed Theo Stemmler.

3. *Moll Flanders*, p vii.

on the fact that incidents are not related to the Christian code of morality, except briefly and occasionally. What is demanded of the reader is not moral judgement, but that he accept the existence of an immensely ego-centric heroine, who does not despise or actively ignore the interests of others but is unaware of them. Children, husbands and lovers are sacrificed by Moll, not consciously, but in unconscious obedience to a principle demonstrated throughout the book and especially in its early chapters, that economic security is all-important. Her occasional moral scruples, like those about her Bath lover (they must be carefully distinguished from her humane scruples, like those about procuring an abortion or murdering the child whom she has robbed) are weak and conventional. When she talks of the fact that all her marriages after the second one are null and void, because her second husband is still alive, her self-reproach is a momentary thing, intended, as far as the reader can judge, to give the reader absolution to go on to the end of the book. At the end, she speaks of her repentance and her intention to spend the rest of her life in 'sincere repentance' with her fourth (bigamous) husband.

Defoe is obviously anxious to play on his reader's belief in situations which portray real life with absolute fidelity. But the inconsistencies of Moll's attitudes to her life story and Defoe's acceptance of this inconsistency — Moll is almost never penitent except when down on her luck; her regret, in fact, seems to be that she is an unsuccessful sinner — make it clear that moral teaching, at least of the conventional kind discussed in the Preface, is not an important part of his purpose.

There is teaching of kind: in fact the first section of the book, the Elder Brother episode, might be called a moral fable if one were to judge it only by the vigour of the teaching which Moll receives from all sides. 'Money is all important', is its theme.

Moll, realising that she is prettier and cleverer

than the daughters of the house in which she is a servant, begins to hope for great things until she hears the elder daughter tell her brother,

'Betty (Moll) wants but one thing, but she had as good want everything, for the market is against our sex just now and if a young woman has beauty, birth, breeding, wit, sense, manners, modesty, and all to an extreme, yet if she has not money, she's nobody, she had as good want them all.'¹

Moll finds this is true: when the elder brother falls in love with her, he makes her his mistress but never really considers marrying her. When his parents seem likely to discover the affair, he pays her off and discards her. The old Moll, looking back at her youth, reproaches herself for her naïveté, not for her wickedness. If she had managed better, either she could have persuaded him to marry her or least to pay her more for her favours. And in the next episode, she says, 'I had been tricked once by that cheat called love, but the game was over'.² She has in fact absorbed what all her associates in the first episode tried to teach her, that a woman must put her financial interests before every other principle or inclination, for without money she is nothing. This is moral teaching of a kind and few people would dispute the importance of economic security in Moll's world, but Defoe does not give it his backing. The memoir technique, which forces him to allow Moll to address the reader uninterruptedly throughout the book, does not permit him to praise or condemn her, except in the Preface, where he certainly adheres to Christian morality in so far as he condemns Moll's thefts and her years of prostitution.

The reader's sense of these comments, however, is that they are written at a certain distance from the book, and that Defoe has forgotten the kind of absorption into Moll which the reader must experience. He speaks of

1. *Moll Flanders*, p 14.

2. *Ibid* p 52.

evil's always being condemned and punished, and virtue rewarded, forgetting that Moll, a bigamous wife and later a thief, often compels us to sympathise with her hopes to get away with crime. He has even forgotten the end of the book, where Moll is left happy and rich on the proceeds of years of crime.

The split between the author's sentiments in the Preface and the harsh truths about economic necessity ruling human life within the book make it at best morally neutral. Of all Defoe's memoir fictions, *Moll Flanders* is the most striking example of this divergence between author and narrator, but it occurs in them all. The reason for it is that Defoe's heroes and heroines are never fully human, learning, changing and developing, as are, for example, the first person narrators of Dickens. *Moll Flanders*, *Roxana* and *Robinson Crusoe* each make a single discovery — the first two that money is the primary necessity of life and the last named that restless ambition is dangerous. No other change or growth ever occurs in them — they are presented as phenomena rather than full humans, and act in terms of the laws of their unchanging natures. If we compare Moll with Pip in *Great Expectations*, we can see clearly why Defoe's fictions are without real moral function for their readers. Pip does change and grow between youth and maturity: the mature Pip, who tells the story, can show us, as no one else in the fiction could, the errors of the young Pip in London. In contrast, we cannot speak of the difference between the young Moll and the mature Moll with any moral implication. And it is because there has been no real change between youth and maturity in the narrator that she cannot help us to judge independently and morally the actions which she describes. In *Robinson Crusoe*, also, when Crusoe tells us that he sold Xury, the child who saved his life, for a good round sum, we feel there may have been betrayal and ingratitude. But has there been? — impossible to say, since Crusoe the narrator has no deeper insight into his action

than Crusoe the merchant. Similarly in *Roxana*, we know of the heroine's horror when she discovers that Amy, her maid, has killed the daughter who has been searching for her; she can tell us about the nightmare of fear and remorse which she suffers, just as she is able, at an earlier stage in the book to tell us of the economic necessities which forced her to abandon her children, but she is never able to look back on her life as a whole, seeing causes and effects and judging her own actions, in order to envisage the possibility that she could have acted differently. Defoe tries to solve his problem at the end of the novel by making his heroine tell us that she was eventually reduced to poverty and misery, a just punishment for her wickedness, but this is merely another of his token bows in the direction of conventional morality - her ruin occurs outside the novel's time span, and at no time during her narration do we have the sense that a woman who has learned from hardship is commenting on her early mistakes.

Defoe's memoir fictions were considerable achievements in their own way, in that they made the important discovery that a narrator-protagonist behind whom the author is invisible and inaudible forces the reader to a high degree of involvement with that narrator, but they were too limited in intention to be regarded as direct ancestors of the novel. Defoe the journalist has been content to present his reader with a series of extraordinary individuals, a rogues' gallery with no more moral intention than the Newgate Calendar of which his books are the fictional relatives. Indeed, a comparison of *Moll Flanders* with say, the Jonathan Wild section of the Newgate Calendar¹ shows that both pay exactly the same lip-service to morality and that the real interest of both, the presentation of a fascinating monster, is the same.

1. *The Newgate Calendar*, Vol I pp 73-97.

When Richardson offered his story of the conduct book from which *Pamela* evolved, he was emphasising that his novel was to be a new kind of fiction, which should be morally instructive in a way that no previous prose fiction had been — as instructive, in fact, as a conduct book or as other types of popular non-fictional writings such as published sermons or moral essays, but sufficiently attractive to make it a substitute for 'romances', which he condemns in the same letter for their 'pomp and parade' and their concern with 'the improbable and the marvellous'.

The term 'romance' though often used interchangeably with 'novel' properly refers to a type of fiction very different from the works of Defoe or his lesser contemporaries, Mrs Manley and Mrs Haywood. It is clear from Richardson's mention of 'the improbable and the marvellous' that he is referring to the works of writers like la Calprenède and Scudéry, and their English translators, whose massive works were very popular in the late Seventeenth and early Eighteenth Centuries. Part of their popularity seems to have stemmed from the fact that they were held to be suitable for the young because they were certainly not 'inflaming' — the charge brought against works of fiction dealing more realistically with sexual love. As Richardson and many other contemporaries realised, they can have no moral function whatsoever since they do not deal with situations or persons whose experience can be recognised by the reader as bearing any relation to his own. They are concerned with mythological or classical characters whose very names acknowledge that they are fictional, and are filled with feats of heroism and extremes of vice and virtue equally beyond human capacity. Dr. Johnson, who as a child and a young man very much enjoyed romances, saw them not as actively damaging, but as a waste of time, a dissipation of useful energy,¹ and this

1. Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, Vol I, p 49.

seems to have been Richardson's attitude to them. Since he speaks specifically of excluding them from the attention of young people, he probably did not consider the necessity of competing with the works of Defoe which do deal realistically with human experience, since Defoe's subject matter in many of his fictions tended to exclude him from the reading lists of young, unmarried women, towards whom Richardson consciously directed most of his teaching.

In 1755, two years after the publication of *Sir Charles Grandison*, when he knew his career as a novelist to be over, Richardson wrote to a friend summarising his sense of his readers' interests and his own intentions which, he claimed, combined to form his own practice as a writer of novels.

'Instruction, Madam, is the Pill; Amusement is the Gilding. Writings that do not touch the Passions of the Light and Airy, will hardly ever reach the Heart. Perhaps I have in mine, been too copious on that Subject: but it is a Subject in which at one time or other of their Lives, all Men and all Women are interested; and more liable than in any other to make Mistakes, not seldom fatal ones.'¹

It is significant that he writes at a considerable remove of time from the composition of the novels when he sums up in this confident manner the convictions which underlie his technique. What he says is of course closer to being true of *Grandison* than of either of his other novels: instruction and amusement are more separable within it than, say, in *Pamela*. But even in this late letter, the object of which is to defend the inclusion of romantic incidents in his novels and to prove that they are compatible with moral teaching, he understands that sexual love must be an important ingredient of his novels because it is an important ingredient of life.

1. *Selected Letters* p 322, to Lady Echlin, 22nd Sept 1755.

Much closer to the writing of *Pamela*, he enlarges on the nature of the teaching which he intends to offer in a letter to George Cheyne, dated 1741, in which he defends himself against Cheyne's charge that he has described Pamela's married life in over-intimate detail.

'But, good Sir, permit me to ask, if Dr. Cheyne be not very delicate in his Opinion of the Matrimonial Tenderness; my Plan and the Nature of the Story, considered? I am endeavouring to write a story, which shall catch young and airy Minds, and when Passions run high in them, to shew them how they may be directed to laudable Meanings and Purposes, in order to decry such Novels and Romances as have a tendency to inflame and to corrupt. And if I were to be too spiritual, I doubt I should catch none but Grandmothers, for the Granddaughters would put my Girl indeed in better Company, such as that of the graver Writers, and *there* they would leave her; but would still pursue those stories that pleased their Imaginations without informing their judgement.'

Richardson is justifying his representations of interesting human situations by saying that it is only of such situations that young people care to read. It is necessary for him to catch their attention in this way (and the distinction between grandmothers and granddaughters shows that he understands that his subject matter must be related to the experience or at least the expectations of his readers) if they are to be persuaded to substitute *Pamela* for other reading matter whose purpose is only to entertain.

Later in the same letter, Richardson defends his right to represent life realistically:

' In my Scheme I have generally taken Human Nature *as it is* for it is to no purpose to suppose it Angelic, or to endeavour to make it so. There is a time of Life, in which the Passions will predominate; and Ladies, any more than Men, will not be kept in ignorance; and if we can properly mingle Instruction with Entertainment, so as to make the latter seemingly

the View, while the former is really the end, I imagine it will be doing a good deal My Gentleman is a Man of warm Passions, Youthful, unconverted. — My Heroine is pious and Virtuous, but blooming in Youth and Beauty, which were the first Attractions to him. — Is it not natural to suppose, that even when she is moulding his Heart to Principles of Virtue and he finds himself lifted above his usual gross Sphere, so as to say, "How greatly do the innocent Pleasure I now hourly taste, exceed the guilty Tumults that used formerly to agitate my unequal Mind! Is it not natural, I say, that he would clasp to his Arms such a Charmer of his *Mind!*"¹

One's first thought on reading this is that Richardson has failed to understand the effect of his work and must surely be mis-stating its primary purpose too, when he claims that *Pamela's* real purpose is to instruct. Certainly he is simplifying unfairly: none of his three novels offers as its primary product moral teaching of a simple kind, unless it is the sequel to *Pamela*, which he wrote only to exclude the work of another author who was employing the name of his heroine to cash in on the novel's popularity.² *Pamela II* leans heavily to the side of the conduct book — it is almost a guide to the problems of married life, with very little plot.

The three major novels, as I hope to show, are none of them without the element of simple instruction, though it is presented in different combinations with other elements, but a far more important comment on them all is that Richardson's commitment is to 'Human Nature *as it is*'. In this statement Richardson is claiming to have replaced the fantasy and distortion characteristic of romances with realism. His right to show scenes of marital tenderness,

1. *Selected Letters*, pp 47, 48.

2. See his letter to James Leake, August 1741. *Selected Letters*, p 42.

which Dr. Cheyne considers dangerous, rests on the fact that such scenes occur in real life; they are necessary in his fiction because they are *natural* in the particular circumstances which he is describing.

He understands that this realism is essential to his work's moral purpose — his readers can only learn from the behaviour of people, who, however virtuous, have the same capacity for vice as well as virtue as they have themselves. A mention within the same letter of 'the poor scenes which I intend only as a first Attractive', shows that he realised that the realistic descriptions of love scenes were likely to persuade young people to read the book, but it is not, as it may appear at first, a willingness to court popularity by offering the same satisfactions as the literature which he despised. On the contrary, he realises that young women are properly curious about their future lives, and especially about courtship and marriage — if they are to read his work, he must treat such matters truthfully and with some degree of frankness.

Pamela, therefore, really is the first piece of fiction of its kind, the first of a new species in several respects. The first of these is its declared moral seriousness, to which all its other characteristics are linked. I shall argue that although Richardson was mistaken in his description of the kind of moral teaching which *Pamela* offers, like *Clarissa* and *Sir Charles Grandison*, it is morally illuminating for a reader, in that it explores and depicts human nature as faithfully as possible: Richardson's commitment to the truth of his characters is absolute.

The question must however arise of how Richardson's conscious aim — moral teaching of the kind which he describes — was transformed into the much more complex activity of his novels. Why, in fact, did he lose interest in the *Familiar Letters* which were the ideal vehicle for offering simple moral instruction? The *Familiar Letters* are by no means the stereotyped book of epistolary etiquette

which might be imagined; in almost all the letters, a fictional situation has been vividly created and Richardson has brought real moral concern to bear upon it. There are exchanges sustained through several letters in which such a situation is analysed and judged from two points of view, generally those of subject and spectator.¹ Moreover it is clear throughout the book that a consistent scheme of moral values, presumably Richardson's own, is being advocated and applied.

It is in fact only from Richardson's early, non-fictional works, the *Familiar Letters* and *The Apprentice's Vade Mecum* that we can make definite deductions about Richardson's moral values. To some extent the fact that he states in comments made outside the novels that Clarissa and Sir Charles Grandison are offered as examples of their sexes helps us to feel that their behaviour and opinions have their author's approval. But although the sub-title '*Virtue Rewarded*' and Richardson's early comments on *Pamela* make it clear that at the time of writing he greatly admired his first heroine, later on he became rather patronising about her. In a letter to Lady Bradshaigh, he speaks of the necessity for corrections in the novel:

'I will give *Pamela* my last Correction, if my Life be spared; that, as a Piece of Writing only, she may not appear, for her situation, unworthy of her Younger Sisters. As to her Story; that, perhaps, taking in the Design, will not make her subscribe to the others: only, as to two Sisters, who, being born to their father, when the Honest Andrewes was a little more *aforehand in the World*, as Rustics phrase it, they were put to genteeler Parts of Education than could be afforded for the Elder Daughter before Mr. B's Mother took her, and laid the Foundations of the Family's better Fortune.'²

1. Such exchanges are, for example, Letters LXXXV to LXXXVII, and CLXI-CLXV.
2. Letter to Lady Bradshaigh, dated 5 October 1753, *Selected Letters*, p 245.

Richardson may be thinking in this passage of the colloquial and somewhat inelegant vigour of Pamela's speech, which he did correct in later editions of the work. But it seems likely that the naïveté of the moral scheme, which is related to the structure, also embarrassed him at a later stage in his work.

There is a kind of clumsy self-consciousness about the tone of the letter which must make us aware that Richardson has found it extremely difficult to discuss, outside of his novels, (inside them the epistolary mode removed the need for such discussion) the relationship between himself as author and his heroines. The way in which he calls himself 'Honest Andrewes' and the italicising of the 'low' phrase 'aforehand with the World', still attempting to hide himself behind the persona of Pamela's fictional father, shows his embarrassment at the necessity of admitting that they originate completely from himself. He is determined to retain, even though in a personal letter it is most inappropriate to do so, a screen of metaphor behind which he can remain concealed. The acknowledgement that they originated from him was an acknowledgement that their interests, even that intense analytical interest in the self which led them to moral discoveries, were his own. Such a recognition was always impossible for Richardson, because his conscious sense of his interests was so greatly at variance with it. He was always able to discuss his conscious sense of moral purpose with complete confidence, as the letter to Lady Echlin, belonging to the same period of his life and quoted on p. 17, shows.

Whatever the convictions of the novelist in 1753, it can be seen that Pamela embodies many of the values held by Richardson in his early days. *The Apprentice's Vade Mecum* which is directed at young people who must work for their livings and who, like Pamela, are junior employees in a large household, is a reworking of a letter of advice to Richardson's nephew who was apprenticed to him, and can therefore reasonably be considered to reflect his views.

He emphasises the importance of honesty and thrift, two qualities which Pamela equally values — she carefully counts the clothes in her bundles, in order to decide what she may legitimately call her own, counts her money, sends guineas to her parents, wrapped in paper so that they do not chink — 'and be sure don't open it before him'.(p2) Though generous, she never gives away money after her marriage without her husband's approval and promises him written accounts of every penny. Richardson himself was extremely scrupulous about money and in his '*Advice to Unmarried Ladies*' in the *Rambler* expressed his disapproval of settlements on a wife, or even stipulations about the pin-money she would receive: he felt it was essential that a wife should remain accountable to her husband in all financial matters.

A more striking example of the way that Pamela embodies Richardson's own beliefs about proper behaviour is the way in which her conduct accords with the advice to his nephew about his choice of associates. A wise apprentice will 'generally converse with his *Betters* and particularly have an Eye to the Acquaintance of such persons as may *promote* him in his Business when he begins for himself'.¹ Although Pamela claims "I have the love of everybody",² in fact she keeps the whole household at a distance, except for the three upper servants, the housekeeper, butler and steward. She has her meals with Mrs Jervis, the housekeeper, and shares her bed, seeing very little of the other servants. Her motive for this, she alleges, is modesty --

'I am sure I am not proud and carry it civilly to everybody; but yet, methinks, I cannot bear to be looked at by these men-servants, for they seem as if they would look one through: and as I generally breakfast, dine and sup with Mrs Jervis (so good

1. *The Apprentice's Vade Mecum*, quoted in *Samuel Richardson: A Biography*, p 53.

2. *Pamela*, p 4.

is she to me) I am very easy that I have so little to say to them.'¹

But the truth is that Pamela has equally little to say to the women of the household, even to the girls of her own age. She works hard at her sewing for Mr. B — diligence is strongly recommended in the *Vade Mecum*, and Pamela, charged with idleness, retorts indignantly ... 'I work all hours with my needle upon his linen and the fine linen of the family; and am besides about flowering him a waistcoat'.² When she is not at her work, she wastes no time in social chit-chat; she is either writing to her parents or reading 'good books' to Mrs Jervis. It is true that her position in the household during the life of Mr B's mother was a special one; it was not defined as such, but the old lady seems to have treated her as a companion as well as a maid. During the period of the novel, until she is kidnapped, she is simply a sewing maid who chooses to avoid the company of her contemporaries and to spend her time with the more influential members of the household. And although we cannot feel that Pamela is seeking promotion or patronage in the way which an apprentice might, we cannot be unaware that it is Mrs Jervis's testimonial which might procure another post for Pamela and that all three upper servants try to protect Pamela from B's anger. After B has abducted her, all three intercede with Lady Davers asking her to help.

Pamela's avoidance of her contemporaries has another effect, which Richardson probably thought very desirable — when she marries B, she can control his household without having the embarrassment of acknowledging former friends in the kitchen.³ She has no ties to cut, in fact:

1. *Pamela*, p 11.

2. *Ibid*, p 11.

3. B himself remarks on this at an early stage in the novel, long before his reformation - 'All the servants from the highest to the lowest, doat upon you instead of envying you, and look upon you in so superior a light as shows what you ought to be.'
Pamela, p 69.

Richardson's advice to the apprentice no doubt considers this too.

The sum of Pamela's qualities, in fact, including those which have made her unpopular, is the system of values which Richardson himself held. They are middle-class, closely related to economic individualism, and except for the great emphasis on chastity, resemble very closely Robinson Crusoe's or Captain Jack's. Even Pamela's sense of chastity is one which Defoe would understand. Moll Flanders's principle, 'that a woman should never be kept for a mistress that had money to make herself a wife',¹ is recognisably related to it, though the downrightness and sincerity of Moll's statement belongs to a lower class than Richardson's. Both he and Pamela prize respectability — that is, the approval of their group — far too much to allow themselves to become so aware of the economic basis of chastity. Moll, an outcast from birth, has nothing to lose by immodest outspokenness, either in her own self-esteem or in others' eyes.

The *Familiar Letters* contain, predictably, letters which show us the reason for several of Pamela's actions and prove that she was acting out beliefs held by Richardson: two of them² advise a young maidservant to quit her employment at once because her master has made guilty overtures towards her. The character of Mrs Jervis and Pamela's quasi-filial relationship with her obviously have the function of explaining why Pamela remained in her master's house when he clearly intended no good towards her. Mrs Jervis's affectionate anxiety about Pamela's poverty if she returns home and her wish to retain her as a companion are important influences on her to stay, and even more important is the fact that Pamela feels safer because she eats and sleeps with Mrs Jervis. B would find it — does

1. *Moll Flanders*, p 52.

2. Letters CXXXVIII, CXXXIX.

find it — very difficult to force Pamela to become his mistress whilst she is under Mrs Jervis's care, though Pamela eventually decides to leave because she foresees that the older woman's opposition to her master will cost her her place, and also because not even Mrs Jervis can preserve her completely from danger.

Eaves and Kimpel¹ mention the high proportion (42%) of letters in the *Familiar Letters* which are concerned with love and marriage — the views expressed are very like those of Richardson's *Rambler* essay², emphasising prudence in general and the importance of parental consent. There seems no doubt that some dissatisfaction with the conduct book as a form, some sense of its limitations, led Richardson to the writing of a novel. His first heroine certainly shares the moral values which he advocates in the *Familiar Letters*, but the crucial difference between the activities of a conduct book writer and those of a novelist has led him to view those values very differently.

It is easy to see that in a conduct book an author will define and advocate lines of behaviour for his readers: as readers, we are aware that novels allow us a far wider range of activities. We become, not merely the spectators of situations and the assenters to the author's prescriptions, but the collators of evidence and the assessors and judges of persons within the fiction. It may, however, be less apparent that Richardson, as novelist, received an equally important extension to his freedom, compared to the comparative confinement within a single viewpoint which must be the conduct book writer's experience. We have seen that in his non-fictional writings, Richardson adheres to the principles which he embodies in Pamela; the process of novel-writing, however,

1. In *Samuel Richardson, a Biography*, p 95.

2. 'Advice to Unmarried Ladies', *The Rambler* No. 97 pp 166-170.

which obliges him to create a whole society, in which his characters move as total and separate personalities, forces him into objectivity about his fictional people, and therefore about the values which they hold.

A trivial example from *Pamela II* will show this process: Pamela has been asked by her father whether he should allow two of her cousins to live with him on the estate which Mr. B is to give him. This is her answer —

'As to the desire of cousin Thomas, and Roger, to live with you, I endeavoured to sound what our dear benefactor's opinion was. He was pleased to say, "I have no choice in this case, my dear. Your father is his own master: he may employ whom he pleases; and, if they shew respect to him and your mother, I think, as he rightly observes, relationship should rather have the preference; and as he can remedy inconveniences, if he finds any, by all means to let every branch of your family have reason to rejoice with him."

But I have thought of this matter a good deal, since I had the favour of your letter; and I hope, since you condescend to ask my advice, you will excuse me, if I give it freely; yet entirely submitting all to your liking.

First, then, I think it better to have *any body* than relations; and for these reasons:

One is apt to expect more regard from them, and they more indulgence than strangers can hope for.

That where there is such a difference in the expectations of both, uneasiness cannot but arise.

That this will subject you to bear it, or to resent it, and to part with them. If you bear it, you will know no end of impositions: if you dismiss them, it will occasion ill-will. They will call you unkind; and you them ungrateful: and as your prosperous lot may raise you enviers, such will be apt to believe *them* rather than *you*.¹

The views of Pamela are exactly Richardson's, as expressed in the letter to his nephew. He speaks of the danger of a man's working for a kinsman, saying that they

1. *Pamela II*, p 12.

may 'frequently disagree, by reason of greater expectations on both sides of allowance and consideration to be had for each other than for mere strangers'.¹ But the novelist has presented Pamela's opinion side by side with the very different view of her husband, which as a good wife (and the financial dependent of Mr B) she must consider. B's view is aristocratic and accepts that he has an obligation to provide for poorer kinsmen, however remote. His sense of his obligations as the rich head of a family belongs to a kind of societal organization already weakening in the Eighteenth Century, when more and more people were coming to towns to work for masters, rather than living and working in family groups. If we are to be moved by Pamela, we must believe in her and in her marriage; her husband must be presented as holding views consistent with his position and behaviour throughout Parts I and II of *Pamela*; Richardson has therefore been obliged to separate himself from Pamela in order to create B, and to free himself (and incidentally us) from her beliefs in order to present B's, which arise from experience and education quite different from hers. The effect is that we see her advice as admirably prudent, but lacking in the generous warmth of B's — we are able to judge it objectively rather than just accept it.

A less simple example, where there is no question of two opposing views being presented within the text, occurs when Pamela, having decided that her master intends to seduce her, decides to go home. She feels that she must leave behind the clothes he has given her, which could place her under an obligation to him, and makes herself an outfit, suitable for a village girl, from materials bought with her own money.

1. Quoted in *Samuel Richardson, a Biography*, pp 51, 52.

'And so, when I had dined, upstairs I went, and locked myself up in my little room. There I dressed myself in my new garb, and put on my round-eared ordinary cap, but with a green knot, my homespun gown and petticoat, and plain leather shoes, but yet they are what they call Spanish leather; and my ordinary hose, ordinary I mean to what I have lately been used to, though I should think a good yarn may do very well for every day, when I come home. A plain muslin tucker I put on, and my black silk necklace, instead of the French necklace my lady gave me; and put the ear-rings out of my ears. When I was quite equipped, I took my straw hat in my hand, with its two blue strings, and looked in the glass, as proud as any thing. To say truth, I never liked myself so well in my life.

O the pleasure of descending with ease, innocence and resignation! — Indeed, there is nothing like it! A humble mind, I plainly see, cannot meet with any very shocking disappointment, let Fortune's wheel turn round as it will.¹

Though we hear only Pamela's voice here, we cannot fail to register that there is a degree of self-deception present in her. Delighted by her own beauty, and even more delighted to recognise that she does not owe it to any gifts from the B family, her confidence in herself, her pride and determination to resist B grow stronger as she admires herself. The fact that she identifies these attitudes as 'a humble mind' is one of our earliest intimations that Richardson will invite us to consider the complexity of meanings behind words like 'humility' and 'chastity'. Both B and his readers are aware that her strongest feelings in this situation are pride and self-satisfaction, but Pamela is not: throughout the whole period of the novel, Richardson invites us to judge Pamela, and the realities which she perceives, differently from the way she does. Frequently, as in the extract quoted, it is the minuteness of her descriptions of people and events which allow us to judge her independently. We

1. *Pamela*, pp 41, 42.

are also aware that her fear of seduction or rape distorts her judgement, and may even be provocative of the kind of sexual aggression which she fears. Richardson himself was consciously approving of Pamela's watchfulness, of her unceasing alertness for any movement on B's side which might lead to dangerous familiarity — it was only in the novel that he could suggest that an all-consuming preoccupation with chastity in a woman must produce in a man the sense that sexual aggression is the necessary response. Similarly, in the novel he was able to show that obsessive fear for one's chastity could make the whole world appear threatening, and could make action or communication difficult — a discovery which he was to take further in *Clarissa*.

'To be sure there is witchcraft in this house; and I believe Lucifer is bribed, as well as all about me, and is got into the shape of that nasty grim bull, to watch me! For I have been down again, and ventured to open the door, and went out about a bow-shot into the pasture; but there stood that horrid bull, staring me full in the face, with fiery saucer eyes, as I thought. So I got in again, for fear he should come at me. Nobody saw me, however. Do you think there are such things as witches and spirits? If there be, I believe in my heart Mrs Jewkes has got this bull of her side. But what could I do without money or a friend? O this wicked woman to trick me so! Every thing, man, woman, and beast, is in a plot against your poor Pamela, I think! Then I knew not one step of the way, nor how far to any house or cottage; and whether I could gain protection, if I got to a house; and now the robbers are abroad too, I may run into as great danger as I want to escape; nay, much greater, if these promising appearances hold: and sure my master cannot be so black as that they should not! — What can I do? — I have a good mind to try for it once more; but then I may be pursued and taken: it will be worse for me; this wicked woman will beat me, take my shoes away, and lock me up.

.....
I have just now a sort of strange persuasion upon me, that I ought to try and get away, and leave the issue to Providence. So, once more — I'll see, at least if this bull be still there.

Alack-a-day! what a fate is this! I have not the courage to go, neither can I think to stay. But I must resolve. The gardener was in sight last time; so made me come up again. But I'll contrive to send him out of the way, if I can:— For if I never should have such another opportunity, I could not forgive myself. Once more I'll venture. God direct my footsteps, and make smooth my path, and my way to safety!

Well, here I am, come back again! frightened, like a fool, out of all my purposes. O how terrible every thing appears to me! I had got twice as far as I was before, out of the back-door: I looked and saw the bull, as I thought, between me and the door: and another bull coming towards me the other way. Well, thought I, here is a double witchcraft to be sure! Here is the spirit of my master in one bull, and Mrs Jewkes's in the other: now I am gone, to be sure! O help! cried I, like a fool, and ran back to the door, as swift as if I flew. When I had got the door in my hand, I ventured to look back, to see if these supposed bulls were coming; when I saw they were only two cows grazing in distant places, that my fears had made all this rout about. But as everything is so frightful to me, I find I am not fit to think of my escape; for I shall be equally frightened at the first strange man that I meet with: I am persuaded, that fear brings one into more dangers, than the caution which goes along with it delivers one from.¹

Pamela's real terror and sense of impotence are movingly presented, but even more vivid is our sense of her obsession with dangerous masculinity which turns a pair of cows into bulls. When she says 'everything is so frightful to me, I find I am not fit to think of my escape; for I shall be equally frightened at the first strange man that I meet with...', Richardson has indicated to us that one of the reasons why she cannot escape is her preoccupation with masculinity as a threat to her. He has seen too that it may impair her judgement somewhat comically in this episode, but more seriously when she interprets B's behaviour, no matter how well-intentioned, as sexually threatening.

1. *Pamela*, pp 131, 132, 133.

It is the creation of a heroine's full human reality which has forced Richardson to identify and portray the darker elements in compounds which his non-literary self was glad to leave under blanket labels like 'virtue', 'chastity' or 'submissiveness'. In *Clarissa*, this examination of the range of meanings behind an attitude is carried on with far more profound penetration. When Sally Martin, the prostitute, visits Clarissa in prison to triumph over her, she looks at Clarissa's clothes and says, "Methinks, Miss you are a little soily, to what we have seen you. Pity such a nice lady should not have changes of apparel. Why won't you send to your lodgings for linen, at least?"

"I am not nice now."¹

Clarissa's shining neatness of dress has been referred to frequently in the novel: when she is confined to the brothel it becomes, not a symbol, but her own statement about her chastity, and her vigilance and scrupulosity in its defence. Now, after her rape, her indifference about her clothes is the sign of her despair — let her outside match her inner reality. She will recover from this despair: the minuteness of her prescriptions about the disposal of her corpse and the inscription and decorations on her coffin become the visible evidence of her recovered sense of her own undiminished value. But the fact that Richardson chooses to show us that Clarissa's chastity as well as her elegance is essentially linked to a firm assertion of her own great worth shows that he has as a novelist achieved a far more complex understanding of human attributes which outside his fiction he could only praise uncritically.

The whole of the novel's greatness depends on the reader's understanding that Clarissa's chastity, as she understands it, is in a great measure responsible for all

1. *Clarissa* Vol III Letter CV p 439 (6.65)

that happens to her: her determination to remain separate from and to acknowledge no ties of affection or obligation to Lovelace until their marriage, provokes and increases his resentment against her. At the end of Volume I¹ and the beginning of Volume II, that is to say, immediately before their elopment and in the early days of their association, he repeatedly says that he will marry her if she admits to loving him: she, on the other hand, emphasises that her only concern is for reconciliation with her family. Given the situation which prevails between them at the beginning of Volume II — they are sharing lodgings but have as yet no plans, however remote, to marry — Richardson the moralist no doubt felt that Clarissa could not properly admit her love — 'That a young lady should be in love and the love of the young gentleman undeclared is an heterodoxy which prudence and even policy will not allow,'¹ — but the novelist could show the disastrous estrangement between the two growing as a result of Clarissa's refusal to commit herself to Lovelace. Chastity in the novel is shown to have, as one of its meanings, defiance of men and an assertion of independence and superiority.

Richardson's statement in the Preface to *Clarissa*, that she is proposed as an example to her sex, taken together with the novel, shows the curious separation always present between the attitudes which he held consciously as a moralist and a member of the urban middle class and those which control his novel-writing. For he demonstrates in the novel that those attitudes which he describes in the Preface as exemplary lead her inevitably to become fatally estranged from her family and unable to achieve union with Lovelace, who presents himself as the alternative to her family — that is to say, once Clarissa has found the moral contradictions of the daughter-father relationship impossible to cope with, she inevitably tries the woman-man

1. These are the Everyman volume divisions: Vol I corresponds to Richardson's Vols I and II, Vol II to his III and IV.

2: 'Advice to Unmarried Ladies', *The Rambler*, No. 97 pp 166-170.

positions, only to find that they too contain irreconcilable contradictions, given her sense of them. The result is that she is unable to achieve union with Lovelace, except in the moment of rape, which is a ghastly travesty of real sexual union, and which in effect separates them permanently.

The fact that Richardson, in his letters to friends during the writing of *Clarissa* and his comments on all his novels after their completion, was never able to acknowledge or even perhaps understand consciously his activity within his novels suggests that the epistolary mode which he always employed within them was of crucial importance to him. He was able to work through a medium which allowed his characters the greatest possible degree of self-revelation, the most minute self-analysis, but in terms of his epistolary mode, he could make no commentary as author.

Jane Austen's brother Henry said that while admiring Richardson's power of 'creating and preserving the consistency of his characters', she was critical of 'his prolix style and tedious narrative'.¹ She herself had abandoned the epistolary mode of her early works² because it had become clear to her that the prolixity of Richardson was inevitable if a moral investigation of any complexity was to be entered on in an epistolary novel. We have only to look at *Lady Susan* to realise this. The heroine reveals herself, that is to say, her wickedness, to her friend Mrs Johnson in comparatively few letters, but unless the events are to be unnaturally prolonged and the plot retarded in order to give Lady Susan opportunity for self-revelation on a much larger scale, it must be, as it is, wickedness of an extremely simple nature, the kind of

1. Biographical Notice of the Author, p 7, Vol 5, *The Oxford Illustrated Jane Austen*.

2. Besides *Lady Susan*, she wrote the original version of *Sense and Sensibility*.

wickedness which exists only in poor novels. There can be no moral discovery for reader or author in such a book. Jane Austen's refusal to finish *Lady Susan* and the tone¹ in which she disposes of all the characters in the hasty plot-summary with which she leaves the work shows her boredom with this kind of writing.

She was to extend the range of topics which a novel could deal with in depth by switching from the epistolary mode, where prolixity is unavoidable if complex or profound moral discoveries are to be made, to a different technique of novel-writing, in which a narrator outside the fiction, who supplies information or interprets behaviour for us is combined with 'point of view' narration - that is to say, access to the consciousness of a character within the fiction, whose perceptions of people and events are offered to us. In the last chapter of this study, a discussion is offered of the effects of this change in technique.

The narrative technique which Jane Austen substituted for the epistolary mode allowed her to reveal and explore character without straining the readers' credulity and patience by endless exchanges of letters: she was able not only to allow her readers access to the minds of her heroines, but to comment as narrator when she felt it desirable. It was not merely because Richardson was writing seventy years earlier that this was impossible for him: in Jane Austen there was no great separation between the conscious values of the woman and those of the novelist; her letters show that her attitudes, especially her characteristic irony, together with a serious moral interest in people, were as visible in her social and family life, as in her writing. With Richardson, as we have seen, it was otherwise; the conscious values of the printer, family man and friend remained rigid and conservative. Only in his

1. *Lady Susan*, p 313, *The Oxford Illustrated Jane Austen: Vol 6, Minor Works*.

novels, knowing himself to be safely out of sight behind heroines and hero-villains, was he able to explore and question.

The defect of which Richardson has been most accused from his own day until our own, is certainly prolixity, but the minute accounts of events, the endless examinations of their own motives and reactions in which his characters indulge are essential features of his technique. If we can summarise his activity as novelist as the objectifying of his own values within a heroine, in order that these values may be judged, then the readers' activity must be to sift, collate and judge unaided by anyone but the heroine herself, who is his source of information.

Richardson's references to himself as editor rather than author and to his novels as collections of letters which have fallen into his hands were not intended to be taken seriously, as Dr Johnson irritably commented. They were in part a continuation of the tradition of fiction writers which can be seen in Defoe's Preface to *Moll Flanders*, in terms of which a novelist was required to persuade his readers that his work was a factual account. But he had, as we have seen, no wish to associate himself with earlier writers of fiction; he presented his novels in this way chiefly to allow his characters to create as vividly as possible the illusion of independent life.

Richardson's technical discoveries, especially this last, must invite comparison with drama, since this is the mode in which the writer must necessarily be invisible behind his characters and unable to intervene in his own voice. It is certainly true that psychological realism was achieved in English tragedy long before the English novel attempted it. Dr. Johnson's great tribute¹ to

1. 'This therefore is the praise of Shakespeare, that his drama is the mirror of life, that he who has mazed his imagination in following phantoms which other writers raise up before him, may here be cured of his delirious ecstasies by reaching human sentiments in human language; by scenes from which a hermit may estimate the transactions of the world and a confessor predict the progress of the passions.'

Shakespeare amounts to a recognition of this, but dramatic realism, even though it is still psychological realism, since the realistic representation of a human must convince us that there is a real human mind before us as well as a body, must always be very different from the realism of a novel. In *Hamlet*, the dramatist's task is to convince us of the reality of the hero's predicament, but it is by Hamlet's outside, his speeches and actions, and the verbal response of others to him that we must be convinced. He may occasionally reveal his thoughts in a soliloquy, but the device must be used sparingly, because a play cannot remain static in its focus for long; it is the representation of an action, not a state. A man who talks to himself or to the audience is acting in a way which is counter-realistic and which will tend to breakdown involvement in the play if it is sustained or frequently repeated. In the case of *Hamlet* the hero's isolation and disturbed mental state make soliloquy almost a realistic means of self-revelation, but nevertheless it can never be the main or even a very important technique in a play.

When T.S. Eliot in his essay on *Hamlet*¹ writes of the play's comparative failure as a work of art, it is at least in part the problem of a genre unsuited to the subject matter which he is investigating.

'The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an "objective correlative"; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked. If you examine any of Shakespeare's more successful tragedies, you will find this exact equivalence; you will find that the state of mind of Lady Macbeth walking in her sleep has been communicated to you by a skilful accumulation of imagined sensory impressions; the words of Macbeth on hearing of his wife's death strike us as if, given

1. 'Hamlet and His Problems', *The Sacred Wood*, pp 100, 101.

the sequence of events, these words were automatically released by the last event in the series. The artistic "inevitability" lies in this complete adequacy of the external to the emotion; and this is precisely what is deficient in *Hamlet*.- Hamlet (the man) is dominated by an emotion which is inexpressible, because it is in *excess* of the facts as they appear. And the supposed identity of Hamlet with his author is genuine to this point: that Hamlet's bafflement at the absence of objective equivalent to his feelings is a prolongation of the bafflement of his creator in the face of his artistic problem. Hamlet is up against the difficulty that his disgust is occasioned by his mother, but that his mother is not an adequate equivalent for it; his disgust envelops and exceeds her. It is thus a feeling which he cannot understand; he cannot objectify it, and it therefore remains to poison life and obstruct action. None of the possible actions can satisfy it; and nothing that Shakespeare can do with the plot can express Hamlet for him.'

The problem is that Hamlet's inner turmoil is disproportionate to the reality of its cause, his mother's behaviour. Therefore in order to understand it, we need, not experience of the cause, but experience of his mental state. No 'objective correlative' can be adequate: what we need is subjective experience of his agony. This, of course, is not available to us in any form of literature, but the theatre, with its necessary concentration on interaction, is much less able to offer us access to the mind of a character than the novel, and especially the epistolary novel, in which the letter can be used with perfect realism as a means of self-exploration as well as communication; the journal-letter, which is the letter between intimate friends who are in daily correspondence, may as easily be concerned with mental states as with events. Eliot suggests later in the same essay that Hamlet's madness is Shakespeare's attempt to suggest the presence of emotions too powerful for expression, but such a means must be by its nature, to a great extent, self-defeating.

Madness is confused and irrational: we need rational self-analysis.

The problem of Hamlet, that his emotions are stronger than their cause can justify, is to an extent paralleled by the plights of both Pamela and Clarissa, since both heroines increase their danger by over-reacting to it. Pamela's exaggerated fear of B, as well as Clarissa's growing mistrust of Lovelace, which provokes him to justify it by plottings and deceptions — these mental states are frequently disproportionate to their causes; in fact it is part of the purpose of the novels to show them as being so. Only a novel can properly investigate an obsession without forcing the artist to suggest its presence by madness.

Chapter 2

Aristotle's famous distinction between literature which is didactic, that is to say, primarily concerned to present ideas, and literature which is mimetic, primarily concerned to imitate an action, is an important one for any discussion of Richardson's novels and especially of *Pamela*. It is a distinction which was to be increasingly blurred in novel-writing from Richardson's day onwards: we can say with confidence that the fictions of Defoe are mimetic in intention, but after the publication of *Pamela* the discovery had been made, though not yet explicitly understood, that the moral effect of a novel depended on the illusion of life which it presented.

We have already seen that Richardson was unable to acknowledge consciously the nature of his literary activity — the first major writer to understand the vital link between the realistic representation of life in fiction and moral intention was Jane Austen. *Northanger Abbey* is a book, which in order to bring home to its readers the fact that its heroine's moral discoveries have importance in their own lives, insists that she and her family are real people, that the events of the novel take place in a world recognisable as our own and not the fantasy world of the Gothic novel. We can be quite sure that Jane Austen's novels were intended to be morally illuminating to their readers: the titles of three of them proclaim her interests, but in all six of them the moral discoveries which are made are firmly tied to the human individuals who make them and depend, for their didactic effect on our engaging with them as far as possible as we would with fellow human beings.

But although Richardson did not articulate the idea that in the novel, didactic and mimetic are one, we can see him actually making this discovery within *Pamela*.

If we take *Pamela* I and II as a single novel, which

is most unfair on Richardson, and fuses two different intentions as well as two distinct periods in the novelist's life,¹ but convenient for my present purpose, we can see a great variety of treatment applied to Richardson's *conscious* purpose, that of offering simple moral teaching. There is the dramatic incident, narrated by the letter-writer; the reader's involvement with the characters may well, in such an incident, make him respond more immediately to the drama than to any didactic intention. B's rape attempt is of this kind, and so is Lady Daver's surprise descent on Pamela; so is the Polly Barlow incident in *Pamela* II. It can be seen from the last two examples that the balance between Richardson's conscious moral interests and his subconscious wish to examine human nature in extreme situations was not always the same: whereas in the rape scene our involvement is entirely with the two personalities and the conflict between them, we are aware in the Lady Davers episode that we are being helped to understand B's arrogance, and to feel that it is not excessive, given his educational disadvantages, and at the same time we are being shown that B did very well for himself when he married his mother's maid. Other truths about Pamela — that she is an able strategist in several senses — are shown to us in this incident, and in the Polly Barlow one, but the point is that although the plot relevance is very clear, and we are able to involve ourselves with Pamela in both cases, our sense of the didactic element is stronger here than in the part of *Pamela* I which precedes the marriage.

During the period after the marriage, a good deal of Richardson's energy has gone into the process of discover-

1. *Pamela* II was written in 1741, Richardson's intention being to expose the continuation of his novel by John Kelly as spurious. See his letter to James Leake, August 1741. *Selected Letters*, pp 42-45.

ing what kind of marriage Pamela and B have made, and upon what terms they must live their lives together. Much of this discovery is undramatised, to the extent that it consists of long passages in which B explains to his wife her new duties and tells her of faults which he wishes her to avoid. Pamela comments occasionally to thank him for his advice, and occasionally, as on pp 406-409, to judge and reflect upon his admonitions.

'Let me see—what are the rules I am to observe from this awful lecture? Why these:

1. That I must not, when he is in great wrath with any body, break in upon him without his leave. — *Well, I'll remember it, I warrant. But yet I think this rule is almost peculiar to himself.*

2. That I must think his displeasure is the heaviest thing that can befall me.—*To be sure I shall.*

3. And so that I must not wish to incur it, to save any body else.—*I'll be further if I do.*

4. That I must never make a compliment to any body at his expense.

5. That I must not be guilty of any acts of wilful meanness.—*There is a great deal meant in this; and I'll endeavour to observe it all. To be sure, the occasion on which he mentions this, explains it; that I must say nothing, though in anger, that is spiteful or malicious, disrespectful or undutiful, and such like.*

6. That I must bear with him even when I find him in the wrong.—*This is a little hard, as the case may be.*

I wonder whether poor Miss Sally Godfrey be living or dead!

7. That I must be as flexible as the reed in the fable, lest, by resisting the tempest, like the oak, I be torn up by the roots.—*Well, I'll do the best I can!— There is no great likelihood, I hope, that I should be too perverse; yet, sure, the tempest will not lay me quite level with the ground, neither.*

8. That the education of young people of condition is generally wrong. — *Mem. That if any part of children's education fall to my lot, I never indulge and humour them in things they should be restrained in.*

9. That I accustom them to bear disappointments and control.

10. That I suffer them not to be too much indulged in their infancy.

11. Nor at School.

12. Nor spoil them when they come home.

13. For that children generally extend their perverseness from their nurse to the schoolmaster; from the schoolmaster to the parents.

14. And, in their next step, as a proper punishment for all, make their ownelves unhappy.

15. That undutiful and perverse children make bad husbands and wives; and, *collaterally, bad masters and mistresses.*

16. That, not being subject to be controlled early, they cannot, when married, bear one another.

17. That the fault lying deep, and in the minds of each other, neither will mend it.

18. Whence follow misunderstandings, quarrels, appeals, ineffectual reconciliations, separations, elopements, or, at best, indifference; perhaps, aversion,— *Mem. A good image of unhappy wedlock in the words YAWNING HUSBAND, and VAPOURISH WIFE, when together; but separate both quite alive.*

19. Few married persons behave as he likes.— *Let me ponder this with awe and improvement.*

20. Some gentlemen can compromise with their wives for quietness sake; but he can't. — *Indeed I believe that's true; I don't desire he should.*

21. That love before marriage is absolutely necessary.

22. That there are fewer instances of men than women loving better after marriage.— *But why so?— I wish he had given his reasons for this! I fancy they are not to the advantage of his own sex.*

23. That a woman give her husband reason to think she prefers him above all men.— *Well, to be sure, that should be so.*

24. That if she would overcome, it must be by sweetness, and complaisance: *that is, by yielding, he means, no doubt.*

25. Yet not such a slavish one, neither, as should rather seem the effect of her insensibility, than judgement or affection.

26. That the words COMMAND and OBEY shall be blotted out of his vocabulary.— *Very good!*

27. That a man should desire nothing of his wife, but what is significant, reasonable, just. — *To be sure that is right.*

28. But then, that she must not shew reluctance, uneasiness, or doubt, to oblige him; and that too at half a word; and must not be bid twice to do one thing.— *But may not this on some occasions be a little dispensed with? But he says afterwards, indeed.*

29. That this must not be only while he took care to make her compliance reasonable and consistent with her free agency, in points that ought to be allowed her. — *Come, this is pretty well, considering.*

30. That if the husband be set upon a wrong thing, she must not dispute with him, but do it, and expostulate afterwards. —'

She recognises that B's commands, whether or not they are just, must be obeyed, a recognition which is implicit in the concept of marriage which she (and B) holds. Nevertheless she sees clearly that Rules 1,2,3,6 and 7 are based, not on any marital duty, but on the particular character of B who is dictatorial and violent-tempered. She does not explicitly censure this, but as B has admitted that the faults of his character are the results of his having been over-indulged as a child, her determination that her own children shall be brought up differently, with a wholesome amount of correction, amounts to a recognition of his defects. Although she intends to conform to his demands, we are made aware of a free, critical spirit. When B claims that a wife can only overcome by sweetness and complaisance, she quickly exposes the contradiction — 'that is, by *yielding...*', and her reservation about 28, which if it were unqualified, would imply a more than slavish subjection, indicates that she has every intention of retaining her freedom of judgment.

Both the list of rules and Pamela's commentary on them are rooted firmly in the situation of the couple — newly married and therefore beginning to establish a relationship which neither fully understands, but about which both have strong ideas. Rule 19, 'Few married people behave as he likes,' may function as a general criticism of marital behaviour but the reader can see it in its context within the novel as related to B's reluctance to marry, not just a servant-girl, whose family background make her unsuitable, but also the various wealthy women whom his mother and sister had suggested to him in the past. The whole list is a part of B's need to dominate the

relationship, and of that sense of himself, his abilities, wealth and position which would have prevented him, as he admits in the homily before Pamela's summary, from compromising about his wife's behaviour to him. In Rule 23, 'That a wife give her husband reason to think she prefers him above all men', there is so much which reminds us of the period before their marriage, when much of the bitterness of their conflict came from the fact that Pamela's fears for her chastity prevented her from acknowledging to herself, much less to B, that she 'preferred him above all men'. Many of the rules are related to B's pride, which made it so difficult for him to marry Pamela: the very presence of these lectures in the novel is partly the result of this pride. If their marriage is a great victory for Pamela, B is determined to redress the balance of their relationship by insisting that it is his standards of behaviour and his wishes, even when they are unreasonable, which will shape it.

The reader's involvement in this part of the novel certainly differs in intensity from that which he experiences at the height of the struggle between Pamela and B: there is a calmer, more intellectual sense of the masculine and feminine perspectives of marriage being compared, and of a strong and violent man and a strong and rather subtler woman accommodating themselves to each other, but the didactic element is still fused with the mimetic: the reader feels that he is learning about the marriage of Pamela and B, not about Ideal Marriage. To an extent, this feeling depends on the way in which Richardson's technique prevents him from backing either heroine or hero: neither can be presented as possessed of the proper solution, though the reader is aware that their future relationship must emerge from a reconciliation of their theories of marriage. It will be shaped too by what they *are* — and it is here that Richardson's statement, that he portrayed 'human nature as it is' acquires a new meaning. When he shows us B, displaying male authority in marriage and

Pamela agreeing on the surface to respect it, but inwardly asserting independence, he is certainly portraying what is, and equally certainly showing the inadequacy of any simply didactic formula for what should be: the form of their marriage will emerge from the interaction of their personalities as he depicts them.

When Lady Davers arrives unexpectedly at B-Hall to find that her brother is away from home and that Pamela is actually married to him, Richardson clearly intends his reader to examine her claim that it is disgraceful for B to marry his mother's maid. Lady Davers's own behaviour and speech, both violent, undignified and, given the circumstances of which she is aware, actively stupid, demonstrate that rank is no guarantee of merit. Pamela, on the other hand, is gentle, dignified and extremely astute in her management of the whole affair. Whilst we can see that the incident has functional importance, however, its credibility is greatly increased by the interest shown in Pamela by Lady Davers after her mother's death¹ and by the requests of the butler, steward and housekeeper to her² that she attempt to rescue Pamela after her abduction. The characters of Lady Davers's maid, Beck, and the idiotic 'Lord Jackey' add to the reader's sense that this is a real experience in which Pamela's claim that she is the proper bride for B is seriously tested.

After B has returned home and is trying to reconcile his sister to his marriage, the two discuss the rights and wrongs of marriages where the partners are of unequal rank, on a much more theoretical level.

"Suppose," said she, "I married my father's groom! what would you have said to that?"
—"I could not have behaved worse," replied he, "than you have done." —"And would you not have thought," said she, "I had deserved it?"

1. *Pamela*, p 5.

2. *Ibid*, p 232.

Said he, "Does your pride let you see no difference, in the case you put?"—"None at all," said she. "Where can the difference be between a beggar's son married to a lady, or a beggar's daughter made a gentleman's wife?"

"Then, I'll tell you; the difference is, a man ennobles the woman he takes, be she *who* she will; and adopts her into his *own* rank, be it *what* it will: but a woman, though ever so nobly born, debases herself by a mean marriage, and descends from her *own* rank to *his* she stoops to.

"When the royal family of Stuart allied itself into the low family of Hyde (comparatively low, I mean), did any body scruple to call the lady Royal Highness, and Duchess of York? Did any one think her daughters, the late Queen Mary and Queen Anne, less royal for that?

"When the broken-fortuned peer goes into the city to marry a rich tradesman's daughter, be he duke or earl, does not his consort immediately become ennobled by his choice? and who scruples to call her lady, duchess, or countess?

"But when a duchess or countess dowager descends to mingle with a person of obscure birth, does she not then degrade herself, and is she not effectually degraded? And will any duchess or countess rank with her?

"Now, Lady Davers, see you not a difference between my marrying my dear mother's beloved and deserving waiting-maid, with a million of excellencies, and such graces of mind and person as would adorn any distinction; and you marrying a sordid groom, whose constant train of education, conversation, and opportunities, could possibly give him no other merit, than what must proceed from the vilest, lowest taste, in his sordid dignifier?"

"O, the wretch!" said she, "how he finds excuses to palliate his meanness!"

"Again," he said, "let me observe to you, Lady Davers, when a Duke marries a private person, is he not still her *head*, by virtue of being her husband? But when a lady descends to marry a groom, is not that groom her *head*, being her husband? Does not that difference strike you? For what lady of quality ought to respect another, who has made so sordid a choice, and set a groom above her? For, would it not be to put that groom upon a par with themselves? Call this palliation, or what you will; but if you see not the difference, you are blind, and a very unfit judge for yourself, much more unfit to be a censurer of me." (pp 380, 381)

It is characteristic of B that he should first dwell on the thought that a man confers his own rank on his wife and not vice versa, before any other consideration, though the actual confrontation between Pamela and Lady Davers has shown that it is her education and innate virtues which qualify her to be his wife. He does recognise that Pamela is herself superior, but passes on rapidly to the fact that a woman may well marry a man of higher rank since it is she who is obliged to honour and obey her husband. The weight of his whole defence rests on the idea that it is the husband whose rank matters, since he must dominate the relationship — not at all the same defence as the novel as a whole, and especially the Lady Davers incident, advances. The merits which entitle Pamela to marry B are those which are conspicuously lacking from her aristocratic neighbours, who lack the moral energy or independence of judgment to come to her rescue when she is imprisoned,¹ and who in the latter part of the novel, when she comes to know them, appear neither better educated nor more intelligent than she. Lady Davers is presented as a caricature of B, with absurdly exaggerated class pride and violence of temper, but without the sensitive response to Pamela's real worth, and the effect of the whole presentation of the gentry is to show them as especially liable to the faults which endanger marriage. B therefore emerges as a highly individual voice, speaking in part from his recent experience, but unable to cast off the class prejudices which the novelist has taught us to identify.

There are occasions during B's post-marital lectures when the tone of his advice comes too close to the moral essay: his matter is based on a growing sense of his own defects and an understanding that marriage to a social equal, who would probably have shared those defects, would have been impossible for him, but there is a formality in

1. *Pamela*, p 116.

the manner, a kind of 'All the World's a Stage' tendency to summarise the young aristocrat's progress from cradle to broken marriage which sits uneasily in the novel. It has the air of a set piece, comparable to Hogarth's *Marriage à la Mode* or *Rake's Progress*, and belongs to the epitomising tradition of moral teaching, with which the novel was to break.

'Humoured by our nurses, through the faults of our parents, we practice first upon them; and shew the *gratitude* of our disposition, in an insolence that ought rather to be checked and restrained, than encouraged.

Next, we are to be indulged in every thing at school; and our *masters* and *mistresses* are rewarded with further grateful instances of our boisterous behaviour.

But in our *wise* parents' eyes, all looks well; all is forgiven and excused: and for no other reason, but because we are *theirs*.

Our next progression is, we exercise our spirits, when brought home, to the torment and regret of our *parents themselves*, and torture their hearts by our undutiful and perverse behaviour, which, however ungrateful in us, is but the natural consequence of their culpable indulgence from our infancy upwards.

Then, after we have, perhaps, half broken their hearts, a *wife* is looked out for: convenience, or birth, or fortune, are the first motives; affection the last (if it is at all consulted): and two people thus educated, trained up in a course of unnatural ingratitude, and who have been headstrong torments to all who had a share in their education, as well as those to whom they owe their being, are brought together; what can be expected, but that they should pursue, and carry on, the same comfortable conduct in matrimony, and join most heartily to plague one another? In some measure, this is right; because hereby they revenge the cause of all those whom they have aggrieved and insulted, upon one another.

The gentleman has never been controlled: the lady has never been contradicted.

He cannot bear it from one whose new relation, he thinks, should oblige her to shew a quite contrary conduct.

She thinks it very barbarous, now, for the *first* time, to be opposed in her will, and that by a man from whom she expected nothing but tenderness.

So great is the difference between what they

both expected *from*, and what they find *in* each other, that no wonder misunderstandings happen, and ripen to quarrels; that acts of unkindness pass, which, even had the first motive to their union been *affection*, as usually it is not, would have effaced every tender impression on both sides.

Appeals to parents and guardians often ensue! if, through friends, a reconciliation takes place, it hardly ever holds: for why? The fault is in the minds of *both*, and *neither* of them will think so: so that the wound (not permitted to be probed) is but skinned over; rankles still at the bottom, and at last breaks out with more pain and anguish than before. Separate beds are often the consequence; perhaps elopements; if not, an unconquerable indifference; possibly aversion. And whenever, for appearance sake, they are obliged to be together, every one sees, that the yawning husband, and the vapourish wife, are truly insupportable to each other; but separate, have freer spirits, and can be tolerable company.' (pp 401-3)

B has left his own special case and is generalising: it is this impulse to generalise, to present a predicament and the characters involved in it, not as real, but as typical which must strike the reader as foreign to the novel. A play like *The Way of the World*, which deals with human types, involved in typical situations, from which issue general truths, can help us to understand the essential difference between the way in which the theatre can present a marriage debate and the mode characteristic of Richardson's novels. The marriage of Mr and Mrs Fainall and the courtship of Mirabell and Millamant are presented, the one as typical of the disillusionments attendant on a society marriage and the other as the perilous route to a good marriage. The people who surround the central characters are also presented as epitomes of attitudes present in their society as their names— Foible, Mincing, Sir Wilful Witwoud — show.

When Mirabell and Millamant finally agree to marry, a debate comparable to that between B and Pamela takes place. In *The Way of the World*, it is Millamant who begins it, for

it is she who has capitulated to Mirabell.

'*Mira*. Have you any more conditions to offer? Hitherto your demands have been pretty reasonable.

Milla. Trifles,— as liberty to pay and receive visits to and from whom I please; to write and receive letters, without interrogatories or wry faces on your part; to wear what I please; and choose conversation with regard only to my own taste; to have no obligation upon me to converse with wits that I don't like, because they are your acquaintance; or to be intimate with fools because they may be your relations. Come to dinner when I please, dine in my dressing-room when I'm out of humour, without giving a reason. To have my closet inviolate; to be sole empress of my tea-table, which you must never presume to approach without first asking leave. And lastly, wherever I am, you shall always knock at the door before you come in. These articles subscribed, if I continue to endure you a little longer, I may by degrees dwindle into a wife.

Mira. Your bill of fare is something advanced in this latter account. Well, have I liberty to offer conditions, that when you are dwindling into a wife, I may not be beyond measure enlarged into a husband?

Milla. You have free leave, propose your utmost, speak and spare not.

Mira. I thank you. *Imprimis* then, I covenant that your acquaintance be general; that you admit no sworn confidante, or intimate of your own sex; no she friend to screen her affairs under your countenance, and tempt you to make trial of a mutual secrecy. No decoy-duck to wheedle you a fop, scrambling to the play in a mask, then bring you home in a pretended fright, when you think you shall be found out, and rail at me for missing the play, and disappointing the frolic which you had to pick me up and prove my constancy.

Milla. Detestable *imprimis*! I go to the play in a mask!

Mira. *Item*, I article, that you continue to like your own face as long as I shall: and while it passes current with me, that you endeavour not to new coin it.¹

1. *The Way of the World*, Act IV, pp 92, 93.

The tone here is very different from that of *Pamela*, much closer to (though not the same as) Restoration Comedy, but the topics which are dealt with in the whole debate, of which only a small part is included here — the wife's dress, her behaviour to her husband's friends, her right to privacy, her husband's right to prescribe to her, even the time at which she will get up (Mr B makes an important point of the fact that he rises at six and will expect his wife to be up half an hour later) are the same as those on which Mr B expounds to Pamela. Both Congreve and Richardson, in fact, are concerned to explore and to some extent to solve the problems of contemporary marriage by allowing their hero and heroine to state their own view of the rights of their sex in marriage. The discussion in *The Way of the World* has a different balance between male and female viewpoints, partly because Congreve saw his audience as adults and roughly equally divided between the sexes. Richardson, on the other hand, as his letter to George Cheyne, quoted in Chapter I, shows, saw himself primarily as the teacher of young, unmarried women, and his view of marriage, though clearly arising from his knowledge of the status of a married woman as fixed by law and by religious belief at the time, gave an unusual emphasis to the subjection of a wife to her husband. His view was perhaps the result of an unusual interest in and value for women: he saw marriage as a state which offered them great, though painful opportunities for gaining merit through self-denial and obedience. Their duties, even when they were married to good husbands, must sometimes be difficult, but he felt that self-sacrifice was an essential part of a woman's lot.

I shall discuss the images of tyrant male and submissive female in Richardson's novels at greater length in a later chapter: the point here is that although Richardson saw the solution to his marriage debate differently from Congreve, he was, in the last part of *Pamela*, consciously trying to present such a debate. For the most part, he has

succeeded in firmly anchoring the solution at which B and Pamela arrive to their own special circumstances. The homily about social *savoir faire*, for example, in which Pamela is instructed always to welcome unexpected guests and to remain mistress of herself though china fall,¹ is related to her social inexperience, inevitable to some extent in a bride, but especially acute in her case. Although the extent to which the reader can feel that B's speeches to Pamela are related to their characters and situations varies, we never feel that the debate between them, even when it is nearest to monologue, is concerned with an ideal marriage, as is *The Way of the World*.

Congreve has chosen to show us the union of the best of men (I am not using this term in a moral sense — Mirabell is simply the quintessence of masculinity within the play, Millamant of femininity) with the best of women. When they marry, the different desires and rights of men and women in marriage will be reconciled and 'happy ever after' is an appropriate phrase.

Pamela, on the other hand, has been presented as an individual, not an ideal woman; she is preoccupied with clothes as well as chastity, and is malicious as well as virtuous — human, in fact, to the extent of producing from the day of the novel's publication to the present, argument about her sincerity and the quality of her moral values. It is because of this commitment to the truth of a human being that the division between comedy and tragedy can never be made as simply or as satisfactorily within Richardson's novels as in drama: the full range of human possibilities within a personality must always be present, and the reader's response to characters will rarely be simple enough to place the novel firmly in one category or another, especially in the case of a hero or heroine. Besides our sense of the tragic possibilities of a heroine

1. *Pamela*, pp 333, 334.

like Pamela, the novel's realism, which demands that we have access to a heroine's own view of herself, is anti-comic: we cannot remain for long periods at a comic distance from the action. We have, for example, from the first, a sense of Pamela which suggests that she will triumph and that the novel will therefore end happily, but her attempt to escape and temptation to drown herself¹ is presented with a vividness which forces us to share her desperation, which turns first to despair and then to apathy and finally to resignation. The degree of our involvement in so distressing an experience is decisively non-comic. In stage comedy, it is not necessarily the subject matter but the treatment which is comic: the realism inseparable from Richardson's technique as a novelist implies a treatment incompatible with a strict adherence either to the comic or the tragic tone. This breakdown of categories within the novel, so characteristic of the great nineteenth century works from *Sense and Sensibility* to the last masterpieces of Henry James, but especially so of George Eliot's works, seems to be one of the most important features of Richardson's works, and to be closely related to their power to impart moral teaching: a work like *Tom Jones*, in which the reader and the narrator remain at an ironic distance from the action, comically distanced too from all the characters, cannot achieve the moral energy, or the complexity of any of Richardson's novels. Captain Blifil, young Blifil, Lady Bellaston are all identified for us as evil, but their evil is relatively simple, and we do not in any case learn to identify or even to understand it for ourselves.

Richardson's energies, on the other hand, are employed in presenting human realities so complex that they break down the meanings of over-simple judgments like 'good' and 'evil': the obligation to judge is certainly not removed

1. *Pamela*, pp 148-155.

from the reader (in *Tom Jones* he merely assents to the judgements of the narrator) but the verdict in the case of each character is multiple and complex. The complexity of activity required from the reader begins with the very first letter, which takes up the situation which distracted Richardson from the *Familiar Letters*.

'DEAR FATHER AND MOTHER,

I have great trouble, and some comfort, to acquaint you with. The trouble is that my good lady died of the illness I mentioned to you, and left us all much grieved for the loss of her: she was a dear good lady, and kind to all us her servants. Much I feared, that as I was taken by her ladyship to wait upon her person, I should be quite destitute again, and forced to return to you and my poor mother, who have enough to do to maintain yourselves; and, as my lady's goodness had put me to write and cast accounts, and made me a little expert at my needle, and otherwise qualified above my degree, it was not every family that could have found a place that your poor Pamela was fit for: but God, whose graciousness to us we have so often experienced, put it into my good lady's heart, just an hour before she expired, to recommend to my young master all her servants, one by one; and when it came to my turn to be recommended (for I was sobbing and crying at her pillow), she could only say — "My dear son!" and so broke off a little; and then recovering, "remember my poor Pamela." — And these were some of her last words. O how my eyes run! Don't wonder to see the paper so blotted.

Well, but God's will must be done! And so comes the comfort, that I shall not be obliged to return back to be a clog upon my dear parents! For my master said, "I will take care of you all, my good maidens. And for you, Pamela," (and took me by the hand; yes, he took my hand before them all) "for my dear mother's sake, I will be a friend to you, and you shall take care of my linen." God bless him! and pray with me, my dear father and mother, for a blessing upon him; for he has given mourning and a year's wages to all my lady's servants, and I having no wages as yet (my lady having said she would do for me as I deserved), he ordered the housekeeper to give me mourning with the rest; and gave me with his own hand four golden guineas, and some silver, which were in my old lady's pocket when she died; and said, if I was a good girl, and faithful and diligent, he would be a friend to me for his mother's sake.' (pp 1-2)

The first letter serves to explain as well as present a situation in which a virtuous, prudent young maid-servant (too cautious, it is implied, voluntarily to enter the service of an unmarried gentleman) may find herself in a dangerous situation. Mr B inherits Pamela as a member of the household of his mother whose personal servant and favourite she was. He therefore inherits at the same time a special obligation to her, which means that his relationship with her is different and more personal than that with the other servants. The dying woman's words prepare the reader to accept from the first that Pamela, though a servant, is exceptional in her abilities and education and that her eventual position (it is made clear in the passage that she has at present no clear-cut office or status in the household) ought to reflect her special qualities. B's mother's interest, at such a moment, in Pamela, also makes us aware of the way in which she must have been brought to B's notice in his mother's lifetime — he has been invited to recognise her attractions by his mother, who in all innocence responded to them strongly herself, but her servile position and absolute dependence on the favour of his family has also been emphasised, as they are in his mother's last words.

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When B takes Pamela's hand, he is, as the reader will later recognise, entering on what will develop into a contention between them — he is to claim that physical familiarity is no more than his right and a sign of his especial benevolence towards her, whereas she will soon come to fear such contacts, even in apparently innocent forms, and will claim that they are sexual advances of an unscrupulous kind. On the first occasion, the gesture is made in public, but Pamela is obviously astonished by it, though as yet she suspects no threat; the way in which he singles her out and the physical contact is still in her mind related to his mother's feeling for her which is shown as having had maternal characteristics.

B's suggestion that she shall stay as his personal sewing maid — 'you shall take care of my linen' — is both perfectly acceptable on the basis of the training which she has received which has been partly in fine sewing, and potentially sinister for the reader, since it suggests that Pamela will be brought into direct contact with Mr B, that is to say, he will be able if he wishes to bypass his housekeeper, through whom he would normally communicate with young women employees. The meaning of the present of money, too, is doubtful: as Pamela is later reassured by the Widow Mumford, a lady's ready money is often given to her waiting-maid after her death, but in this case, the present is made into a personal matter between B and herself — he gives it 'with his own hand'. And we have a real sense of what a magnificent present Pamela feels it to be, and how unused she is to money in the way that she registers, not the amount, but the dazzling appearance of the coins in her phrase, 'four golden guineas, and some silver,' a sense we must use later in the novel to make us realise what heroism Pamela shows when she rejects the fixed income of £250 a year which B offers to settle on her. When Pamela says '... my virtue is as dear to me as if I was of the highest quality,'¹ two hundred years of novels have blunted the sensibility of the modern reader to the enormous claim she is making: he is obliged, if he is to understand what Richardson intended by it, to remake his sense of the distinction, in income as well as in status, between master and servant in the mid-eighteenth century and to remake it in the specific circumstances of Pamela, daughter of an impoverished farm labourer, and B, a wealthy landowner. The words which accompany the gift are, at their face value, conventional from master to young employee and the reader can see that Pamela cannot take them as having any other meaning without appearing

1. *Pamela*, p 190.

offensively suspicious. Yet they are at the same time the beginning of their long dissension as to what constitutes, for B, proper behaviour towards Pamela. By giving her money and advising her to be good, faithful and diligent if she wants his favour, he is, as the novel will later make clear, introducing the assertions about their rights and duties to each other which he is to insist on so violently later. For B, as he later admits, already intends to make her his mistress, and by giving her money is inviting her to recognise the special rights over her which his status as her employer gives him. He is also, by virtue of this display of power, beginning to try to redefine for her the qualities of goodness, fidelity and diligence in terms of the master-servant relationship: goodness, as he wishes her to see it during the period of his attempts at seduction, is obedience to his wishes, whatever they are; fidelity is willingness to keep silent about his behaviour. All good qualities in a servant, according to his later assertion, are defined by the supreme good of servants, which is obedience to their master. Mrs Jewkes accepts this contention completely, which is the reason why she treats Pamela inhumanely up to the time of B's change of heart and is obsequious and servile to her thereafter. It is also the reason why Pamela, usually generous to a repentant sinner, remains sceptical about the idea that Mrs Jewkes's changed behaviour is evidence of moral reform — she understands that the early cruelty and the later grovelling stem from the same principle, to which she greatly objects. At their first meeting, she debates the point with Mrs Jewkes:

"Well" said I, "you will not, I hope, do an unlawful or wicked thing, for any master in the world." — "Lookye," said she, "he is my master; and if he bids me to do any thing I *can* do, I think I ought to do it: and let him, who has the power to command me, look to the *lawfulness* of it." ' (p 93)

Mrs Jewkes's view of the relationship between her employer and herself, crude though it is, is related to the Sixteenth and early Seventeenth Century notion of the Chain of Life, in which God's will was transmitted to creation through a series of intermediaries, beginning with the king of a country and going down through his deputies at various levels to the heads of households who transmitted God's will to the subordinate members. In Richardson's writings, the word 'family' is used to mean both a kinship group and the members of a household and the duty of obedience to the head of a family is seen as resting equally on his servants, his wife and his children. Pamela does not deny this duty: she is very ready to offer B the deepest respect and to obey him in all that is not sin, but unlike Mrs Jewkes she cannot hand over to him responsibility for all her actions. She has been brought up in a kind of moral independence, if it may be so called, which implies an understanding of right and wrong as absolutes, defined by God and unchangeable by the will of any human.

"Here," said I, "were my poor honest parents; they took care to instil good principles into my mind, till I was almost twelve years of age; and taught me to prefer goodness and poverty to the highest condition of life; and they confirmed their lessons by their own practice; for they were, of late years, remarkably poor, and always as remarkably honest, even to a proverb: for, *As Honest as Goodman Andrews*, was a bye-word." (p 175)

The lesson which Pamela learnt was obviously that the poor are as capable as the rich of understanding and following the will of God; when she is in B's mother's care, the old lady reinforces the teaching of her parents, giving it a more specific form, related to the dangers she foresees for a poor and pretty girl -- '*My good Pamela, be virtuous, and keep the men at a distance.*'¹

1. *Pamela*, p 176

It is important to remember that Pamela is almost completely inexperienced in the adult world at the beginning of the novel, and that besides this, she occupies no well-defined position in the B household, so that neither her status nor her duties are clear-cut. She was taken into the household of B's mother as a child of twelve and was much more protégée than servant to the old lady. She explains in her first letter that up to her mistress's death she was entitled to no regular salary 'my lady having said she would do for me as I deserved.'¹ The instruction given her in music, dancing, embroidery, writing and arithmetic has served to set her apart from her fellow servants, and she seems to have been treated more as a companion for Mrs B's leisure hours rather than as a lady's maid. The old lady's injunction to keep the men at a distance, when she recollects it just before the rape attempt, appears to be a caution against the male sex in general, but in fact 'the men' probably indicates a wish that Pamela should not, by associating too freely with her male fellow-servants, commit herself whilst she is still immature to a relationship unworthy of the exceptional woman into whom she is likely to develop. When Mrs B dies, she is still only fifteen, an age at which a warning against venturing on any kind of sexual relationship is a proper recognition of her immaturity: she is at a stage when self-awareness is as difficult for her as understanding of others.

What is remarkable about Pamela is that when we first meet her, although she can be sure of so little, she can use that little to preserve her whole self. The effect of Mrs B's death has been to bring to an end a childhood which she prolonged and sheltered, and to render questionable Pamela's whole future. The only guiding voice which Pamela now has is that of her father, who reiterates that chastity is all important and that in her undefined position

1. *Pamela*, p 1.

almost any action of her master's may constitute a threat to her chastity. She accepts that this is so, and that the need to preserve her chastity must control her whole understanding of and response to the world. She is not unaware, for example, that she is extraordinarily gifted, mentally and physically, but although she has a good deal of pleasure in her gifts, she accepts that chastity is the necessary qualification to them which will render them valuable.¹ Her sense of chastity in her early letters is rather a rhetorical one, but we always have a sense, alongside the conduct book phrases, of immense determination to maintain her position against B's bullying or persuasion. She is aware that B's position as her master combined with his greater experience and verbal skill, will often enable him to make her appear wrong, but an instinctive confidence in her own understanding of the situation comes to her aid.

'I fear he that was mean enough to do bad things in one respect, did not stick at *this*, (the theft of her letter). But be it as it will, all the use he can make of it will be, that he may be ashamed of *his* part; I not of *mine*: for he will see I was resolved to be virtuous, and gloried in the honesty of my poor parents.' (p 10)

Even though the last phrases sound as though they are not her own, but derived from instruction which she has received, there is already an independence and a toughness in her judgment which will make her 'virtue' into a real moral independence, the keynote of a personality which is strong as well as loving. The change from the sheltered child to the woman who defends herself so

1. Her father's first letter explicitly warns her that her gifts are only conditionally good: 'Everybody talks about how you have come on and what a genteel girl you are; and some say you are very pretty: and six months since, when I saw you last I should have thought so myself if you was not our child. But what avails all this, if you are to be ruined and undone? My dear Pamela, we begin to be in great fear for you; for what signify all the riches of the world, with a bad conscience, and to be dishonest?' (p 3)

ably comes quickly, because the death of B's mother forces her into independence (in her case it is complete isolation from all possible protectors) since the alternative is to accept B's 'protection' on his terms — but we do see the evidence of the change. In Letter I Pamela is so overawed by B's speaking to her, on a perfectly innocent occasion, that she says, 'I did nothing but curtsey and cry, and was all in confusion at his goodness.'¹ Tears remain characteristic of her, and a kind of fear of B which is partly a fear of his power to move her and partly an understanding that he has the means to damage her very seriously, but through the contemplation of herself and of B and their whole relationship which is the essential activity of the letters, she acquires the confidence and ability to understand her own opposition to his wishes better. The way in which she answers B's Articles,² point by point, explaining the principles which make her absolutely inflexible, and the fact that chastity is an absolute, about which, by its very nature, there can be no compromise, shows that she has grown into an adult's understanding of her position by this stage in the novel.

It is however in the earlier letters that we are most aware that her own feelings incline her towards B, whom she finds very attractive. In her first letter she calls him 'the best of gentlemen' and when he gives her a present of some of her late mistress's clothes, comments 'I always thought my young master a fine gentleman, as everybody says he is: but he gave these good things to us with such a graciousness, as I thought he looked like an angel.'³

Her comparison of him to an angel and her pleasure in his generosity show her willingness to see him as far above her and to translate the feelings which are dangerous to

1. *Pamela* p 2.

2. *Ibid*, pp 165-168, and quoted in part in this chapter on pp 42-44.

3. *Ibid*, p 7.

them both into benevolence on his side and gratitude on hers. But her father is ready from the first to alert her to possible danger and even to suggest that any interest that B takes in her may be dangerous — 'I cannot but renew my cautions on your master's kindness and his free expressions about the stockings... Arm yourself, my dear child, for the worst and resolve to lose your life sooner than your virtue.'¹ His suspiciousness serves at once to make us aware of her innocent pleasure in the special notice taken of her — in her first letter, before he has begun his cautions, it is unalloyed by any fear — and at the same time to make us realise that maturity must come to her quickly if she is to save herself from B. For Andrews is right: special notice from B is evidence of feelings which, given his sense of his position (which is shared by everyone in the novel, including to a great extent, Pamela) can only be dangerous to her. Her father's urgings that she leave B's house and return home are right, and Pamela shows her developing understanding of this when she agrees to return, with a clear sense of the financial burden she will be and the difficulties she will experience in readjusting to a life of poverty. She is very afraid of the physical hardship which she must encounter, largely because of the blow to her pride which she anticipates when she proves to be incompetent in the simplest menial task, and when all the accomplishments which she has acquired are shown to be useless in her new life.

'I shall make a fine figure with my singing and dancing when I come home! I shall be unfit even for a *May-day* holiday; for these minuets, rigadoons, and French dances, that I have been practising, will make me but ill company for my milkmaid companions that are to be. I had better, as things are, have learned to wash, scour, brew,

1. *Pamela*, p 8.

bake, and such like. But I hope, if I can't get work, and can meet with a place, to learn these soon, if any body will have the goodness to bear with me till I am able: for, notwithstanding what my master says, I hope I have an humble and teachable mind; and, next to God's grace, that is all my comfort, for I shall think nothing too mean that is honest. It may be a little hard at first; but woe to my proud heart if I find it so on trial! I will make it bend to its condition, or break it.

I have read of a good bishop that was to be burnt for his religion: he tried how he could to bear it, by putting his fingers into the lighted candle: so I, the other day, tried, when Rachel's back was turned, if I could not scour a pewter plate she had begun. I could do it by degrees; it only blistered my hands in two places.

All the matter is, if I could get plain work enough, I need not spoil my fingers; but if I can't, I hope to make my hands as red as blood-pudding, and as hard as a beechen trencher to accommodate them to my condition.' (pp 62, 63)

There is an absurdly exaggerated sense of her plight in her comparison of herself to the martyr-bishop who put his hand in the fire, but it is a sense which is the key to her whole position: over-fearful though she may often be, we must admire her because her courage in overcoming her fears is proportionate to them.

Against a background of stern warnings from her father, B's orders and his attempts at persuasion are simply the voice of evil — 'Be not virtuous, Pamela,'¹ as she summarises it. He is 'my abominable master'² against whom she prays God to protect her. God must also protect her against herself, or rather against those instincts in her which may lead her to consent to B's desires. When B, in Letter XXX, begs her to stay with him while he struggles with his pride, — 'O how my heart throbb'd! and I begun

1. *Pamela*, p 176

2. *Ibid*, p 17

(for I did not know what I did) to say the Lord's Prayer. "None of your beads to me, Pamela!" said he; thou art a perfect nun." But I said aloud, with my eyes lifted to Heaven, "*Lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil, O my good God!*"¹

Pamela's sense that her virtue is as important and her wrongdoing as serious as that of any lady is important to B as well as to herself, since it is in direct opposition to the pride of rank in which he has been educated. After she has returned to B at his request, he shows her a letter from Lady Davers in which the opinions which he has long held are articulated.

'As to the *other*, (marriage with Pamela) I dare say you don't think of it: but if you *should*, you would be utterly inexcusable. Consider, brother, that ours is no upstart family; but it is as ancient as the best in the kingdom! For several hundred years, the heirs of it have not been known to have disgraced themselves by unequal matches; and you know you have been sought by some of the best families in the nation, for your alliance. It might be well enough if you were descended of a family of yesterday, or but a remove from the dirt you seem so fond of.'

(pp 228-229)

Pamela opposes to this sense of her lowliness the belief that we are all equal in God's sight —

'...do they not know, that the richest of princes, and the poorest of beggars, are to have one great and tremendous Judge on the last day; who will not distinguish between them, according to their circumstances in life; on the contrary, may make their condemnations the greater as their neglected opportunities were greater!'

(p 229)

It is this sense that Pamela is worthy of the great opportunities which rank and wealth will confer upon her which brings B to offer her marriage, and both he and the

1. *Pamela*, p 70

reader grow even more convinced, in the last part of the novel, that she is the proper person to occupy a position of power. In the earlier part of the novel, however, before her reconciliation with B, her claim that she is his equal before God is expressed in her determination to preserve her honour.

At the very centre of the novel lies the dispute between B and Pamela about 'honour', a very frequently recurring word in their exchanges. To pay a servant well for being your mistress is to treat her honourably, B claims. 'Your honour is to destroy mine',¹ Pamela tells him, '... my virtue is as dear to me as if I was of the highest quality.'²

The reader shares increasingly the doubts in Pamela's mind about B's motives and intentions: he even shares, to a degree, her misapprehensions about them, or at least, he sympathises deeply with the fears and the limited experience which cause her to be, at times, over-simple in her judgment of B, and occasionally seriously mistaken. Pamela's letters present herself and her background with a kind of vividness which compels us to respond to her as a person and not merely as a representative of female virtue.

She can write in terms that show her determination to be a pattern of virtue — 'No, my dear father and mother, be assured that by God's grace, I never will do anything that shall bring your gray hairs with sorrow to the grave'³ — but this is no failure in Richardson's dramatic conception of his heroine. It is Pamela deliberately hardening her attitude into the kind of chastity which she has been taught is all important. The cliché has in fact its own pathos— her experience of life is so limited that she

1. *Pamela*, p 184.

2. *Ibid*, p 190.

3. *Ibid*, p 4.

cannot speak of the result of seduction in terms of herself. But when it comes to her plans to return, she supplies a complete, material sense of the obstacles and how she will overcome them.

'I hope to have finished the ugly waistcoat in two days; after which, I have only some linen to get up, and shall then let you know how I contrive as to my passage; for the heavy rains will make it sad travelling on foot: but may-be I may get a place to —. which is ten miles of the way, in Farmer Nichols's close cart; for I can't sit a horse well at all, and may-be nobody will be suffered to see me upon the way.' (p 35)

There is a concrete sense here of what it is to be a young female servant: Pamela knows that she dare not be negligent about her work, and that her master's resentment may make her journey difficult. She is never *merely* chaste: chastity in her co-exists with characteristics both pleasant and unpleasant. Her suspiciousness and financial scrupulosity, for example, are recognisably related to it and so is her pride, which manifests itself in a preoccupation with social class very different from B's. When she determines to lay aside the fine clothes which B's mother gave her, her motive is partly scrupulosity — they belong to her role as family servant — partly prudence — silk clothes would be inappropriate in a labourer's daughter — but there is more than this.

'People would have said (for poor folks are envious as well as rich) "See there Goody Andrews's daughter, home from her fine place! What a tawdry figure she makes! How well that garb becomes her poor parents' circumstances!"' (p 32)

Pamela's rejection of the B family's clothes comes partly from a pride in herself which is one of her reasons for being chaste. In reply to B's assertion that she is his dependent and must do what he wants, the humble clothes which she buys and makes up herself are her answer, that life outside his house may be poor but it will be

honourable and dignified. Pamela claims throughout her conflict with B that to be what she is, is honourable, and that servant though she is, she is a morally responsible being, entitled to value her integrity highly.

Her virginity, as she sees it, is her integrity, both moral and physical. The metaphor seems a natural one, but it runs into trouble when she agrees to marry B. By asking her to marry him, B has accepted her contention that her moral importance is as great as that of any woman of his own class, but the problem remains, that if virginity equals integrity, what happens to integrity in marriage? The problem need not have remained insoluble: in *Clarissa*, where the same equation is made, we are unaware for at least half the novel that Clarissa could marry, for the situation is presented with a greater sense of the two humans. For Clarissa, seduction would mean defeat and the destruction of her integrity: marriage would mean reconciliation, in the sense that it would imply Lovelace's acceptance of her right to separate integrity. What seems to be wanting in *Pamela* is a stronger sense of B's internal struggle before their marriage, and even more, of his change of heart. There are certainly indications that B does not maintain his stand without a struggle, that to seduce Pamela is honourable behaviour provided that he pays her handsomely, but the reader is never absolutely convinced that if it is disgraceful for Pamela to become B's mistress, she makes no sacrifice of integrity by agreeing at once and with gratitude to his proposal of marriage.

The problem is, as I shall argue, in part a technical one: the book is a single stream of letters from the heroine who must remain unaware of the gradual change in B. But the novel's sub-title, *Virtue Rewarded*, shows that Richardson himself deliberately advocated chastity for women on the grounds that it was likely to be more profitable than licence, even in this world. His Letter to *The Rambler*, entitled 'Advice to Unmarried Ladies' was

published in 1752, twelve years after *Pamela*. It advocates modest behaviour and the avoidance of public entertainments for women — because gay coquettes will never find anyone to marry them. Richardson describes the customs of his youth, when unmarried women were never seen outside their houses except at church.

'The churches were almost the only places where single women were to be seen by strangers. Men went thither expecting to see them, and perhaps too much for that only purpose.

But some good often resulted, however improper might be their motives. Both sexes were in the way of their duty. The man must be abandoned indeed who loves not goodness in another; nor were the young fellows of that age so wholly lost to a sense of right as pride and conceit has since made them affect to be. When, therefore, they saw a fair one whose decent behaviour and cheerful piety showed her earnest in her first duties, they had less doubt, judging politically only, that she would have a conscientious regard to her second.

With what ardour have I seen watched for the rising of a kneeling beauty; and what additional charms has devotion given to her recomunicated features.¹

There is a good deal of unconscious humour in the self-portrait of the young Richardson, excitedly watching a young woman in church, but the morality of the whole article is very like Mrs. Peachum's — 'By keeping men off, you keep them on' — and unlike John Gay, Richardson intends no satire on popular morality: he genuinely wishes to return to an earlier period when men were intensely excited by the appearance of women in church because they saw them so rarely. The hypocrisy of which *Pamela* has so often been accused, in that her chastity is a device to make her more valuable to B, is not hypocrisy in the sense of a worthy motive's being advanced to justify behaviour which stems from much less admirable ones. *Pamela* and her creator share a sense that chastity is necessary for pru-

1. 'Advice to Unmarried Ladies', *The Rambler*, No 97, p 167.

dential reasons as well as religious ones. The Polly Barlow incident in *Pamela* II when Pamela's maid comes close to being seduced by Lady Davers's nephew Jackey, gives Pamela the opportunity to articulate this view.

'At last I said, "How long have these freedoms past between you and Mr. H.?— I am loth to be censorious, Polly; but it is too plain, that Mr. H. would not have followed you into my chamber, if he had not met you at other places." — The poor girl said never a word. — "Little did I expect, Polly, that you would have shewn so much imprudence. You have had instances of the vile arts of men against poor maidens: have you any notion that Mr. H. intends to do honourably by you?"— "Me'm--Me'm—I believe—I hope—I dare say, Mr. H. would not do otherwise."—"So much the worse that you believe so, if you have not very good reason for your belief. Does he pretend that he will marry you?"—She was silent.—"Tell me, Polly, if he does?"— "He says he will do honourably by me."—"But you know there is but one word necessary to explain that other precious word *honour*, in this case. It is *matrimony*. That word is as soon spoken as any other, and if he *means* it, he will not be shy to *speak* it."— She was silent.— "Tell me, Polly (for I am really greatly concerned for you), what you think *yourself*; do you *hope* he will marry you?"—She was silent.—"Do, good Polly (I hope I may call you *good* yet!), answer me."—"Pray, Madam!" and she wept, and turned from me, to the wainscot—"Pray excuse me."—"But, indeed, Polly, I cannot *excuse* you. You are under my protection. I was once in as dangerous a situation as you can be in. And I did not escape it, child, by the language and conduct I heard from you."—"Language and conduct, Me'm!"—"Yes, Polly, language and conduct. Do you think, if I had set me down in my lady's bed-chamber, sung a song, and hemm'd twice, and Mr. B. coming to me, upon that signal (for such I doubt it was), I had kept my place, and suffered myself to be rumped, and only, in a soft voice, and with an encouraging laugh, cried—'How can you do so?' that I should have been what I am?"¹

Pamela is pointing out to Polly the imprudence of

1. *Pamela* II, p 187.

her behaviour, not its wickedness; she makes the point that chastity, not complaisance, earned her a rich husband. Her emphasis on the absolute necessity of the man's promising matrimony — the explicit mention of the ceremony, not vague talk about honour — gives us a sense of her toughness, her inexorable determination. This is Pamela herself, interpreting for us her behaviour before marriage and glorying in the strength of purpose which led her to triumph.

We cannot be unconscious, when reading either the *'Advice to Unmarried Ladies'* or the extract from *Pamela* II, of the way in which Richardson's presentation of a situation in physical terms allows us to judge it: speaking of his 'ardour' as he watches for the 'rising of a kneeling beauty', or Pamela's relentless questioning of her maid and her knowledge of how a girl beckons a man on without seeming to do so, he presents us with an illusion of physical reality, which we feel we must judge. Critics of Pamela's moral code, from Fielding until our own day, have responded to this sense, often by condemning her, but the fact that they have done so is a considerable tribute to Richardson's art. Pamela, as I have said earlier, shares with Moll Flanders a sense that chastity is a valuable commodity, though she has other feelings about it too; nevertheless, whenever we respond to her by judging her morality as flawed by materialism, we judge her as a human and not as an ideal of any kind.

It seems to have been Richardson's need to create and investigate an individual which caused him to become dissatisfied with the *Familiar Letters*: a conduct book cannot go beyond the typical case. For that matter, if Richardson, when writing his Prefaces and letters to his friends, had been in touch with his novel-writing self, he could not have spoken of his heroines as examples to their sex without qualifying this claim with a great deal of explanation. His purpose was certainly to explore human

nature, but his interest, in *Pamela* and *Clarissa* at least, was in extreme circumstances. From the moment of Pamela's abduction until she returns of her own free will to B, she cannot be considered an example in the sense that her behaviour is offered to young women to be imitated, because the normal life will not offer opportunities for such imitation.

In the early part of the novel, we are made aware of gradually increasing pressure on Pamela to become B's mistress: in the first letter, as we have seen, he emphasizes their relative positions as master and servant and shows his special interest in her. Later, he gives her, or tries to give her, valuable presents of clothing,¹ which are intended to place her under an obligation and bring about greater intimacy between them. He offers to 'make a gentlewoman of her' if she is obliging, and kisses her. After a series of arguments and threats, he breaks in on her in bed and she faints away.² More disputes occur, B trying hard to bully her into compliance. Eventually his manner changes, he speaks of efforts to swallow his pride and begs her to stay for a further two weeks,³ but unfortunately follows this up by offering to marry her to a clergyman whose patron he is and at the same time to make large presents of money to her father. His kisses as he proposes this arrangement make it clear that he intends to protect her from social stigma by allowing her to be nominally Williams's wife whilst in fact his mistress. Treating her 'honourably' in fact, is to mean preserving her from open censure.

At this point in the novel, when Pamela's rejection of his scheme and determination to return home drives B to plan her abduction, Richardson's plot set him a problem: Mr B has to serve both as villain and hero, that is to say, the reader must believe that the danger which he presents to Pamela is real and great, and must nevertheless

1. *Pamela*, Letters VI, VII, pp 7, 8.

2. *Ibid*, p 12.

3. *Ibid*, pp 69-71.

be able to accept their eventual marriage is a proper and happy outcome of the conflict between them. He has solved his problem in part by creating the character of Mrs Jewkes. The immediate tormentor of Pamela and therefore the tester of her virtue is for a long period not B but Mrs Jewkes, who is much more simply evil and repulsive; she is ugly, middle-aged, foul-mouthed and a woman, which means that Pamela (and therefore we) has none of that confusion of feelings which she must experience towards B if he is to develop into the hero-husband. Mrs Jewkes is even sexually threatening in herself, as well as associated with B's threats.

'Then the wicked creature appeared, whom I had never seen but once before; I was terrified out of my wits. No strategem, thought I, not *one!* for a poor innocent girl; but every thing to turn out against me; that is hard indeed. So I began to pull in my horns, as they say; for I saw I was now worse off than at the farmer's.

The naughty woman came up to me with an air of confidence, and kissed me! "See, sister," said she, "here's a charming creature! Would she not tempt the best lord in the land to run away with her?" —O frightful! thought I; here's an avowal of the matter at once. I am now gone, that's certain; and was quite silent and confused. Seeing no help for it, (for she would not part with me out of her sight) I was forced to set out with her in the chariot: for she came thither on horseback, with a man-servant, who rode by us the rest of the way, leading her horse. I now gave over all thoughts of redemption, and was in a desponding condition.

Well, I thought, here are strange pains taken to ruin a poor innocent, helpless, and *worthless* young body.—This plot is laid too deep, and has been too long hatching, to be baffled, I fear. I put my trust in God, who I knew was able to do every thing for me, when all other possible means should fail: and in him I was resolved to confide.

You may see what sort of woman this Mrs. Jewkes is, compared to good Mrs. Jervis, by this: every now-and-then she would be staring in my face, in the chariot, and squeezing my hand, saying—"Why, you are very pretty, my silent dear!" And once she offered to kiss me. But I said

"I don't like this sort of carriage, Mrs Jewkes; it is not like two persons of one sex." She fell a laughing very confidently, and said—"That's prettily said, I vow! Then thou hadst rather be kissed by the other sex! I-fackins, I commend thee for that."

I was sadly teased with her impertinence and bold way; but no wonder; she was an inn-keeper's house-keeper, before she came to my master; and those sort of creatures don't want confidence, you know: and indeed she made nothing to talk boldly on twenty occasions, and said two or three times, when she saw the tears every now-and-then, as we rid, trickle down my cheeks, "I was sorely hurt, truly, to have the handsomest and finest young gentleman in five counties in love with me!"

So I find I have got into the hands of a wicked procuress; and if I was not safe with good Mrs. Jervis, and where every body loved me, what a dreadful prospect have I now before me, in the hands of a woman that seems to delight in filthiness!' (p 91)

At this point in the novel, Pamela has not yet arrived at B- Hall and still hopes that a truthful explanation of her position and appeal to people's charity may help her. Not only is she extremely afraid when she realises to what extent her 'strategems' have been anticipated by B, but she understands at once, from Mrs Jewkes's opening speech, that she is in the hands of a 'wicked procuress'. The kind of fear that Mrs Jewkes evokes in Pamela is made extremely vivid by the description of the kiss and the 'air of confidence' with which she greets her — we feel in both an assertion of power and a gloating over Pamela's youth and beauty. If Mrs Jewkes is B's Pandarus, she has at least one of the necessary qualifications, in that she is fully aware and responsive to the girl's attractions.

Pamela's pathetic protest, 'I don't like this kind of carriage, Mrs Jewkes; it is not like two persons of one sex,' shows that she registers and is trying not to feel threatened by the quality of Mrs Jewkes's interest in her. Mrs Jewkes herself realises that she is going beyond her role of procuress and at once turns the

conversation to B's interest in Pamela. But Pamela's final observation, that she is 'in the hands of a woman that seems to delight in all filthiness' shows that she has understood that Mrs Jewkes's pleasure is not only, as she will assert, in carrying out her master's orders to the letter — she has a personal pleasure in watching Pamela's sexual violation. Her sexual innuendo, squeezing and attempts to kiss Pamela are as far as she dares to go in sexual sadism on her own account towards a girl whom she knows is protected as well as threatened by B's interest in her.

Mrs Jewkes continues to serve as a substitute villain: Pamela is physically afraid of her and disgusted by her obscene talk as well as by her obvious relishing of the idea that the girl must eventually consent to B's desires. She soon exceeds her orders — defies them, in fact, as we learn later, by beating Pamela, and at the same time makes it clear that she is far more simply brutal than B, and misunderstands his purpose as a mere desire for physical possession of Pamela.

'The gardener was at work a little farther, and I began to talk about his art; but she said, "Softly, my instructions are, not to let you be so familiar with the servants."— "Why," said I, "are you afraid I should confederate with them to commit a robbery upon my master?"—"May-be I am," said the odious wretch; "for to rob him of yourself, would be the worst that could happen to him, in his opinion."

"And pray," said I, walking on, "how came I to be his property? What right has he in me, but such as a thief may plead to stolen goods?"—"Why, was ever the like heard?" says she. "This is downright rebellion, I protest!—Well, well, lambkin" (which the foolish woman often calls me), "if I was in his place, he should not have his property in you long questionable."—"Why, what would you do," said I, "if you were he?"—"Not stand shill-I shall-I, as he does, but put you and himself both out of your pain."—"Why, Jezebel," said I (I could not help it), "would you ruin me by force?" Upon this she gave me a deadly slap upon the shoulder: "Take that," said she; "whom do you call Jezebel?"' (p 108)

There is both sadism and sexual excitement in this passage — the endearment 'lambkin' suggests that Mrs Jewkes takes pleasure in the innocence and vulnerability of her victim, and Pamela is understandably terrified. But her response, when she has had time to recover from pain and shock, is an odd one.

'When I came near the house, I said, sitting down upon the bench—"Well, I will *not* go in, till you say you forgive me, Mrs Jewkes. If you will forgive my calling you that name, I will forgive your beating me." She sat down by me, and seemed in a great pucker, and said, "Well, come, I will forgive you this time;" and so kissed me as a mark of reconciliation. "But pray," said I, "tell me where I am to walk or go, and give me what liberty you can; and when I know the most you can favour me with, you shall see I will be as content as I can, and not ask you for more."' (p 109)

She seems to recognise the abnormal nature of Mrs Jewkes's interest in her and be prepared to exploit it for her own ends. She is first petulant and then obsequious, always with the intention of making her gaoler believe that she accepts their relationship and intends no further rebellion. Richardson does not further explore the idea that Pamela is capable of encouraging Mrs Jewkes's interest in her for her own ends: it is, of course, always certain that the woman can never seriously threaten her chastity because of the existence of B, even though he is at a distance. But Mrs Jewkes frequently uses his commands as a blind: when she arranges for Parson Williams to be waylaid and beaten, it is because she enjoys taking revenge on one who almost engineered Pamela's escape from her. And when B stands aghast at Pamela's terror when he has apparently come to rape her, Mrs Jewkes twice intervenes to urge him on, once when it is clear that he has completely given up the idea.

'"And will you, Sir," said the wicked wretch, "for a fit or two, give up such an opportunity as this?—I thought you had known the sex better. She is now, you see, quite well again."' (pp 179-180)

The fact that Mrs Jewkes is a woman makes her behaviour appear even more ferocious, and at the same time makes it easier for the reader to understand and detest the fate which Pamela faces — Mrs Jewkes is herself the unchaste woman that Pamela refuses to become, at least to the extent that the bawd is traditionally an old harlot; certainly the older woman represents the attitudes towards sex and the master-servant relationship which Pamela rejects so vigorously. She tests Pamela's courage and sincerity most severely by the sheer horror of her personality and physical presence, from which the girl can only escape by agreeing to B's demands.

B, though clearly under the influence of class pride and a stubborn determination to impose his will on Pamela, is never presented as depraved or cruel. We become aware that his genuine admiration for Pamela is always in conflict with his pride of rank, and there are hints even before Pamela is abducted that B has begun to realise that her humble birth does not invalidate her claim, based on her exceptional qualities, to real superiority. He even seems to hint that he is considering marrying her, when in Letter XXX, he asks her to stay for a further fortnight.

"My pride of birth and fortune (damn them both," said he, "since they cannot obtain credit with you, but only add to your suspicions) will not let me descend all at once." (p 70)

His wish to 'descend' does not endure — in a page or two he is proposing that she cloak an affair with him by marrying Parson Williams, which makes her determined to return home. He is furiously angry at the fact that she can apparently leave him without pain and decides to punish her and secure her person by kidnapping her. His letter, however, which she receives on the journey, once more asserts his good intentions.

'Yet, forgive me, my good girl, for although I have taken these steps, I will, by all that's good and holy, use you honourably.' (p 88)

Pamela is not reassured and continues to fear the worst, but the reader must be at greater pains to understand what B means when he speaks of honourable usage. He states in the same letter that he will not visit B-Hall where she is to be held, unless she gives him leave. Honourable treatment, then, even of maid-servants, stops short of rape; it stops short of any physical coercion other than imprisonment, for B is angry that Mrs Jewkes has beaten Pamela. When, much later in the novel, he writes to Pamela to ask leave to visit her, his words are vague but by no means threatening. They seem, in fact, to hint at a purpose about which he is afraid to be too specific.

'I will only say one thing, that if you will give me leave to attend you at the hall (consider *who* it is that requests this from you as a *favour*), I solemnly declare that you shall have cause to be pleased with this obliging mark of your confidence and consideration for me. If I find Mrs Jewkes has not behaved to you with the respect due to one I so dearly love, I will put it entirely in your power to discharge her the house, if you think proper; and Mrs Jervis, or who else you please, shall attend you in her place. This I say on a hint John gave me, as if you resented something from that quarter. Dearest Pamela, answer favourably this earnest request of one that cannot live without you, and on whose honour to you, you may absolutely depend; and so much the more, as you place a confidence in it. I am, and assuredly ever will be, *your faithful and affectionate, &c.*' (p 115)

There is plenty of evidence of pride in this letter, but there are also efforts to show Pamela respect and to recognise her right to power over herself. Once again, Pamela fails to see this, does not in fact seriously consider the letter's implications before she is presented with Sir Simon Darnford's view of her plight:

'"Why, what is all this, my dear, but that our neighbour has a mind to his mother's waiting maid! And if he takes care she wants for nothing, I don't see any great injury will be done her. He hurts no *family* by this."' (p 116)

Pamela is furious at this, which appears to her a crude summary of the views which B has expressed in the past and may well still hold; Mrs Jewkes, by promising that B will use her 'honourably', that is, pay her well if she becomes his mistress, increases her sense that B's vague hints mean nothing more.

But although B is definitely not yet at the stage where he can make firm, unambiguous promises, his letter does show that he recognises that Pamela has her own dignity, that any consent she gives must be on a basis of reason and not of fear. Is he considering asking her to marry him? Perhaps, but only momentarily: a few days later he again suggests she should marry Williams. This time it is to be a real marriage, not a smoke-screen to conceal their liaison. He says his purpose in arranging this is to make restitution to her for what he has made her suffer but it has, no doubt, the secondary advantage of forcing him to give up the idea of marrying her himself. When he finds out that Pamela has already been in contact with Williams and that the two have combined to plot an escape for her, he is furiously angry.

" Yes, she would have run away with a fellow that she had been acquainted with but a few days: at a time when she had the strongest assurances of my honour to her.

I think I now hate her perfectly: and though I will do nothing to her *myself*, yet I can bear for the sake of my revenge, *injured honour* and *slighted love*, to see anything, even what *she most fears*, be *done to her*; and then she may be turned loose to her evil destiny and echo to the woods and groves her piteous lamentations for the loss of her fantastical innocence, which the romantic idiot makes such a work about!" (p 141)

B's last sentence, full of the clichés of romantic fiction, shows us that he is venting his pique rather than expressing feelings on which he intends to act. Nevertheless he is furiously jealous — he believes that she prefers Williams to him and sees her resistance to his overtures as expressing indifference as well as a determination

to remain chaste. He also feels that his efforts to change, to 'descend' have been ignored or undervalued. If Pamela was willing to elope with a comparative stranger in order to escape from him, after the concessions which he feels he has made to her point of view, then his sacrifice of pride has been wasted.

The epistolary mode at this point in the novel makes great demands on the reader and continues to do so until B's letter summons Pamela back to B- Hall. It is the essence of this technique that the letter-writer, in this case Pamela, shall write 'to the moment', when the issue is still in doubt, for her as for the reader. The situation in which she finds herself after her abduction makes her writing in effect a journal: in her first letter, written on the way to B- Hall, she says,

'Let me write and bewail my miserable hard fate, though I have no hope that what I write can be conveyed to you. I have now nothing to do but write, and weep and pray.' (p 82)

She seems to record the events of her life in an effort to stiffen her own resistance. Without a confidante, she creates one in her journal and the effect is that heroine and reader, to whom alone the journal is accessible, share the hopes, doubts and fears which she is obliged to hide from everyone else. When Pamela fails to register that B's understanding of honourable behaviour is changing, because Sir Simon and Mrs Jewkes remind her of what he meant by 'honour' in his earlier days, the reader receives, almost irresistibly, Pamela's impression that B is still a determined seducer, perhaps even a rapist.

Against this he must place his own knowledge that B is not fixedly evil: he may not be good, but there is undoubtedly a struggle within him. And the reader must use his experience of Pamela, that her position has prevented her from seeing herself as a proper mate for B, just as his has, that her fear for her chastity prevents her from relaxing sufficiently to perceive change — he must detach

himself from her viewpoint sufficiently to recognise the truth of the situation.

What makes the reader's rôle a difficult one in *Pamela* is that two contradictory but vital tasks are imposed on him: first is that he responds to the presentation of Pamela herself by involving himself in her experiences as closely as possible, as she does: the second is that he retain a sense of the objective reality, which she only partly perceives, so that B's proposal appears to him not a dramatic change of heart, from seducer to suitor, but the culmination of a long process.

When B eventually comes down to B-Hall, he tries to maintain his tone of anger and indignation, calling Pamela 'vile forward one', and 'little hypocrite... let such fellows as Williams be taken in by her artful wiles!'¹

His anger begins to recede under the influence of Pamela's beauty and distress, and he speaks of forgiving her and taking her to his bosom — vague and ambiguous terms, once again, which Pamela understands as offers to seduce her. She seems to be right, for B next sends her his 'Articles', that is, a formal offer of property and income if she will agree to become his mistress. Pamela naturally rejects them out of hand, but they deserve the reader's consideration because B clearly intends to offer her a definite status — financial independence — and the treatment, as far as possible, which his wife could expect.

"Art. V. I will besides, order patterns to be sent to you for choosing four complete suits of rich clothes, that you may appear with reputation as if you were my wife. And I will give you the two diamond rings, and two pairs of ear-rings, and diamond necklace, that were bought by my mother, to present to Miss Tomlins, if the match that was proposed between her and me had been brought to effect: and I will confer upon you still *other* gratuities, as I shall find myself obliged by your good behaviour and affection."

1. *Pamela*, p 159.

"*Answer.* Fine clothes, Sir, become not me; nor have I any ambition to wear them. I have greater pride in my poverty and meanness, than I should have in dress and finery. Believe me, Sir, I think such things less become the humble-born Pamela than the rags your good mother raised me from. Your rings, Sir, your necklace, and your ear-rings, will better befit ladies of degree than me: and to lose the best jewel, my virtue, would be poorly recompensed by those you propose to give me. What should I think, when I looked upon my finger, or saw, in the glass, those diamonds on my neck, and in my ears, but that they were the price of my honesty, and that I wore those jewels outwardly, because I had none inwardly?"

"*Art. VI.* Now, Pamela, you will see, by this, what value I set upon the free-will of a person *already* in my power; and who, if these proposals are not accepted, shall find that I have not taken all these pains, and risked my reputation, without resolving to gratify my passion for you, at all adventures; and if you refuse, I will accomplish my purpose without making any terms at all."

"*Answer.* I know, Sir, by woeful experience, that I am in your power: I know all the resistance I can make will be poor and weak, and perhaps stand me in little stead: I dread your *will* to ruin me is as great as your *power*: yet, Sir, will I dare to tell you, that I will make no free-will offering of my virtue. All that I *can* do, poor as it is, I *will* do, to convince you that your offers shall have no part in my choice: and if I cannot escape the violence of man, I hope, by God's grace, I shall have nothing to reproach myself, for not doing all in my power to avoid my disgrace: and then I can safely appeal to the great God, my only refuge and protector, with this consolation, that my will bore no part in the violation."

"*Art. VII.* You shall be mistress of my person and fortune, as much as if the foolish ceremony had passed. All my servants shall be yours: and you shall choose any two persons to attend yourself, either male or female, without control of mine; and if your conduct be such, that I have reason to be satisfied with it, I know not (but will not engage for this) that I may, after twelve-month's cohabitation, marry you; for if my love increase for you, as it has done for many months past, it will be impossible for me to deny you any thing." (pp 166, 167)

For Pamela, the gulf between a life of virtue and one of sin is so wide that she can make no other distinctions:

the Articles, she says would make her into a base-born prostitute.¹ But B's offers are surely intended to preserve her from such disgrace — he wishes to offer her a position only slightly less dignified than that of a wife; he even offers to be faithful to her and to allow her to share his fortune, but his pride cannot bear to consider her as the equal that his wife must be.

The rape attempt which follows Pamela's rejection of the Articles, though one of the most famous passages in Richardson's writings, has very frequently been misunderstood, presumably because the reader is compelled to share Pamela's emotions in a very powerful way. She is naturally overcome with fear and sees the attempt as proof that her master will stick at nothing. But in fact B knows that he could achieve nothing by raping her: she must consent to becoming his mistress or he has not won his point, that this is an honourable position for her. He is driven to make the attempt by the threat which he made when he feared that she would reject his Articles — 'if I have this as your absolute answer and I don't like it, you are undone, for I will not sue meanly where I can command'.²

The rape attempt is B's effort to command in the most forcible way: he reminds Pamela, when he reveals himself, of his earlier threat —

'Said I, "Is the wench mad! Why, how now, Confidence?" thinking still it had been Nan. But he kissed me with frightful vehemence; and then his voice broke upon me like a clap of thunder, "Now, Pamela," said he, "is the dreadful time of reckoning come, that I have threatened." I screamed out in such a manner, as never any body heard the like. But there was nobody to help me; and both my hands were secured, as I said. Sure never poor soul was in such agonies as I. "Wicked man!" said I, "wicked abominable woman!"—O God! my God! this *time!* this *one time!*

1. *Pamela*, p 168.

2. *Ibid*, p 169.

deliver me from this distress! or strike me dead this moment."

And then I screamed again and again.

Said he, "One word with you, Pamela; hear me but one word; and hitherto you see I offer nothing to you."—"Is this *nothing*," said I, "to be in bed here? To hold my hands between you! I will hear, if you will instantly leave the bed, and take this villainous woman from me!"

Said she (O disgrace of woman kind!)—"What you do, Sir, do: don't stand, dilly dallying. She cannot exclaim worse than she has done: and she'll be quieter when she knows the worst."

"Silence!" said he to her; "I must say one word to you, Pamela! You see, now you are in my power! You cannot get from me, nor help yourself: yet have I not offered any thing amiss to you. But if you resolve not to comply with my proposals, I will not lose this opportunity: if you do, I will yet leave you."

"O Sir," said I, "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. With struggling and terror I fainted away, and did not come to myself soon; so that they both, from the cold sweats that 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 with his, and in his gown and slippers.' (pp 178, 179)

It may be too strong to say that Pamela is mistaken about the nature of the attack made on her and that B's intention is not really rape, but he makes it very clear that he would be glad to be spared the necessity of offending her in this irrevocable way, if he could obtain her assent to his Articles in any other way. Mrs Jewkes's irritation at his 'dilly-dallying', and his abrupt silencing of her shows that he is not motivated by irresistible desire, but by a determination to show her that he has absolute physical power over her when he wishes, and that resistance is therefore pointless. His primary purpose is not immediate rape, but to force a consent from Pamela.

The reader is intended to distinguish between Mrs Jewkes's attitude — rape her and get it over — and B's. The question arises of whether he intends rape as a last resort: when he and Pamela are discussing the incident next day, he says, 'I know not, I declare (beyond this lovely bosom) your sex, but that I did intend what you call the *worst* is most certain.'¹ But this does not necessarily mean that he intended rape — when Mrs Jewkes twice urged him to rape Pamela, he refused; — what he hoped was to force her to agree to become his mistress. He already feels remorseful about his behaviour and promises Pamela, 'If I am master of myself and my own resolution, I will not attempt to force you to anything again.'²

A period follows which could be called courtship, since B is trying to put their relationship onto a footing of affection rather than fear, and he seems to be prepared to enjoy her company as he would that of an equal. She, fearing that his affectionate behaviour is intended to accustom her to ever-increasing physical familiarities, resents his kisses, and after a quarrel about this and a partial reconciliation, he explains his dilemma to her and asks her advice.

'You know I am not a very abandoned profligate: I have hitherto been guilty of no very enormous or vile actions. This of confining you thus, may, perhaps, be one of the worst. Had I been utterly given up to my passions, I should, before now, have gratified them, and not have shewn that remorse and compassion for you, which have reprieved you more than once, when absolutely in my power; and you are as inviolate a virgin as you were when you came into my house.

"But what can I do? Consider the pride of my condition. I cannot endure the thought of marriage, even with a person of equal or superior degree to myself; and have declined several proposals of that kind: how then, with the distance between us in the world's judgment,

1. *Pamela*, p 181.

2. *Ibid*, p 181.

can I think of making you my wife? Yet I must have you; I cannot bear the thoughts of any other man supplanting me in your affections: the very apprehension has made me hate the name of Williams, and use him in a manner unworthy of my temper.

"Now, Pamela, judge for me; and since I have told you, thus candidly, my mind; and I see yours is big with some important meaning, by your eyes, your blushes, and that sweet confusion which I behold struggling in your bosom, tell me, with like openness and candour, what you think I ought to do and what you would have me do." (p 188)

In essentials, B's position has not changed since Letter XXX, in so far as he has always had, in his better moments, the sense that she was a worthy bride for him. Class arrogance has always been in conflict with this sense — he could not possibly accept as wife and equal his mother's waiting maid. By now, however, he has thought seriously about marrying her and the fact that he puts the problem to her shows that he has accepted that she will never be his mistress.

During this interview, Pamela admits that she loves him, an admission which moves him greatly because of the confidence in him which it shows, but he is still afraid that the conflict will recur — 'And, Pamela, you must pray for the continuance of this temper; and I hope your prayers will get the better of my temptations.'¹

His insistence on her remaining, though she asks several times to be allowed to return home, makes it clear that whatever he says about the impossibility of marrying her, the idea is still in his mind. Since he has abandoned attempts at seduction, unless he sends Pamela home, or reinstates her as sewing maid, which the present relationship makes impossible, he must marry her. At this point, Pamela's perceptions can give the reader little idea of B's inner struggle against the notions of his up-bringing. She reports his uneven temper, his touchiness

1. *Pamela*, p 193

at any idea that she may doubt his good faith, but Richardson cannot allow her to guess B's thoughts, nor can he allow B to discuss his dilemma further without making her aware that if she holds out a little longer she may win an enormous prize — without, in fact, making her appear interested and scheming rather than virtuous.

The anonymous letter, in which Pamela is informed that B will try to trick her by means of a false marriage, has the effect of simplifying the situation as she sees it once again into a struggle between B's wishes to seduce her and her wish to return to her parents. Her attitude hardens again into rigid resistance.

It is very important to Richardson's purpose that B should be finally persuaded of Pamela's worth by her letters, some of which he reads before he sends her home and the remainder thereafter. The belief which informed Richardson's literary practice was that letters gave the truest and most complete access to the self of another, more reliable even than direct conversation. A woman especially could only reveal herself in her letters, where the embarrassment of a face-to-face confrontation was removed. The kind of knowledge which B needs of Pamela's thoughts and feelings can only be found in her letters: modesty and the kind of constraint which Richardson felt was proper between the sexes made such self-revelation impossible in conversation.¹

In a fit of pique at Pamela's apparent indifference to the effort it costs him to offer her marriage, he sends her home. His offer has been a very tentative one — 'If I can see those former papers of yours and those in my pocket give me no cause to alter my opinion, I will endeavour to defy the world and its censures and make my Pamela amends, if in the power of my whole life, for all the hardships I have made her undergo'² — and Pamela fears

1. See his letter to Sophia Westcomb, dated 15 Sept 1746. *Selected Letters*, pp 67, 68.

2. *Pamela*, p 214.

that it is the preamble to a fake marriage. The conditional nature of his offer and its very guarded language show that the conflict in B's mind is not finally resolved until he writes the letter which begs her to return to him. Though it concerns no overt proposal of marriage, which B's pride makes impossible until she has shown by her return that she would welcome such an offer, the terms on which he addresses her show that he accepts her as an equal.

"In vain, my Pamela, do I struggle against my affection for you. I must needs, after you were gone, venture to entertain myself with your journal. When I found Mrs Jewkes's bad usage of you, after your dreadful temptations and hurts; and particularly your generous concern on hearing how narrowly I escaped drowning (though my death would have been your *freedom*, and I had made it your *interest* to wish it); and your most agreeable confession in another place, that, notwithstanding all my hard usage, you could not *hate* me; expressed in so sweet, so soft, and innocent a manner, that I flatter myself you may be brought to *love* me, (together with the rest of your admirable journal:) I began to repent my parting with you; and, God is my witness! for no unlawful end, as *you* would call it; but the very contrary: as all this was improved in your favour by your behaviour at leaving my house; for O! that melodious voice praying for me at your departure, and thanking me for my rebuke to Mrs Jewkes, still dwells upon my ears, and delights my memory. I went to bed, but could not rest; about two I arose, and made Thomas get one of the best horses ready, in order to overtake you, while I sat down to write.

"Now, my dear Pamela, let me beg of you, on receipt of this, to order Robin to drive you back again to my house. I would have set out myself, for the pleasure of bearing you company back in the chariot; but am really indisposed; I believe, with vexation that I parted thus with my soul's delight, as I now find you are, and must be in spite of the pride of my own heart.

"You cannot imagine the obligation your return will lay me under to your goodness; and yet, if you will not so far favour me, you shall be under no restraint, as my letter inclosed to Colbrand will shew, which I have not sealed, that you may read it. But spare me, my dearest girl, the confusion of following you to your father's

which I must do, if you persist to go on;
for I find I cannot live a day without you.

"If you are the generous Pamela I imagine you to be (for hitherto you have been all goodness, where it has *not* been merited), let me then see the further excellence of your disposition, that you can forgive the man who loves you more than himself; let me see by it, that you are not prepossessed in any other person's favour: one instance more I would beg, and then I am all gratitude; which is, that you would dispatch Monsieur Colbrand with a letter to your father, assuring him that all will end happily; and to desire that he will send you, at my house, the letters you conveyed to him by means of Williams. And when I have all my proud, and perhaps *punctilious* doubts answered, I shall have nothing to do but to make you happy, and be so myself. For I must be *yours, and only yours.*" (pp 222, 223)

In this letter, the attitude which led to the rape attempt, 'I will not sue meanly where I can command,' has disappeared: he has acknowledged that there is an area of Pamela which no master can command, which must always be entirely at her own disposal. At the same time, Pamela's journal has informed him that whilst constraint has been useless, Pamela is able to love him spontaneously; the knowledge invites him to replace his former pride of class with a sense that he merits love in himself, instead of claiming, as he did earlier, that his position entitles him to deference and obedience.

The reader has seen by this stage in the novel three attitudes in B: the 'master-servant' attitude, in which he claims that he has a right to Pamela's person, as well as to her sewing skills, the sense that Pamela's personal merits make her a fit wife for him despite their difference in class, and the compromise attitude which inspired the Articles, which is that Pamela is entitled to special treatment, but not to equality with B. This last attitude he abandons fairly rapidly, since Pamela makes it clear that chastity is not a matter for compromise, and that it is neither the loss of status nor the financial insecurity

of a kept woman that she fears.

But the conflict in him between the first two attitudes continues until after he has sent Pamela away: though in the period immediately before Pamela's departure for her home we can see that he is seriously considering marriage, it has been in his mind since Letter XXX. In a sense, the reader's understanding of Pamela is now exactly the same as B's: until B has read her letters, the reader has known far more about her. B, up to this point, has been the observer of her behaviour but has had no access to her motives.

It is a limitation, though not perhaps a defect of the novel, that it can give us no similarly profound understanding of B. We are always aware of an inner struggle in him, and we believe when he writes his letter asking Pamela to return that he has grown and changed from a spoilt young man into the husband whom Pamela deserves. And our regard for him eventually as her husband is supported by his behaviour after the marriage, the seriousness with which he undertakes the re-ordering of his household as a married man, and the understanding of his upbringing which the Lady Davers incident gives us. Richardson, by portraying B's sister as stupidly arrogant as a result of the same upbringing, has convinced us that the innate qualities of B, which overcame his education, are worth our admiration.

Nevertheless our understanding of B, at least before his marriage, has to be of a fairly simple nature. For most of the time, we must collect and compare pieces of information about him on our own, since Pamela's perception of him is distorted by her fears. From the abduction until page 159 he is off-stage, and though we can understand that Pamela's sense of him as brutal and simply aggressive (as shown in the bull episode, for example) is erroneous, it is impossible for us to arrive at a complete and independent sense of him. To put the matter simply, because of its structure as a single series of letters, *Pamela* cannot

become much more than a novel centred on a single character. B can only be seen as he relates to Pamela herself. In order to present a second character in a manner which would be as persuasive, and as demanding of involvement for the reader, the double series of letters, which is *Clarissa*, was necessary. It is the degree of involvement with Pamela which the reader must experience which makes B rather a shadowy figure: we must know that Pamela is mistaken, but we must be persuaded to sympathise with her mistakes, almost, to make them with her, if we are to accept her as heroic. Though we must from time to time separate ourselves from Pamela in order to judge B as she cannot, our strongest feeling must be for her.

In order to create two characters of similar stature so as to produce in the reader equal, or almost equal involvement with each, and at the same time create that tension in him which must arise when he is involved with two irreconcilables, the double letter-exchange of *Clarissa*, which continues the investigation of chastity begun in *Pamela* on a much more complex level, will help us to understand why Richardson needed to write the simpler work first. Having objectified within a heroine those qualities and behaviour patterns which his conscious self could only commend, he was able to provoke his readers to judge them objectively as they read *Pamela*: in *Clarissa* he has allowed himself, and his readers, to discover the responses which such behaviour can produce. Chastity may produce, or at least strengthen the wish to violate; female passivity may provoke male sadism — Richardson exposes in *Clarissa* the struggle between chastity and lust as a power struggle on both sides. The invitation of *Pamela* is to see chastity as a strength, as the outward sign of an integrity which is internal: in *Clarissa* we are allowed to see it in this light again, but also in others, by no means all of which require our approval. The reader of *Pamela* sees its heroine as she sees herself, and at the same time can form an objective view of her; in *Clarissa*, both those view-points

of her and of Lovelace are available to him, and at the same time, he has access to a third, the view of each combatant of the other. Seriously distorted though these views are, they are nevertheless vital to our understanding of the two. Richardson always deplored the tendency of readers to identify themselves with Lovelace rather than Clarissa¹ but his reason for this belonged to his conscious purpose which remained alienated from his actual literary practice. In fact, the intense engagement of the reader with both main characters is absolutely necessary to the sense of tragic conflict in the novel: we must feel for Clarissa as Lovelace's victim, but we must feel almost equally for him as his own, and to some extent Clarissa's victim.

Before writing *Pamela*, Richardson could have no sense of the technical expertise necessary to a moral investigation on this scale, nor could his interests, which the writing of the novel had so greatly extended, satisfy themselves fully except in a work of the scale of *Clarissa*. It was his recognition of the unsatisfactory, shadowy areas of *B*, the hints at sadism and the sense that he could not, in the earlier novel, fully explore the conflict between love and the desire for power over the beloved which led Richardson to write *Clarissa*.

1. He mentions this several times in his letters, notably in one to Frances Grainger, dated 21 December 1749 — 'O that I could not say that I have met with more admirers of Lovelace than of Clarissa'. *Selected Letters*, p 141.

Chapter 3

Like most novels - like all great novels - *Clarissa* offers the reader interest of three distinct types, not separated in the novel, for almost every word or action of every character contains elements belonging to all three, but different in kind, so that it is useful to distinguish them in order to see the extent to which each contributes to the greatness of the work.

Most obvious and most limited, though not least in its interest, is the socio-historical interest. Richardson has, in *Clarissa*, conducted the most brilliant analysis of the social and moral code of his time — patriarchy sanctioned by religion — ever to be written in the Eighteenth Century. A comparison between the *Spectator* papers dealing with the behaviour of women¹ and *Clarissa* will show the power and understanding with which Richardson has portrayed the lives of women under this type of societal organization. The size and flexibility of the novel has allowed him to go beyond the 'case history' type of analysis to offer us a whole society, organised in this way, in action: he is as interested in its effect on men as on women. And whereas the *Spectator*, as he defines himself in his first paper, stands as far as possible outside the society on which he comments, Richardson's narrators write their letters 'while the minds of the writers must be supposed to be wholly engaged in their subjects (the events at the time generally dubious.)'² The writers — *Clarissa* herself, Anna Howe, Mrs Harlowe, Lovelace, even the uncles, as they define their rights and shape their behaviour in terms of the code, present in the picture which they collectively constitute not only the details of its effect on human behaviour but

1. Papers 11 and 15, for example (Vol. I pp 34-37, 47-49,) are of this kind.

2. *Clarissa*: Author's Preface p XIV. (Everyman Edition.)

a critique of its principles. This critique, which arises from a synthesis in the mind of the reader of impressions of personalities, is never articulated within the novel: both Richardson and his characters accept the code in the sense that they never propose any alternative to it, or even suggest that an alternative might be sought. Richardson's own position *vis à vis* the Eighteenth Century belief in male supremacy is strange to the modern reader and only to be understood if one takes into consideration the fact that he felt that it was divinely instituted.¹ He is very aware of the contradictions which the system involves; indeed the very nature of Clarissa herself, so superior to every member of her family, male or female, makes this clear. Nor is it only when a woman of exceptional merit is his subject that he can see that the dominance of men over woman may be dangerous to both: Mr and Mrs Harlowe's marriage is presented to us in detail in order that we may see a man degraded by the wielding of unquestioned power over his wife. The other marriages, those of Mr and Mrs Howe, and of Lord and Lady M, have, it is suggested, been marred by the wives' striving against their husbands' expectations of obedience and 'gratitude'— the latter defined within the novels as the acknowledgement, as a favour, of affectionate treatment and financial support from one's husband. Nevertheless, he refuses to look outside the system for an alternative and perhaps happier way in which men and women may associate. At the end of *Clarissa*, even Anna Howe is shown as having conformed almost completely to the conventional notions concerning a wife's behaviour; indeed the description of her marriage to Hickman² is extremely interesting because it shows Richardson's sense

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1. References to the Bible and especially to Genesis as defining the position of women occur in all the novels: an even clearer indication that Richardson felt that the subjection of women was ordained by God is Harriet Byron's praise of *Paradise Lost*, (in *Sir Charles Grandison* Vol I Letter XLIII, pp 56, 57) as 'the sublimest of poems': no better description of the proper status of women as it was understood in the Eighteenth Century exists than in Bk IV of the poem.
 2. Vol. IV (8. Conclusion) pp 547-8.

MS
* that a man ought to retain the final authority in marriage even when his wife is abler than himself. The form of the novel — two exchanges of letters, interspersed with letters from minor characters — makes it impossible that a single verdict should be arrived at within the novel, but the sum of the immense variety of experience offered in it suggests that Richardson's attitude to the patriarchal system as it existed in his time was that it was potentially extremely dangerous to both men and women, and that it would be a rare and valuable man who was not corrupted by the possession of such power over wives and daughters or who, when public opinion was tolerant of its abuse, would be sufficiently self-critical to restrain himself. Where it affected women, he was aware of the tremendous sacrifices they were required to make of their free will, their tastes and their whole personalities: Clarissa's sense of the glory of yielding and Miss Howe's comment to her, that adversity is her shining time, are important here: in the performance of the religious duty of subjecting themselves, Richardson felt they could obtain everlasting satisfaction, which was far more important than transitory happiness.

Against this social background of Eighteenth Century England, Clarissa and Lovelace appear, each working out a *modus vivendi* in terms of their age's beliefs, and at the same time, of their own remarkable characters. The most striking achievement of the novel occurs on this second level, where two mighty and complex personalities present themselves for our understanding. The individual responses of the heroine and hero-villain to their society and each other are outside the realm of social history: they exist as emanations from and illustrations of the personalities of fictional beings. Few people would deny that the novel is so constructed that the social background (whose code is real and historical) exists in order to allow the fictional characters, Clarissa and Lovelace, the greatest possible scope. The paradoxical character of Clarissa, a woman who is determined to be great, and who re-defines that adjective

to conform with the expectations of a society which demands that she be subject to her inferiors, is by far the greatest achievement of the novel. Like her creator, Richardson, Clarissa accepts that subjection to her father and later to her husband is divinely decreed and though she can see that yielding to her husband has brought neither happiness nor even peace to Mrs Harlowe, she cannot condemn her behaviour, nor even see it as unsuccessful, because worldly success is not the motive for performing one's religious duty. Clarissa will not be anything less than perfect in terms of her own code, which is that of her group in its purest form; when the standards of that group prove to be tragically contradictory, then the story of her life will be a tragedy, but it is her own decision to be exemplary, which I have called in a later discussion of the novel, her ambition, which is responsible for her tragedy. What makes her heroic, rather than mistaken, is her ability throughout the novel to see the cost of obedience to her principles, and at the same time to be determined to adhere to them unswervingly.

Lovelace, like Clarissa, accepts that women must be subject to men and that their supreme value must be chastity: his acceptance, however, does not imply that he admits these principles as shaping forces of his own behaviour. He too is a paradoxical creature; ready to judge Clarissa, or any other woman by this code, he organises his own life as a defiance of it. He is a rake, who lives to steal women from their fathers and husbands. His especial determination to ruin Clarissa comes from the fact that she is the perfect representative, perhaps even the justification, of the code which he wishes to flout in his own actions. Like Clarissa, he is determined to be great but he defines greatness for himself as superiority to the laws which govern the conduct of others. The social code must exist, and must control the rest of humanity, since it is his own exceptional qualities which qualify him for immunity from its laws. Like Clarissa, therefore, he pro-

poses no alternatives to the code, though in his personal behaviour he is often contemptuous of it, especially when it is represented by the narrowest of its adherents, the Harlowes. If the Harlowes represent tyranny, then Lovelace is anarchy.

I have called the creation of Clarissa and Lovelace the novel's most striking achievement: the epistolary mode and Richardson's genius for the *particular* — for recording life so that its sensory realities seem to be present to the reader — have combined to make this so. We never, whilst we read, have the sense that the novel deals mainly with issues, or with the principles which underlie human life; it is the way in which the material surface of life is shaped and altered by what underlies it that Richardson is concerned. Both Clarissa and Lovelace are shrewd observers of each other's behaviour and of their acquaintance, and both are minute in their observations, in a way which allows them not only to judge, but to qualify their judgments by explaining that an action which they have witnessed is capable of more than one meaning. When Clarissa has her first conversation with Mrs Sinclair for example, she reports that the widow 'put her handkerchief to her eyes twice or thrice. I hope, for the sake of her sincerity, she wetted it, because she would be *thought* to have done so: but I saw not that she did.'¹ In the same interview it is the half-hidden signals between Lovelace and the prostitutes which make her, and us, aware that a relationship, an understanding of each other, already exists between these people: 'For he, by stealth, as it were, cast glances sometimes at them, which they returned; and on my ocular notice their eyes fell, as I may say, under my eye, as if they could not stand its examination.'²

When, in the early stages of the novel, Mr Harlowe obliges his wife to offer the patterns of silk to Clarissa,

1. Vol. II, Letter LVIII, p 202, (3.61).

2. *Ibid.*

it is tempting to say that the patterns symbolise the Harlowe sense of marriage which is a matter of property, outward show and status. But the patterns are not symbols, in the sense that they bring to mind the reality which they represent: they are tokens, representative parts of the benefits which, the Harlowes promise, will accrue to her if she marries Solmes. It is a natural manifestation of their materialism that they should give this material form to their approval and to the economic security and social status which will follow her marriage. But the letters which deal with the offer of the silks¹ show that Richardson sees the whole family as highly conscious of the way in which small objects or actions can become vehicles for great meanings: Mrs Harlowe's reluctance to present the patterns to Clarissa shows her awareness that her child is not to be persuaded by such crude bribery to marry a man whom she despises: the fact that she mentions her unwillingness to Clarissa is indicative of the conflict in her between marital duty and love for her child. Most significant of all is the fact that despite her sympathetic understanding of Clarissa, she yields to her husband's bullying and asks her to look at the patterns: she is perfectly aware of the pointlessness of doing so and knows that her request can only increase the distance between herself and her daughter. Only the kind of despair which is productive of irresponsible behaviour could lie behind her action. It is even more horrifying to read that Bella's sense of what marriage to Solmes would mean to her sister is almost as strong, and certainly even more concrete than Clarissa's own; in the ugly scene² in which she torments her sister by obliging her to look at the patterns, she suggests that since this will be 'a solemn wedding' Clarissa should make her first public appearance after the wedding in a black dress. It is one of the moments when the reader understands very fully

1. Vol I Letters XL1, XLV (1.41,45).

2. Vol I Letter XLV p 235 (1.45).

that James and Arabella intend the death of Clarissa, in one form or another. The extent to which they disguise this intention from each other, or even from their own consciousness, is not clear, but from this moment, their determination, not only to exclude her from their family, but to deny her the necessities of life, does not flag until it is obviously too late to save her.

Clarissa's own awareness of this, and her fear that Lovelace may intend a struggle to the death, from different motives, but with consequences equally fatal to her, is expressed in the dream, another example of Richardson's giving exact visual form to an idea.

"Methought my brother, my Uncle Antony, and Mr. Solmes, had formed a plot to destroy Mr. Lovelace; who discovering it, and believing I had a hand in it, turned all his rage against me. I thought he made them all fly into foreign parts upon it; and afterwards seizing upon me, carried me into a churchyard; and there, notwithstanding all my prayers and tears, and protestations of innocence, stabbed me to the heart, and then tumbled me into a deep grave ready dug, among two or three half-dissolved carcasses; throwing in the dirt and earth upon me with his hands, and trampling it down with his feet."

I awoke in a cold sweat, trembling, and in agonies; and still the frightful images raised by it remain upon my memory.'

(Vol I Letter XXXIV p433 (2.39))

This dreadful vision gives physical shape to Clarissa's apprehension that the combat between her family and Lovelace may centre itself on her relationship with him, and that she may come to represent for him the family whom he regards as his enemies. It is typical of Richardson's method that the fear of rape which her chaste reserve forbids her to verbalise can yet be expressed in a form so much more compelling — that Lovelace might stab her to the heart and throw her amongst rotting carcasses. The whole area of the novel which

1. Vol I Letter XLV p235 (1.45).

deals with Clarissa's own arrangements for her burial acquires meaning in the light of this vision: the 'crowned serpent, with its tail in its mouth, forming a ring, the emblem of eternity,' and the 'hourglass, winged'¹ are her assertion that she is immortal, not only as a spirit surviving the death of the body, but as a principle of integrity surviving the rape, and the corruption which she envisaged in her dream has not, as a moral state, been her fate.

In this part of the novel, as in so many others, Richardson has contrived to show us how an individual can assert a moral truth in her own behaviour and at the same time, has convinced us of the human reality of the woman who behaves in this way.

* But whilst I asserted at the beginning of Chapter 2 that the novel was to combine didactic and mimetic elements (the creation of credibly human characters definitely belongs to the mimetic) and to make these elements mutually dependent, it must be recognised that they are present in different combinations in novels. Later critics have called novels with strong didactic elements 'moral fables': *Silas Marner* is such a novel: equally James's *Portrait of a Lady* in which the strong central focus, not only of the reader but of all the other characters in the fiction, is on the character of the heroine, is not. James himself, when discussing the conception of the novel,² speaks of the figure of Isabella forming in his mind and presenting him with the question, 'what will she do?' It is tempting to call a novel with this kind of emphasis, like *Clarissa*, a novel of character, had not James himself made the term unusable.

'There are bad novels and good novels, as there are bad pictures and good pictures; but that is the only distinction in which I see any meaning, and I can as little imagine speaking of a novel of character as I can imagine

1. Vol IV, Letter XC p 257 (7.82).

2. *Portrait of a Lady*, p XXV Penguin.

speaking of a picture of character. When one says picture one says of character, when one says novel one says of incident, and the terms may be transposed at will. What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character? What is either a picture or a novel that is not of character?'¹

James's arguments, however, are against the over-arbitrary division of novels into meaningless categories: all novels contain humans, or at least creatures possessing human characteristics, and therefore offer the pleasure of knowing and understanding human beings. Equally, it is through incidents in which they are involved that we come to know and understand the people of the novel. Nevertheless it is legitimate to categorise to some extent, when to do so helps us to understand the purpose of the novelist. When we recognise that most novels offer three types of interest, that of social history, of human character, and finally, of the 'moral fable' kind, we are better able to understand them and to measure the degree of the success or failure of the novelist in terms of his own intention, if we first determine in what order of importance they have been combined.

Richardson himself seems to have asserted the contrary of what I have suggested when I claimed that the creation of Clarissa and Lovelace is his greatest achievement, in his Postscript to the fourth edition, in 1751, when he maintained 'that the story (interesting as it is generally allowed to be) was to be principally looked upon as the vehicle to the instruction'.² But it must be remembered that he is writing at a considerable remove of time from the writing of the novel³ and is consciously defending it against the charge that many of the letters do not in fact

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1. 'The Art of Fiction', *Selected Literary Criticism* ed Morris Shapira, pp 78-97.
 2. *Clarissa*, Vol IV postscript p 564 (8. Postscript).
 3. First published 1747-8.

advance the action but are simply homilies. Here, I think, we would agree with James and say that the writing of a letter which reveals Clarissa's character by amplifying her views on any subject is an action. The debate between the heroine and Anna Howe on the rights and duties of parents and children, for example, is primarily an illustration of their very different approaches to a code which neither rejects and although our sense of Clarissa gives greater weight to her opinions than it does to Anna's, this sense is modified as we see the relationships of the girls with their parents, and understand that in terms of happiness in this world, Anna's is by far the more successful. It is noticeable that Richardson himself unconsciously responded to the characters which he had created by writing about them to his friends as though they were real: his short letter to his wife, with a set of *Clarissa*,¹ is a joking example of this, but the long letter to Lady Bradshaigh which begins on the opposite page, as well as the others to Edward Moore (p 108) and Solomon Lowe (p 123) show his sense of Clarissa as a personality obliged first of all to be herself, rather than to illustrate a principle.

Much of his insistence on the moral purpose of his novels can be discounted as being the Eighteenth Century fiction writer's necessary justification of his works: we have seen in Ch I that even Defoe felt compelled to claim that his work, if not the plain reporting of facts, was productive of moral teaching. But even for a Twentieth Century reader who does not feel the temptation to condemn fiction as lies, it is necessary that it clear itself of the charge of being escapism — an alternative world to which the reader may escape from his own. A novel which belongs to a period other than our own must also clear itself of the charge of being merely social history: the social code of the Eighteenth Century is interesting to us

1. *Selected Letters* p 102.

mainly as it helps us to understand our own.

This brings us to our final level, on which we recognise that Clarissa and Lovelace are fictional, not real, and that patriarchy sanctioned by religion has passed away. Does any final meaning remain for the reader, irrespective of the period of history in which he lives? The answer to this question is that Clarissa and Lovelace do have final, timeless meaning, as does the novel in which they exist.

MS The fictional Clarissa exemplifies a continuing truth that a human being may achieve heroic stature by absolute conformity to the code in which she believes, despite its defects. The struggle between Clarissa and Lovelace is finally the struggle between absolute conformity to a system, with the self-sacrifice which such conformity implies — and sterile rebellion, which produces an attack on the system, but no alternative to it.

MS The two central figures offer examples of extreme responses to an oppressive code of behaviour: the concepts of heroine and villain equally imply this extremeness, but the discoveries which Clarissa, for example, makes, are shown to have meaning in the life of Anna Howe, who though she is intelligent and loving, is much nearer to representing the average virtuous but unheroic young woman. Her acceptance of marriage to Hickman, it is clear, is the result of her understanding of Clarissa's tragic experience at the hands of Lovelace: as I shall demonstrate in a later section, Clarissa, by refusing to marry Solmes and opting instead for life with Lovelace, is attempting to retain in her life those sensory satisfactions and excitements which he offers her rather than, by marrying Solmes, to secure for herself the intellectual pleasures of martyrdom. In Anna's life the choice presents itself much less dramatically, but we are aware that she too is attracted by Lovelace, to the extent that she understands and is intrigued by the possibilities for life which he offers. After the rape and death of Clarissa, she has learnt the dangers which accompany association with such a man: not even Clarissa has

been able to maintain a balance between that satisfactions of moral rectitude and sensory pleasure.

When Anna marries Hickman, she sacrifices, not without difficulty, the possibilities of sensory happiness, because the effect of Clarissa's tragedy has been to destroy in her the confidence in her own ability to avoid the tragic pitfalls involved in the pursuit of such happiness. The description of her married life with Hickman¹ shows that she accepts her husband as a refuge from the dangers which overwhelmed Clarissa. The marriage, however, is described in terms of the *ideas* of right marital behaviour which it embodies — though there are suggestions that Anna looks back with mild regret to the earlier period when she was determined that the needs of her own personality would dominate ideas of right behaviour.

The way in which Anna's life has been changed by knowledge of her friend's fate is not really an example of the way in which the discoveries of a fictional character can be meaningful in the life of a reader, for Anna's marriage is shaped as it is because she herself is within the fiction and the memory of her friend's fate will always be inescapably present to her. For the reader, the dangers to which Clarissa succumbs become part of a body of fictional experience, throwing many different lights on his own life. But it is in the form of the final truths which emerge that fictional experience is brought to bear on real life.

It is on this final level too that we can most easily see the links between *Clarissa* and the great nineteenth century novels like *Middlemarch*, which examine the problems of human life and offer, not one, but several solutions. The end of *Middlemarch* offers us Dorothea, Lydgate, Fred Vincy and Mary Garth, even Celia and Sir James Chettam, as possibilities for life, and though it is true that the author sees Lydgate as a failure, the other five are pre-

1. Vol 1V pp 547,8 (8. Conclusion).

sented as achieving success of different kinds, as well as different degrees. Similarly, Clarissa, her mother and Anna Howe represent different responses and different possibilities for women faced with an oppressive social code: though Mrs Harlowe is a failure, Clarissa's and Anna's lives are both approved, although they are so different, as legitimate patterns for female behaviour.

In the first part of the work, up to the moment when Clarissa leaves her father's house, we are particularly conscious of the element of social history because we are required to learn the rules of her society in order to judge, as we must, the behaviour of the characters. The Harlowes' determination to marry Clarissa to Solmes is fixed: we must understand the rights of fathers over daughters well enough to understand why Mr Harlowe feels justified in choosing such a husband for her, and we need to understand the obligations of a wife to her husband in order to see why she refuses to marry Solmes. All this information is of course contained in the novel, but it is not offered to us in any simple manner. Clarissa, though determined to do her duty in all relationships, is by no means a typical product of the system, and in the debate between Miss Howe and herself about the filial and marital duties of women which is so important in the novel, neither one voices the ideas or responses which could fairly be called average or representative. The Harlowes are identified for us by Clarissa as exceptionally rigid insisters on male prerogative; Lovelace is a libertine — no one individual in the novel can function as a reliable authority and the reader must examine and sift the evidence, measuring the behaviour of one character against the criticism of another, in order to understand for himself the norms, against which Clarissa can be seen as heroic.

The problem with which Richardson begins *Clarissa* is implicit in his statement in the Author's Preface that his heroine is intended as an example to her sex. Clarissa embodies all those qualities which constitute female excel-

lence — physical beauty, high intelligence, perfect integrity, religious acceptance of her role as a woman. It is with the paradoxical concept of female excellence that the novel as a whole is largely concerned, but Volume I deals especially with the way in which the concept of excellence in a woman conflicts with her role as daughter, sister or wife as it is envisaged in the novel.

When the novel begins, Clarissa's excellence is already well on the way to undermining her relationships with the other members of her family. Our first hint of this is Anna Howe's mention¹ of the fact that Clarissa has been a beneficiary under her grandfather's will: on p 21 we receive from Clarissa herself a copy of the Preamble in which the old man explains why he has, despite the claims of three sons and two elder grandchildren, left his estate to the younger grand-daughter.

'Copy of the requested Preamble to the clauses in her grandfather's will: enclosed in the preceding letter.

As the particular estate I have mentioned and described above is principally of my own raising; as my three sons have been uncommonly prosperous, and are very rich: the eldest by means of the unexpected benefits he reaps from his new-found mines; the second, by what has as unexpectedly fallen in to him on the deaths of several relations of his present wife, the worthy daughter by both sides of very honourable families, over and above the very large portion which he received with her in marriage; my son Antony by his East India traffic, and successful voyages; as furthermore my grandson James will be sufficiently provided for by his godmother's Lovell's kindness to him, who, having no near relations, hath assured me that she hath, as well by Deed of Gift as by Will, left him both her Scottish and English estates; for never was there a family more prosperous in all its branches, blessed be God therefor; and as my said son James will very probably make it up to my grand-daughter Arabella, to whom I intend no disrespect, nor have reason, for she is a very hopeful and dutiful child; and as my sons John and Antony seem not inclined to a married life, so that

1. Vol I Letter I p 3 (1.1)

my son James is the only one who has children, or is likely to have any. For all these reasons, and because my dearest and beloved granddaughter Clarissa has been from her infancy a matchless young creature in her duty to me, and admired by all who knew her, as a very extraordinary child; I must therefore take the pleasure of considering her as my own peculiar child, and this without intending offence, and I hope it will not be taken as any, since my own son James can bestow his favours accordingly, and in greater proportion, upon his son James and upon his daughter Arabella. These, I say, are the reasons which move me to dispose of the above described estate in the precious child's favour, who is the delight of my old age and, verily think, has contributed by her amiable duty and kind and tender regards, to prolong my life.

Wherefore it is my express will and commandment, and I enjoin my said three sons John, James and Antony, and my grandson James, and my granddaughter Arabella, as they value my blessing, and will regard my memory, and would wish their own last wills and desires to be fulfilled by *their* survivors, that they will not impugn or contest the following bequests and devices in favour of my said granddaughter Clarissa, although they should not be strictly conformable to law or to the forms thereof; nor suffer them to be controverted or disputed on any pretence whatsoever.'

(Vol I Letter 1V (1.4))

Old Mr Harlowe obviously resembled his sons insofar as he was extremely preoccupied with possessions, to the extent of being unable to refrain from rewarding his favorite with an estate, even though he realised that his sons, his grandson and his elder grand-daughter were likely to resent the bequest. It is curious to see how completely he belongs to the system of patriarchal power and ownership of possessions, even at the moment when he is disposing of his property in a way which defies it: the way in which he lists the property and expectations of his sons and grandsons suggests an immense satisfaction at the family's wealth, and a feeling that he has every right to dictate the way in which his sons leave their money is

also present: he confidently makes the testamentary arrangements for the whole family for two generations. This foresight in financial matters, which implies absolute blindness to the truths of the human beings on whom the arrangements depend, is characteristic of all the Harlowes but Clarissa. Solmes persuades them that he is the only man for Clarissa by making promises of reversions of enormous estates which are absolutely meaningless because of the improbabilities on which they hinge: the estates will come to the Harlowes *if* Clarissa, married to him, dies childless and *if* after her death he has no child by any other marriage. Given the knowledge available to them of his avarice and his resentment of his existing connections, they ought to realise that he will see to it that his relations-in-law will never inherit his property, but it is equally true that Clarissa's grandfather ought to have realised that Clarissa would never be allowed effective ownership of her estate, that the bequest would bring her into danger and that he could not compensate her brother and sister by dictating her father's and uncles' wills to them from the grave. The greatest danger to her lies in his statements that she is 'a matchless young creature' and 'a very extraordinary child', since they suggest that these merits have won her the estate; her brother and sister, it is clear, feel their prospects threatened and hate her from this period *because* of her good qualities and especially because of her affectionate behaviour within the family which reminds them of her manner towards their grandfather.

The last paragraph of the Preamble shows that the old man was aware that he was behaving in an unexpected, uncharacteristic way; the strength of his injunction on his other descendants not to contest the will (it is ironic that this injunction depends for its strength on the patriarchal system which his bequest undermines) shows that he knows his will must be seen by the Harlowes as disloyalty to the group, and a breach in the patriarchal system which they see as essential to the family's rise. They (that is

to say, the three Harlowe brothers and the son) see this rise entirely in material terms: the family will increase its ownership of wealth, especially of land, which is the most evident and permanent form of wealth, until its holdings demand the recognition from the state which a peerage would constitute. So long as they equate achievement with wealth, their principle that they can only achieve as a group if wealth remains concentrated in the hands of males, preferably in the hands of a male family head, is correct. James Harlowe, who is frequently used to show the absurdity or the odiousness to which the family views tend, expresses this view in its most vulgar form: he is determined that as much as possible of the family's wealth shall devolve on him and that his sisters shall receive minimal shares of the family fortune. Clarissa quotes him, in Letter XIII, as speaking of daughters as 'chickens brought up for the tables of other men' — a comparison typical of his 'low and familiar' turn of phrase, as she calls it, but a fair summary of the position of a daughter in a patriarchal, property-centred society.

In this same letter, Clarissa gives her own summary of the family ambitions:

'I have more than once mentioned to you the darling view some of us have long had of *raising a family*, as it is called; a reflection, as I have often thought, upon our own, which is no inconsiderable or upstart one on either side; of my mother's especially. A view too frequently, it seems, entertained by families, which having great substance, cannot be satisfied without rank and title.

My uncles had once extended this view to each other of us three children, urging, that as they themselves intended not to marry, we each of us might be so portioned, and so advantageously matched, as that our posterity, if not ourselves, might make a first figure in our country. While my brother, as the only son, thought the two girls might be very well provided for by ten or fifteen thousand pounds apiece; and that all the real estates in the family: to wit, my grandfather's, father's and two uncles', and the remainder of their respective personal estates, together with what he had

an expectation of from his godmother, would make such a noble fortune, and give him such an interest, as might entitle him to hope for a peerage. Nothing less would satisfy his ambition.'

(Vol I Letter Xl11 pp 53, 54 (1,13))

There is evidently a degree of indecision in the minds of the two uncles as to whether the three Harlowe children should start as financial equals, in order to see which can confer most distinction on his or her uncles. This indecision in itself suggests that they too have been influenced by the values of the grandfather's will, which rewarded personal merit in Clarissa, in defiance of family position and sex, both of which placed her at the bottom of the merit scale in a patriarchal structure. But in fact, James Harlowe Junior holds a trump card — the Harlowe family proper can only be elevated through his achievements since only his posterity, not his sisters', can continue the family name. The doubt in his uncles' minds, however, shows that they, like their father, are vacillating between the patriarchal values and the value for personal merit which the will shows: old Mr Harlowe was expressing his pride in the family's having produced an individual of the calibre of Clarissa, and his sense that such an individual had a natural right to the power and influence which wealth confers.

Clarissa's comment on her grandfather's will suggests that it made the whole family conscious of the way in which the special value, which all had been content previously to place on her, threatened the patriarchal system under which each knew the share to which he was entitled.

'Nobody indeed was pleased; for although every one loved me, yet being the youngest child, father, uncles, brother, sister, all thought themselves postponed, as to matter of right and power (who loves not power?); and my father himself could not bear that I should be made sole, as I may call it, and independent, for such the will, as to that estate and the powers it gave (unaccountably as they all said), made me.'

(*Ibid* p 54)

They have understood that the grandfather's bequest has been given in terms of merit and that it is because he has understood that Clarissa has deserved most of him and will best administer the estate that she has been left the bequest. Anna Howe suggests¹ that he felt that he himself had done too little good in his lifetime and was willing to allow Clarissa to make reparation for this. Clarissa's father's anger that his daughter should thus be made independent of him and have the power which wealth gives over herself and others, shows that he has understood the challenge to the whole system which the will represents. He himself does not need and cannot miss the estate's revenues, but his father, by distributing part of his wealth in this way, has offered a strong challenge to the family creed that wealth and power belong to males and descend to males, in order of generation and age. The challenge is the more terrible because it comes from the family head, the only proper seat of wisdom and power — the Harlowes continually make themselves excuses about senility and improper influence in order to justify their disobedience to the spirit of their father's will. Nevertheless, they are all aware and their family turmoil originates from the fact that the deceased family head asserted that moral excellence makes an individual a worthy owner of riches and that this, together with the strength of intellect which makes moral excellence valuable, is not tied to a particular sex or age.

We are frequently told that the Harlowe men are great insisters on their right to be obeyed by their womenfolk, which is of a piece with this insistence that property belongs by right to male heads of families. As they realise, money, power and independence are all very much alike in this context. When they assert the male right to absolute obedience from wife and daughters, they are asserting that as in the case of ownership and control of family possessions, this right does not depend on merit. Mr Harlowe is

1. Vol I Letter XXVII p 124 (1.24).

obviously his wife's inferior in birth, intellect and disposition, but he asserts, as do his brothers, that it is his right to be obeyed by her in everything. His attitude to Clarissa, which is one of pride and affection whilst he can see her merely as an ornament to the family, changes into implacable hostility when he realises that she cannot be treated as a valuable possession and traded off or retained at will.

Clarissa's willingness to make over her estate to her father's control helps to quieten the agitation which he feels at the idea of a challenge to the system of male/parental ownership and authority. She gives her reasons for surrendering it in Letter XLX :-

'I found jealousies and uneasiness rising in every breast, where all before was unity and love: the honoured testator was reflected upon: a second childhood was attributed to him and I was censured, as having taken advantage of it.'

(Vol I Letter XLX p 92 (1.19))

She goes on to suggest that a wish for independence in her might suggest a greed for power, and that if she were to claim the independence within her reach, she might antagonise her family whose protection she still needs. This recognition is one of the grand ironies of the novel: Clarissa, superior to the other Harlowes in a way which makes words like duty, obedience and prerogative grotesque, nevertheless, in virtue of the system under which she, and everyone else in the world of the novel lives, really and desperately needs the protection of her family. Her account of her action is permeated by the sense that independence of her family must mean isolation from them: she feels that they would no longer be available as the social protectors which any young woman needs, no matter how great her own abilities. Given the intensity of her father's resentment of her legacy, she is probably right to fear that he would withdraw his protection if he felt that she was asserting her independence, but although she does not explicitly state that she has understood that her family can only bear

her excellence if they are able to regard her as their possession, completely at their disposal, the reader can perceive this is so and can foresee the conflict which must ensue.

She is able to assuage, for the moment, her father's fears that she will claim independence but as we, during the exchange of letters between her and Miss Howe, become increasingly aware of her superiority, we understand that a clash between her and the rest of her family is inevitable. The problem will arise, we realise, from her own awareness that she is better able to judge right and wrong than her elders: there must come a moment when she will be obliged to insist on moral independence, that is, the right to judge for herself. Predictably, the moment comes when her family tries to choose a husband for her.

The string of suitors whom Clarissa has already refused remind us that marriage will present her with great difficulties, since like her family, she believes that it is the duty of a wife to be obedient to her husband and to prefer his judgement to her own. Anna Howe points out that Clarissa is likely to be addressed only by her inferiors, whose baseness prevents them from understanding how unworthy they are to become the husband and, *ipso facto*, the superior of Clarissa. But the fact that the Harlowes fix on Solmes, physically repulsive, of low intelligence, education and moral character, has special meanings. James and Arabella Harlowe, afraid of being 'out-uncled' as they have been 'out-grandfathered' begin to 'cabal' against their sister, as Mrs Harlowe puts it, as early as Letter V. When Solmes first makes his proposals, they see that if they can prevail on their father to insist that Clarissa accept him, they stand to benefit in one of two ways. The likeliest thing is that she will be obliged to accept him, in which case she will be removed from the family circle in which her very presence, they feel, endangers their prospects of inheritance, and they no doubt hope that Solmes's enormous wealth will make their uncles think it unnecessary to enrich him further by

leaving legacies to Clarissa. His obvious demerits, which will make him an unattractive son and nephew-in-law, will probably cancel out Clarissa's merits in the eyes of the elder Harlowes — Mrs Solmes will never have the claims on them that Clarissa Harlowe has. But if Clarissa proves determined not to marry Solmes she will be absolutely cast out of her family's favour, since her father and uncles can be relied on to insist on their right to dispose of her as they wish. In the eyes of James and Arabella, therefore, Solmes's grotesque appearance¹ and unpleasant character qualify him for the role they offer him.

Mr. Harlowe's reasons for insisting on Solmes seem to be related to those of the brother and sister, but they are not the same. He tells Clarissa,² 'I will be obeyed! I have no child, I will have no child but an obedient one.' There is no doubt that having made Clarissa's acceptance of Solmes a necessary proof that she accepts her obligation to obey her father in everything, he cannot recede from this stand. It is partly the manoeuvring of Arabella and James which has trapped him into this position and his unwillingness to meet Clarissa after his ultimatum to her, when she arrives back from her visit to Anna Howe — an unwillingness which continues until she leaves his house finally — shows that there is a conflict in him between his insistence on his rights as a father and his love for his daughter. Clarissa herself is aware of this and reflects, after she has left Harlowe Place with Lovelace,³ that she might have been able to win her parents round had she met them face to face, even at the last moment before her marriage. But despite his love and pride in his daughter, Mr Harlowe is a gloomy, jealous man (Clarissa, as his child

1. He is described for us by Anna Howe in Vol I Letter XXVII p 126 (1.27).

2. Vol I Letter VII p 36 (1.8).

3. Vol I Letter XCV p 474 (2.49).

cannot give us a full or accurate account of his defects, but Anna Howe is able and willing to censure him, and his behaviour to his wretched wife, as well as the parental curse which he pronounces on Clarissa are sufficiently indicative). She is his beloved child, but she has challenged, however unintentionally, the system which entitles him to wealth and power. His father's will made him first aware of this challenge, but once made aware of it, the presence of Clarissa in his household must make him doubt increasingly that age and maleness are the characteristics which confer the right to rule. Her abilities are always causing her to be offered power, for everyone's sake: she administers the household, although she has a mother and an elder sister. It is significant that the household keys are taken from her as soon as her opposition to her father's will is taken seriously¹ because it must be made plain to her that she has no power beyond what her father allows her. But the moral stature which even her contemporaries recognise confers on her a power which cannot be taken from her: Anna Howe's tone, in almost every letter, contains respect and deference to her friend as well as affection; she says several times that their acquaintance regard Clarissa as an authority on proper behaviour and her family know that if they are to escape public censure whilst they are putting pressure on her to marry Solmes, they must forbid her to appear in public, where her very appearance will plead for her. Mr Harlowe is made inescapably aware that Clarissa's qualities are superior and that they make absolute obedience and dependence on his favour appear absurd for her.

Clarissa herself loses no opportunity to affirm her respect for her father and her willingness to obey him in all possible matters, but she makes it clear (though with no conscious intention of criticising him) that this willingness is not related to any sense that he is fitter to

1. Vol I Letter XXI p 108 (1.21)

judge than she—'I am convinced that whether the parent do his duty by the child or not, the child cannot be excused from doing hers to him',¹ she says. On these terms, obedience becomes an affirmation of her dutifulness, with no necessary relationship to any merit of her father's. The only satisfactory affirmation which Clarissa could make that she regarded her father as superior to herself, and the patriarchal order which he represents as good and reasonable, would be her willingness to allow him to choose a husband for her. It seems likely that Solmes's defects appeal to Mr Harlowe, in that they make marriage to him the most complete testimony of filial obedience possible for Clarissa, who is by no means unwilling to allow her father to choose for her. Her sense of her own inexperience in the world, and of the necessary difficulties which modesty and those rules of conduct which stem ultimately from the high value placed on female chastity, prevent her from wishing to negotiate a marriage for herself. We are to see in Volume II that once Clarissa has left her family, marriage becomes almost impossible for her, because it involves so many arrangements which a modest woman cannot make for herself. She cannot even allow herself to get to know Lovelace—anything approaching intimacy would be wrong and dangerous for her without the protection of her family—whereas in a family situation, the intimate knowledge of her suitor necessary before a marriage could be agreed on, would be acquired by a male protector—her father, uncle or brother.

At this stage in the novel, Clarissa does not articulate her value for chastity, and we are as yet unaware of the way in which it will conflict with the other absolute necessity of her character, that she be a free moral agent: she is merely trying, at this point, to allow her father to make a choice for her to which she can freely consent,

1. Vol I Letter LV p 280 (2.10).

as her envy of Anna Howe, whose mother has chosen an acceptable husband for her, shows.

'Adieu, my happy, thrice happy Miss Howe, who have no hard terms affixed to your duty! Who have nothing to do, but to fall in with a choice your mother has made for you, to which you have not, nor can have, a just objection: except the frowardness of our sex, as our free censurers would perhaps take the liberty to say, makes it one, that the choice was your mother's, at first hand. Perverse nature, we know, loves not to be prescribed to; although youth is not so well qualified, either by sedateness or experience, to choose for itself.'

(Vol I Letter LXXIII p 360 (2.28))

Clarissa, as this passage makes clear, does not feel that one must be romantically in love with a prospective husband, for Anna Howe does not love Hickman — her strongest feeling for him at this period is amused irritation. She feels, we can see, that it is Anna's duty to marry the man whom her mother has chosen for her because she has no 'just objection' to him, a phrase to which other letters to her friend give exact meaning. In her view, a child has no right to choose for herself. If her own father had chosen a man who though unattractive to her (Anna Howe's description of Hickman on pages 242 and 243 makes it clear that he is absolutely without sexual attraction for her) was morally acceptable, she would have agreed to marry him. Her explanation of why it is impossible for her to marry Solmes shows how well she understands the contradictions inherent in the position of a woman who is married to a man morally and intellectually her inferior.

'As to getting over my disgusts to Mr. Solmes, it is impossible to be done; while he wants generosity, frankness of heart, benevolence, manners, and every qualification that distinguishes a worthy man. O my dear! what a degree of patience, what a greatness of soul is required in a wife, not to despise a husband who is more ignorant, more illiterate, more low-minded, than herself? The wretch, vested with prerogatives, who will claim rule in virtue of them (and not to permit

whose claim, will be as disgraceful to the prescribing wife, as to the governed husband); how shall such a husband as this be borne, were he, for reasons of convenience and interest, even to be our CHOICE? But, to be compelled to have such a one, and that compulsion to arise from motives as unworthy of the prescribers as of the prescribed, who can think of getting over an aversion so justly founded? How much easier to bear the temporary persecution I labour under, because temporary, than to resolve to be such a man's for life? Were I to comply, must I not leave my relations, and go to him? A month will decide the one: but what a duration of woe will the other be! Every day, it is likely, rising to witness to some new breach of an altar-vowed duty!'

(Vol I Letter LV11 p 287 (2.12))

Clarissa's tragic dilemma lies in the fact that she, like her father, believes in the patriarchal system with which her own nature is in conflict. Obviously superior to her parents, she believes that she has a religious duty to obey them, but she can nevertheless see the inconsistency in the idea of a religious duty to marry the man whom they have chosen, when his character is such that obedience to him (also a duty) will probably involve her in the commission of sin. She tries to compromise with her conscience and with her parents' wishes by offering never to marry without their consent, and later by offering to remain single forever, but her father is not to be satisfied with compromises — both these offers contain the assertion that he may not dispose of her as he wishes.

In Richardson's letters during and after the composition of *Clarissa* he has nothing but praise for his heroine's willingness to obey her parents in all that is not sinful; he does not, outside the novel, seem to regard submissiveness as having any other meaning than virtue, and submissiveness to the degree shown by Clarissa is regarded by him as heroically virtuous. In so far as the novel is a tragedy and Clarissa herself a tragic heroine, her willingness to submit to her parents is seen in the same way in the novel: her struggle to reconcile her duty to herself

and her duty to her parents, though always doomed to failure, is heroic. But we are not allowed, within the novel, to regard with uncritical admiration an exceptionally gifted woman's attempts to submit herself to the rule of her mediocre elders. Richardson has been able to investigate the meanings and implications of female submissiveness and female excellence through three other female figures, Anna Howe, Mrs Harlowe and Arabella Harlowe, all of whom interact with and compare themselves with Clarissa.

It may be most helpful to begin with the simplest case, Arabella, Clarissa's plain, commonplace elder sister. As the Preamble to her grandfather's will makes clear, Clarissa has outshone both her siblings since she was a tiny child: the unfortunate Arabella has not even had the compensation of knowing herself the only son and natural heir to the largest share of the family property, as her brother has — it is very significant that she is on bad terms with James as well as with Clarissa until their grandfather's will shakes his confidence as to his rights to be the main heir, and their uncles' growing interest in Clarissa shows that they too are questioning his claim to be their 'natural' heir.

Lovelace's courtship of Arabella (which we learn in Vol I Letter XXL, (1.31) was the result of a mistake of her uncle's, who misunderstood his wishes and introduced him to the elder sister instead of the younger) seems to have offered the kind of reassurance about her attractions which she needed, and which might have freed her from her painful jealousy and resentment against Clarissa. Clarissa describes to Anna Howe her sister's behaviour during the brief period of Lovelace's courtship of her.

'My sister made me a visit there the day after Mr. Lovelace had been introduced, and seemed highly pleased with the gentleman. His birth, his fortune in possession — a clear two thousand pounds a year — as Lord M, had assured my uncle; presumptive heir to that nobleman's large estate; his great expectations from Lady Sarah Sadleir and Lady Betty Lawrance who with

his uncle interested themselves very warmly (he being the last of his line) to see him married.

"So handsome a man!— O her beloved Clary! (for then she was ready to love me dearly, from the overflowing of her good humour on his account!) "He was but *too* handsome a man for *her*! Were she but as amiable as *somebody*, there would be a probability of *holding* his affections!— For he was wild, she heard; *very* wild, very gay; loved intrigue. But he was young; *a man of sense*: would see his error, could she but have patience with his faults, if his faults were not cured by marriage."

Thus she ran on; and then wanted me "to see the charming man" as she called him. Again concerned, "that she was not handsome enough for him"; with, "a sad thing, that the man should have the advantage of the woman in that particular!"— But then, stepping to the glass she complimented herself, "That she was very *well*: that there were many women deemed passable who were inferior to herself: that she was always thought comely; and her comeliness, let her tell me, having not so much to lose as Beauty had, would hold, when that would evaporate or fly off. Nay, for that matter" (and again she turned to the glass), "her features were not irregular: her eyes not at all amiss." And I remember they were more than usually brilliant at that time.— "Nothing, in short, to be found fault with, though nothing very engaging, she doubted— was there, Clary?"

Excuse me, my dear, I never was thus particular before; no, not to you. Nor would I now have written thus freely of a sister, but that she makes a merit to my brother of disowning that she ever like him, as I shall mention hereafter...'

(Vol I Letter 11 pp 4,5 (1.2))

On Clarissa's side there is undoubtedly an awareness of her superiority, mental and physical, as well as a will to present her sister's folly and vulgarity in a fulness of detail which will itself be a defence against the charges of over-assertiveness and hypocrisy which her sister brings against her.

Though Arabella is obviously intrigued by Lovelace's good looks and dashing reputation, it is of his birth,

riches and expectations she speaks first. That a rich man, heir to a nobleman, should address her, means that her merits are being recognised in terms of her prospective husband's income and status, as Clarissa's were by her grandfather's legacy. But what is most striking in view of Arabella's manner of speech and behaviour in the rest of the novel, is the affectionate enthusiasm of her tone to her sister. Clarissa's comment tells us that it is far from being her usual manner, and in fact we are to see Arabella gradually deteriorating in her behaviour to her sister from insolent taunting to hysterical anger. For the moment, however, fancying that she has been preferred to Clarissa by a rich and sexually attractive man, she can be affectionate — can even wish openly that she was as pretty and charming as her younger sister. She is eager to display her prize to Clarissa, and one has the sense that she is asking for her sister's reassurance that, plain and ordinary as she is, she really does merit Lovelace. The way in which she comforts herself before the looking-glass with the thought that she is not actually repulsive and begs her sister to agree with her shows the degree of self-doubt which her younger sister's superiority has produced in her and the curious relationship of resentment together with dependence on Clarissa's approval which exists on her side. This account of their conversation is written by Clarissa when the two sisters are once again on bad terms, because Lovelace, having received what Clarissa calls 'a good encouraging denial'¹ from Arabella, has deliberately misunderstood the hint and has transferred his attentions to the younger sister. But although her irony at her sister's expense belongs to a later period, it is clearly far more typical of their relationship than is Arabella's friendliness and willingness to acknowledge her sister as her superior.

During the period of Lovelace's courtship of her,

1. Vol I Letter II p 8 (1.2).

Arabella is able to feel, no doubt for the only time in her life, that she has been preferred to her sister by someone whose preferences can be valued: we have the impression that she is becoming reconciled to her own limitations, as well as to her sister's exceptional qualities, because of her prospect of marriage to Lovelace. Such a marriage would, however it turned out, (and she is obviously aware that it would have its dangers) be concrete evidence of one important victory over her sister, and it would at the same time preclude further comparisons between them: they would be members of different families, one a married woman and the other still an unmarried girl, and could not be considered on the same footing.

The fact that we receive Clarissa's account of her sister's behaviour, when their relationship has deteriorated and Arabella has already begun to 'cabal' with James against her, prevents us from responding sympathetically to the predicament of the elder sister overshadowed in all respects by her junior. Later in the novel, Arabella explains in a fury the humiliation which she and her brother have felt as they were outshone by their younger sister.

'You are *indeed* a very artful one for that matter, interrupted she in a passion: one of the artfullest I ever knew! And then followed an accusation so low! so unsisterly! That I half bewitched people by my insinuating address: that nobody could be valued or respected, but must stand like cyphers wherever I came. How often, said she, have I and my brother been talking upon a subject, and had everybody's attention till *you* came in with your bewitching *meek* pride, and *humble* significance; and then have we either been stopped by references to Miss Clary's opinion, forsooth; or been forced to stop ourselves, or must have talked on unattended to by everybody. She paused. Dear Bella, proceed! She indeed seemed only gathering breath. And so I will, said she. Did you not bewitch my grandfather? Could anything be pleasing to him that *you* did not say or do? How did he use to hang, till he slabbered again, poor dotting old man! on your silver tongue! Yet what did *you* say, that *we* could not have said? What did

you do that we did not endeavour to do? And what was all this for? Why, truly, his last will showed what effect your smooth obligingness had upon him! To leave the acquired part of his estate from the next heirs, his own sons, to a grandchild; to his youngest grandchild! a daughter too! To leave the family pictures from his sons to you, because you could tiddle about them, and though you now neglect their examples, could wipe and clean them with your dainty hands! The family plate, too, in such quantities of two or three generations standing, must not be changed, because his precious child, humouring his old fal-lal taste, admired it to make it all her own. This was too low to move me: O my poor sister! said I: not to be able, or at least willing, to distinguish between Art and Nature. If I did oblige, I was happy in it: I looked for no further reward: my mind is above art, from the dirty motive you mention.'

(Vol I Letter XL11 pp 215,216 (1.42))

It is again the accusation of natural superiority which is being brought against Clarissa: in the position of youngest child, second daughter, she is intolerable to her siblings. Her social gifts, her intellect and her beauty inevitably exact deference from outsiders, in the same way as her family virtues entitled her, in her grandfather's eyes, to inherit his estate.

Once again, it is Clarissa's report on Arabella's behaviour that we are receiving, and her verbatim account naturally shows her wish that Miss Howe should acquit her of the charge of artful behaviour. Indeed, the anger and jealousy apparent in Arabella's manner goes far to discredit her charge that Clarissa has schemed to outdo her brother and sister on purpose to cheat them out of an estate. The real grievance which Arabella holds against her is, as we know, far more serious — it is that Clarissa is naturally and irresistibly superior — that the position of younger sister in a rigidly-structured family like the Harlowes is impossible for her. Overconscious of rank and precedence of all kinds, and especially that of age, the Harlowes require her to regard herself as James's and Arabella's inferior, whereas in fact, not all the deference

which she attempts to offer them can disguise her awareness of her superiority, which they themselves equally feel. When writing to her brother, she remarks on the fact that his greater educational opportunities have not made him her superior: her frequent citing of her sister's speeches is intended to draw attention to the latter's essential meanness and vulgarity. Similarly, in her letters which portray her brother and sister in a framework of writing which reveals her own qualities, she proves their point for them, that she is an intolerable younger sister in such a family.

It cannot be suggested, within the novel, that the Harlowe family is at fault, and that a less rigidly hierarchical organization within a family would allow for the existence of a Clarissa, even in its lowest rank. Inside the world of the novel, no other scheme of family organization exists. The nature of parents is to rule and of children to be ruled and though a verdict is passed against Mr Harlowe because he exercises authority untempered by love, the problem of his inability to judge better than his youngest child is seen as having no solution; certainly, the idea of his allowing any real degree of freedom is discarded, because society outside the family is organized in a way which makes freedom even more dangerous to women than control. It is absolutely necessary that the family should be structured, therefore, in a way which vests money in the hands of males who can deal with the world, or failing males, in the hands of women beyond the age of sexual attraction like Mrs Howe. Such a structure will place power in the hands of guardians, as it does money, for women cannot deal directly with the world outside the family. The dreadful irony of this part of the novel is that Clarissa will find that all these assumptions, which undermine her very essence, are tragically true: her final discovery confirms her sister's complaint — she is indeed an impossible person in her world.

Mrs Harlowe, whom Clarissa reveres as a mother, and

also loves for her own virtues — her intelligence, her sensitivity and the generous sympathy for her husband's ill-health which is at least part of her reason for giving in to him — is even more important than Arabella in the way in which she illuminates Clarissa's character. Clarissa speaks in Letter V of 'the superiority of her fine talents' and says to Anna Howe, "I know you do not love any of us but my mother and me'. It is clear that Clarissa inherits her mother's talents as well as her sensitivity, and it is the likeness between the two which accounts for Anna Howe's respect and affection for Mrs Harlowe. Unlike her younger daughter, however, Mrs Harlowe has completely surrendered the right to judge independently, and it is through her that the principle of absolute obedience from wife to husband is tested. We are told in Letter V that Mr Harlowe is 'impatient of contradiction'. Clarissa cannot, without sinning against filial duty, comment in particular on his ill-treatment of her mother, but when she generalises in this context on conjugal behaviour, it is clear that she is thinking of her own parents.

'Our sex perhaps must expect to bear a little *uncourtliness* shall I call it? — from the *husband* whom as the *lover* they let know the preference their hearts gave him to all other men. — Say what they will of generosity being a *manly* virtue; but upon my word, my dear, I have ever yet observed that it is not to be met with in that sex one time in ten that it is to be found in ours. But my father was soured by the cruel distemper I have named, which seized him all at once in the very prime of life...'

(Vol I Letter V p 23 (1.5))

We are shown from the first that Mrs Harlowe's resemblance to her daughter allows her to understand her as no one else in the family can, and to appreciate her reasons for refusing to marry Mr Solmes; indeed in Letter VII, Clarissa says of her '... on his first being proposed she was pleased to say that had Mr Solmes the Indies in his possession and would endow me with them she should not