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“A Geometry of His Own”: Richardson and the Marriage-Ending

JOHN ALLEN STEVENSON

John Herschel first popularized the story of wedding bells for Pamela in an address he gave at Eton in 1833. As he told the story then,

The blacksmith of [a] village had got hold of Richardson's . . . *Pamela* . . . and used to read it aloud in the long summer evenings, seated on his anvil, and never failed to have a large and attentive audience. . . . At length, when the happy turn of fortune arrived, which brings the hero and heroine together . . . —the congregation were so delighted as to raise a great shout, and procuring the church keys, actually set the church bells ringing.¹

Whether true or not, this anecdote represents one of the great spontaneous tributes to the power and pleasure of the traditional finale of so many stories—a wedding. But our delight in the tale may lead us to forget the fact that those villagers still had almost half the novel yet to hear. Ian Watt may be right about the tradition when he says that Richardson solved the problem of form for the novel by basing *Pamela* on “single action, a courtship,” but he is wrong about Richardson's first novel.² In fact, nowhere does Richardson give his readers a marriage-ending—not in the comic *Pamela*, not in the tragic *Clarissa*, and not in *Sir Charles Grandison*, even though both the first and the last of these have as their central interest getting a certain man and woman to the altar.

The controversy over the ending of *Clarissa*—many readers begging the novelist for a happy ending, Richardson stubbornly refusing—is well known,³ but his refusal to use the convention of a

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concluding marriage in his other novels is curious and merits examination too. What Richardson achieves, I think, in so unconventionally crossing the matrimonial barrier is a consistency of feeling between his apparently comic fictions and his tragic masterpiece, *Clarissa*. The suspicion he evinces towards human sexuality in his greatest work is no less present in *Pamela* and *Grandison*, and that suspicion is revealed, at least in part, by the way he manipulates the structure we usually find in courtship stories (where a concluding wedding is essential) in order to undermine their typical satisfactions.

At the outset, we have to distinguish between Richardson's rejection of the marriage-ending and the abandonment of the convention by serious novelists later in the history of the genre. Henry James has some famous remarks about what he considers the absurdity of the traditional happy ending, with its final distribution of "prizes, pensions, husbands, wives," and he calls upon the novelist to discover closure, not conventionally, but by a "geometry of his own."⁴ And indeed, the modern mind has felt uncomfortable with what it sees as the artificially-closed vision of experience that a concluding marriage represents, and has favored—in its serious literature, anyway—endings that either acknowledge the loose ends of existence or that draw direct attention to the artificial nature of literary closure. But I don't think that we should regard the unconventional endings of *Pamela* and *Sir Charles Grandison* as indications that Richardson was a prophet of Jamesian realism. The history of the novel may indeed be a history of anti-novels, as Frank Kermode asserts,⁵ but Richardson's novels do not, as I hope to show, reject the marriage-ending because they wish to promote some anachronistically modern notion of "openness."

Richardson himself never speaks directly to the issue of the endings of *Pamela* and *Grandison* (*Clarissa*, of course, is another story), but we can get a glimpse of his thinking, perhaps, in a remark of Charlotte Grandison's: "The French only are proud of sentiments at this day; the English cannot bear them: Story, story, story is what they hunt after, whether sense or nonsense, probable or improbable."⁶ "Sentiments" here, as the modern editor of *Grandison* reminds us, means "maxims,"⁷ and the testiness of this remark betrays, I think, Richardson's conviction that the didactic demands of his art are somehow at odds with shapeliness of narrative form. As we will see, Richardson uses the postnuptial section of his first novel in a number of ways, but it is undeniable that a great deal of it is taken up with explicit instruction of one kind or another—rules of good

housewifery or the kind of self-congratulatory catalogue of Pamela's virtues so aptly summarized by Shamela's remark: "and so we sat down and talked about my vartue till dinner-time."⁸ But, of course, there is no necessary opposition between didacticism and a formal impulse, between teaching a lesson and telling a story—even if Richardson told himself that there was. The question remains, if Richardson writes stories in which the primary impulse is to marry a central couple, why does he so sedulously avoid the marriage-ending?⁹

The crucial question is, what—besides instruct—does Richardson do in the space he creates by entering a post-nuptial world in his fictions? It seems to me that he uses that fictional space to undermine or even destroy the satisfactions the marriage-ending usually gives us, especially (though not only) the kind of implicit erotic release a concluding wedding affords. Northrop Frye has persuasively argued that a concluding marriage offers its audience an image of a restored social order or reintegrated sense of identity. After a period of confusion or injustice, the world is made right again, and a wedding (or weddings) ritually suggest this renewal of order.¹⁰ Less symbolically, it seems to me that the wedding-ending also provides a more direct erotic satisfaction, because marriage, while a useful and resonant image of social order, is also an institution which allows people to satisfy their sexual natures. The "happily ever after" conclusion implies the possibility of a stable order, but the phrase also clearly suggests erotic joy. Such a hint is usually tacit, but not always, as the ending of *Tom Jones*, which delivers Sophia to the "eager arms" of an "enraptured" hero, testifies.¹¹

We can also regard the importance of the marriage-ending historically. As Lawrence Stone among others has argued, marital happiness had taken on a new importance in the eighteenth century, especially in England.¹² The shift from a marriage based on the interests of the family (whether economic, political, or whatever) to marriages based on the mutual affection of the partners undoubtedly gave a new importance to this traditional device of narrative closure. In many minds, marriage represented this world's supreme felicity, and the number of early (and later) novels that relied on a wedding to conclude used the convention not only for its metaphoric pleasures but because it directly expressed one of the culture's strongest convictions—that a proper mate could be found and could help guarantee happiness.

The satisfactions that the marriage-ending provides are largely created by the overall structure of such courtship narratives, not just

by their conclusions, and it is the total structure that Richardson manipulates. By "courtship narrative" I mean any story—not just novels—in which there is a primary love-interest that leads up to a marriage,¹³ and such stories are always structured around obstacles. These obstacles—family opposition, for example, or rivals, or physical distance—separate two people who wish to unite, or whom we think should unite. Frye says that the "obstacles to the hero's desire . . . form the action of the comedy,"¹⁴ an insight that tends to obscure the fact that, in a profound way, those same obstacles also constitute his desire. They are both the source of his desire and an image of it, as Socrates' remark in *The Symposium* reminds us: "everyone . . . who feels desire, desires what is not in his present power or possession, and desire and love have for their objects things or qualities which a man does not at present possess but which he lacks."¹⁵ Desire is necessarily predicated on what a man "lacks," and one function of the obstacles in these narratives is to be a continual reminder of this fact. Obstacles also serve to remind the audience of the true subject matter of these stories. For the desire imaged by obstacles is generally displaced from any overt sexuality. The struggle against obstacles is analogous to sexual longing, but usually takes the form of a battle with nonsexual problems—matters of class, family, and the like. An erotic impetus, in other words, is masked by a surface propriety. The result, to take only one example out of many, is a world like Jane Austen's where sexuality is both nowhere directly discernible, and yet everywhere at once. And since obstacles are an image of desire, the concluding wedding which frees the lovers from the bondage of their struggle also has the effect of an erotic release. However sublimated, the structure of courtship narrative is finally sexual—desire and release. And by making happy consummation their last image, such stories imply that such pleasure is somehow permanent.¹⁶

But Richardson never allows a wedding, with all this joyfully erotic freight, to be his last image, and we see confirmed in his manipulations of the structure of his courtships the old Aristotelean dictum that, after intercourse, all animals are sad. In both *Pamela* and *Grandison*, the action after the weddings works specifically to break down any idea we might have of marriage as an image of sexual fulfillment—although, as we shall see, the two novels subvert that image in very different ways.

Pamela inverts the structure we have seen above and thoroughly violates its emotional satisfactions. If we look at the "courtship"

phase of Pamela and Mr. B's relationship—that is, the period usually taken up with the displaced eroticism of the struggle against obstacles—what we find is overt sexuality. In *Tom Jones*, while there is a good bit of sexual activity, sex is something outside Tom and Sophia's relationship, until, as we have seen, the end of the novel. In fact, the hero and heroine spend very little time together and the focus is on the forces—family, rumor, rivals, distance—that separate them. In *Pamela*, by contrast, our attention from the beginning is on the heroine and her pursuer together, not apart, and his four attempts at rape constitute the action of this part of the narrative. Attempted rape, or its contemplation, is their courtship. But if sex is all this couple has on their minds before they wed, we note that when Richardson so unconventionally crosses the matrimonial barrier, they seem to forget about sex altogether. In other words, the tacit fantasy of a permanent happy sexual life that the marriage-ending encourages disappears when we enter this suddenly sexless world, a postmarital fiction.

And what does Richardson substitute for sex? Besides instruction, he fills the pages after the wedding with precisely the kinds of difficulties that constitute the *prenuptial* section of the typical courtship narrative. Only after Pamela and Mr. B are married does the classic blocking character (as Frye says, usually a "heavy father" or his substitute¹⁷) make an appearance. Lady Davers, nearly apoplectic in her opposition to her nephew's marriage to a servant, is a typical figure in the plots of courtship (one thinks especially of *Pride and Prejudice*'s Lady Catherine de Bourgh), but here she appears only after the wedding. She even goes so far as to enforce the usual blockade, imprisoning Pamela ("But thou shalt not stir from my presence," etc.¹⁸) in the manner of every *senex iratus*. But her action is hollow, for she locks Pamela in her own husband's house. Similarly, B's former mistress, Sally Godfrey, occupies the familiar place in courtships of the apparent rival whose threat turns out to be trivial or nonexistent. And before the threat disappears, Pamela frets as we expect her to: "And, foolish thing that I am, this poor Miss Sally Godfrey runs in my head!" (pp. 456-57). Again, however, this typically prenuptial danger asserts itself (and disappears) only after the wedding. Given the way these kinds of obstacles usually constitute the *courtship* phase of the narrative, we might almost think Richardson had anticipated Squire Western's comment: "People may court very well after they have been a-bed-together" (p. 800). But the effect in *Pamela*, while comic, is also in fact rather

dark. Instead of a displaced erotic frustration followed by a fulfillment that works to imply its own permanence, there is an explicit portrayal of premarital sexual violence and frustration followed, not by any release, but by exactly the kinds of difficulties that commonly signal thwarted desire. Courtship narratives afford us both frustration and satisfaction, and in that happy order, but *Pamela* offers only different kinds of frustration—explicitly sexual before marriage, implicitly so afterwards. Richardson's manipulation of the typical literary structure of courtship, in other words, gives rise to the sense that erotic satisfaction is impossible.¹⁹

The wedding of Sir Charles Grandison and Harriet occurs proportionately later than do the nuptials in *Pamela*, but about a sixth of the novel—amounting to a half a volume in the Oxford edition—remains when we reach that long-delayed occasion. Richardson contrives here to use this lengthy postwedding section in order to subvert two different kinds of satisfactions that we expect from courtship narratives, both erotic fulfillment and social harmony. Near the end of the novel, commenting on the fact that virtually every woman in the book is hopelessly in love with Sir Charles, one character vividly sums up this novel's thwarted universe: "as there is but *one* Sir Charles Grandison in the world, were his scheme of Protestant Nunneries put in execution, all the rest of womankind, who had seen him with distinction, might retire into cloisters" (3:396). This monumentally chaste hero is a kind of sexual oxymoron, possessed as he is of an attractiveness that finally works to de-eroticize, rather than arouse, the women he knows. And it is this power, to send women at least symbolically into the cloister, that Richardson lingers over in the long postnuptial section of the novel as we watch case after case of female despair—especially of course Clementina (who, as a Catholic, can literally take the veil), and his ward, Emily Jervois. This paragon, "for whom so many virgin hearts have sighed in vain" (3:68), becomes a male version of the woman of epic virtue whom Steele describes in *Tatler* 126, a Diana who boasted that she had "not only the spirit of continency in herself, but that she had the power of communicating it to all who beheld her. This, the scoffers of those days called, 'The gift of infrigidation.'" If, as I contend, Richardson is writing what amounts to anticourtship narratives, then Grandison is the anti-courtship hero *par excellence*, a glittering image of the endlessly unattainable.

If the postnuptial section of *Pamela* is taken up with the kind of obstacles that usually herald frustration, the concluding letters of

Grandison are marked by a prevailing spirit, not only of frustration, but sacrifice. Sir Charles's sister, Charlotte, sets the tone when she comments, in the midst of her description of her brother's wedding: "After all . . . , we women, dressed out in ribbands, and gaudy trappings, and in Virgin-white, on our Wedding days, seem but like milk-white heifers led to sacrifice" (3:236). But in *Grandison*, women are not the only ones whose sexuality is bound up with sacrifice. The concluding section of Richardson's last novel is dominated by sacrifice and compromise—and for both sexes. We see here not only the grief of Sir Charles's unrequited lovers, but the teeth-gnashing of Harriet's frustrated suitors—Orme, Greville, Pollexfen, Fowler. But these frustrations are peripheral, for there is sacrifice involved even in *Grandison* and Harriet's union. Harriet, unlike all those potential Protestant nuns, does get the hero, but she never quite escapes the fear that she has only half his heart, and that Clementina, his first love, will forever possess the rest. He, in turn, takes Harriet, but does so knowing that he had succeeded, at one point, in conquering his feeling for her in order that he might return to Italy and at least try to do the right thing by his prior, Catholic love. Indeed, the last section of the novel takes as its primary focus not the "happy, happy pair,"²⁰ but Clementina. At this stage, her fate (whether she will somehow reconcile herself to *Grandison*'s marriage, or be destroyed by her grief) is the only point of narrative interest left, and the effect is to focus our attention on her exclusion, rather than the inclusion of the central couple. And what all the lovers—Sir Charles and Harriet, Clementina, as well as their satellites—have in common is sacrifice.

Ultimately, I think, *Grandison* goes further than *Pamela* in its attack on the satisfactions we expect of courtship narratives. The telos of such stories does work toward inclusion: what was separated is brought together in an image of erotic and social harmony. Such harmony, as Frye points out, is often underlined by the device of multiple weddings, which he compares to couples pairing up for a dance.²¹ We can think again in this regard of *Tom Jones*, in which we move from a world in which virtually every character of importance is unmarried, to a harmonious one in which everyone has a mate (and even Blifil is courting a wealthy—and Methodist—widow). There are also multiple weddings in *Grandison*, and Frye's image is anticipated in a remark made by Emily to Harriet; describing the rush to the altar that occurs in the last pages of the novel, she tells her guardian's wife, "You, my dear Lady *Grandison*, have led up this dance" (3:443). Nonetheless, the effect of these weddings, as with Clementina, is one of exclusion. Everyone gets a partner only in the

act of giving up someone else—or being given up. *Grandison*, that is, not only undermines the erotic satisfactions of courtship narratives (like *Pamela*), it also subverts the marriage-ending as an image of social harmony. The many weddings we see as this novel slowly moves towards conclusion are all founded on an absence, on hearts open to union only because the original choice is not there. Each marriage or potential marriage at the end of *Grandison* is an image, not of the union of true minds, but of the divided heart: Grandison, as we have seen, split between Harriet and Clementina, Clementina torn between Grandison and Belvedere, Emily between Sir Charles and Beauchamp, and so on through the rest of the Grandisons' *salon des refusées*. In *Sir Charles Grandison*, Richardson again brings his central couple together, but his structural decision to put their wedding, as it were, out of place, has the total effect of transforming marriage from an image of harmony and pleasure into one of frustration and sacrifice.

There are several ways in which we can read the overall significance of Richardson's structural manipulations of courtship narrative in *Pamela* and *Sir Charles Grandison*. The first is metatextual, the second is political (sexual politics, specifically), and the third has to do with Richardson's own psychology. The latter interpretation is, to me, the most illuminating, but I want to comment briefly on the other possibilities, especially because they reflect trends that have dominated much of the recent work on Richardson.

In light of the analyses I have sketched above, we can in a real sense regard *Pamela* and *Grandison* as novels which are "about" courtship narrative. That is, by the way in which Richardson invokes the possibility of conventional structure (*Pamela* could end with a wedding) and then denies it, he exposes the convention as a convention, thus undermining it as a vehicle of representation. These novels thereby help us to understand that the wedding-ending has to do with readers, not with lovers, with wish-fulfillment, and not with reality. The disordering of reader expectation undeniably has this kind of metatextual effect, an effect that links these novels more closely to much of the recent commentary on *Clarissa*. Terry Castle and Terry Eagleton (and, before them by about a decade, John Preston) have described the ways in which *Clarissa* is significantly concerned with its own status as a text.²² But we would be mistaken, I think, if we took the metatextual interpretation of Richardson's structural maneuvers as the final or only one. For as we have seen, the impact of the postnuptial space in *Pamela* and *Grandison* is not—or

not only—an alienation effect. The concluding sections of these novels also invoke a series of dark emotions—frustration, sacrifice, denial—and the presence of such emotions (in both readers and characters) has a meaning beyond the solely textual.

But Castle and Eagleton are not only interested in meta-textual issues; they are both also interested in reading *Clarissa* as an important early moment in the history of feminism. For both critics, Clarissa's trials constitute a powerful indictment of the patriarchal order, an order that variously renders women speechless, that imposes meaning on them, and that involves them in a series of impossibly contradictory sexual demands.²³ Certainly, we can read the darker emotional overtones of the conclusions of *Pamela* and *Grandison* as further expressions of Richardson's *ur*-feminism. The structure I have called "courtship narrative" is also embedded in what Eagleton calls "romantic fiction," stories that displace women's suffering into a "consolatory myth" about marital happiness that "merely consolidates patriarchal power."²⁴ Since Richardson does deny the structure of courtship narrative, since he does enter a postnuptial world in his fiction and then darkens the color of that world, we can easily read this refusal of the marriage-ending convention as a repudiation of this myth. Marriage, that glamorized consolation held out to women by patriarchy, is simply *not* a world of "happily ever after," and Richardson makes that point by the structural manipulations that we have seen.

Both Castle and Eagleton insist that *Clarissa*'s prescient feminism is unique in Richardson, and in fact both attack *Pamela* specifically as an embodiment of myths about women that upholds the patriarchal order.²⁵ The reading I have suggested, then, has the virtue perhaps of uncovering a new feminist unity in Richardson's canon. But while Richardson's refusal to use the marriage-ending undoubtedly has implications for a feminist reading of his work, I am not sure that his deepest protest is directed against the treatment of women in his culture, however sensitive he was to their plight. It seems to me that his most profound dismay is provoked, not by the politics of sexual difference, but by the fact of human sexuality itself.

I said at the outset that Richardson's refusal to use the marriage-ending establishes a consistency of feeling between his two comic fictions and his tragic masterpiece, *Clarissa*. That consistency arises from his own psychology and centers around his suspicion of human sexuality. The loathing Richardson displays toward sex in *Clarissa* is well-known; Dorothy Van Ghent's description of it is as accurate

as any, and more eloquent than most: "as *Clarissa* formulates the love-myth, it becomes perverse, inasmuch as 'love' here is conceived so strangely and exclusively as physical violation, an act of stabbing or ripping, with no implication of any aspect of sexual passion except a passion to murder or be murdered."²⁶ The morbidity of sex in *Clarissa*—it literally kills²⁷—is distinctive to that novel; what the other novels add to Richardson's vision of sex is less gruesome but little more pleasant. In *Pamela*, as we have seen, we enter a world where frustration is preserved. Those villagers, in ringing the church bells, displayed a release of desire that the novel itself never grants—unless of course one stops reading at the point when Pamela and Mr. B do wed. *Grandison* extends an idea Richardson expounds in the "Conclusion" to *Clarissa*. The Harlowes, it seems, after their own reading of the novel (supplied to them by Morden in the form of the original letters) see their error, and understand finally "that [Clarissa], if any woman ever could, would have given a glorious instance of a passion conquered, or at least kept under, by reason and piety, the man being too immoral to be implicitly beloved."²⁸ And as he was finishing his last novel, Richardson wrote Lady Bradshaigh: "One of my great views in this piece is . . . to shew the Vincibility of that passion, wch. indulged, occasions so many disgraces to it, and so much unhappiness in families."²⁹ But in *Grandison* this "vincibility" has nothing to do, as it did in *Clarissa*, with the moral stature of the beloved object—just the opposite in fact. Characters must overcome their attraction to paragons like Harriet and Sir Charles, not to devils like Lovelace. Repression and sacrifice, "vincibility" in Richardson's terms, are not a matter of the particular moral situation, but an end in themselves. In *Sir Charles Grandison*, a novel of courtship with a happy ending, everybody learns to do without. Thus, while sex is a literal killer only in *Clarissa*, it comes across no better in Richardson's other novels: it is a source of frustration or something it amounts almost to our duty to conquer. And this doctrine in *Pamela* and *Grandison* is inseparable from the manner in which Richardson uses the unconventional postnuptial narrative space he has created for himself by not ending those fictions with a wedding.

Richardson's attitude towards sexuality has sometimes been described as "Puritan,"³⁰ but that explanation is finally inadequate. The Puritans, whatever their suspicions about sex, did not reject it (the unthinkable Roman Catholic alternative), but sought to harness it within marriage, and happy marriage at that. The development of what Stone calls the "companionate marriage" owes much to the

Puritans.³¹ As I have tried to demonstrate, Richardson's problems with sexuality extend much further than this condemnation of the license represented by an unreformed Mr. B or by a satanic Lovelace; they extend, in fact, into the marital sanctum itself. The problem is not with any doctrine that Richardson picked up from his culture, but is instead something in the man himself, a something he gives expression to in his writing. To try to reconstruct the source of his problems is beyond the scope of this essay, and what I have tried to outline instead are the artistic consequences of his sexual attitudes. The largest consequence, perhaps, is the contradictory position in which Richardson finds himself in relation to his fictions. Sex is all he writes about, but what he writes about sex is always couched in terms of prohibition, avoidance, violence, and frustration. Richardson's position is much like that of Plato's Leontius, in the *Republic*. Desiring to look at the executed criminals lying outside the city walls, but also violently repelled by his own desire, Leontius finally, after much struggle, rushes up to them, and cries out to his own "wide, staring" eyes, "There, ye wretches, take your fill of this fine spectacle."³² Richardson feels compelled to look at the world of human sexual behavior, but it seems he can only justify that compulsion by seeing that world always as something criminal and corrupt, as in *Clarissa*, or as frustrating and "vincible," as in *Pamela* and *Grandison*.

Before concluding, I would like to look at what seems to me to be one more structural consequence of Richardson's suspicion of sexuality. Not only does this suspicion lead him to spurn the marriage-ending, thus creating a space in which he can subvert its satisfactions, it is also perhaps the source of his near-refusal to end his novels at all. Writing itself, for Richardson, is the ultimate form of sexual avoidance.

We can see the opposition between sexuality and writing in his famous preference for epistolary relationships with his legion of female admirers; and we see it, perhaps surprisingly, in Lovelace, who—so long as he spins his plots and speculations—is actually doing nothing, and whose report of the rape is the shortest letter in all of Richardson's word-drunk fiction. The opposition of writing and sex is perhaps clearest, however, in *Pamela*, where the space between letters—the periods of silence—become fraught with sexual peril and possibility.

For instance, *Pamela* ends Letter XXV on a note of fear and uncertainty: "Perhaps I shall send this in the morning; but may-be

not, so won't conclude: though I can't say too often that I am (yet with great apprehensions), *Your most dutiful Daughter*." Her hesitancy to conclude seems bound up with her fears for her chastity, and the anxiety that thus attaches itself to the blank space at the end of the letter appears entirely justified by the opening of the next. It first appears that something terrible has filled that void: "O let me, my dear parents, take up my complaint, and say, Never was poor creature so barbarously used, as your Pamela!, . . . my heart is broken. . . . Wicked, wicked man! and yet, don't be frightened—for—I hope—I am honest" (pp. 92-93).³³ Until her somewhat artificially-delayed reassurance, we have been busy coloring in the blank space between the letters with the most lurid pictures. But her reassurance, delivered as it is before her account of the perilous episode, also has the effect of *confining* real danger to that empty space. Despite Richardson's claims to be writing to the moment, the epistolary form forces him to deliver, not continuous action in which the suspense builds, but a series of summaries. Thus, Pamela is always writing from the perspective of sexual danger fended off, *sub specie virginitas*, as it were. As long as Pamela is writing, all is well, and when we finally hear her account of B's latest outrage, we are already secure in the knowledge that she is still unravished. It is in the interstices of writing, in the space between letters that sexual danger lurks for Pamela—and for Richardson.

Perhaps we have here a clue to the endlessness of Richardson's novels, the fact that not only do they not end with a wedding, but that they almost do not end at all. Hazlitt is on to a central truth about Richardson when he remarks: "it is said, that the published works are mere abridgements. I have heard (though this I suspect must be a pleasant exaggeration) that Sir Charles Grandison was originally written in eight and twenty volumes."³⁴ There is a paradox at the heart of these endless narratives. As Kermode tells us, form—closure in particular—is one tool we have to keep the dark gods of chaos away. But one prominent form of closure—the marriage-ending—while it closes off experience in one way, also releases, as we have seen, a good bit of sexual energy. For Richardson, it seems that release was intolerable, and he ends up embracing one kind of chaos, his unbounded flow of writing, in order that he may somehow keep another—eros—at bay.

NOTES

¹Quoted by Alan Dugald McKillop, "Wedding Bells for Pamela," *PQ* 29 (April 1949):323.

²Ian P. Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, and London: Chatto and Windus, 1957), p. 135. Watt acknowledges (p. 149) that *Pamela* does not end with a wedding. He does want to insist, however, that the novel achieves its unity by centering on a courtship. I will argue, instead, that this fiction creates effects very different from those we usually find in narratives unified by a courtship, and those effects are attributable, in part, to Richardson's decision not to end his "single action" at the expected place.

³The best discussion of the controversy—who said what to whom, and what the consequences were—is William Beatty Warner's *Reading Clarissa: The Struggles of Interpretation* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1979).

⁴Quoted by Frank Kermode in *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), pp. 22, 176.

⁵Kermode, p. 131.

⁶Samuel Richardson, *The History of Sir Charles Grandison*, ed. Jocelyn Harris, 3 vols. (London and New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1972), 3:228. Further references are to this edition and will be noted in parentheses in the text.

⁷Harris makes this connection in an explanatory note on 3:479 of her edition of the novel. She argues there that Dr. Johnson was using the word "sentiment" in the same sense when he made his famous comment about the necessity of reading Richardson for "the sentiment" rather than "the story."

⁸Henry Fielding, *An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews*, ed. Martin Battestin (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961), p. 323.

⁹For more on the relation of didacticism and structure, see A. M. Kearney, "Richardson's *Pamela*: The Aesthetic Case," in *Samuel Richardson: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. John Carroll (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1969), pp. 23-38. According to Kearney, the novel has two, not always compatible, "voices," one that is directly experiential, and another which is distanced and didactic. What he calls the novel's "peculiar shape" is the result of the takeover of the latter voice in the concluding section of the book. See p. 37.

¹⁰Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1957), pp. 163-64, 193. Kermode's discussion of endings centers on the way that closure provides reassurance against the threat of contingency—"the sense of an ending" is another defeat of chaos by form. Like Frye, Kermode thus sees in the marriage-ending what he sees in all kinds of closure: the image of an order beyond itself.

¹¹Henry Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling*, Martin Battestin and Fredson Bowers, eds. (Middletown: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1975), p. 979. Further references are to this edition and are noted in parentheses in the text.

¹²Lawrence J. Stone, *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, and New York: Harper and Row, 1977). See especially pp. 135-36, and 325-404. Stone's belief in the rise of affectionate marriages has not been universally accepted. For one critique, see Alan MacFarlane's review of Stone in *History and Theory*, 18:1 (1979):103-26.

¹³I am thus distinguishing such stories from plots of adultery, in which the obstacles are created by some union (by definition, forbidden) rather than

preventing union. For instance, the difficulties in the way of Tristan and Iseult are almost never to their union (the point at which their story begins, rather than—as in courtship—the point towards which it is tending), but to making that union public. For adulterous plots, see Tony Tanner, *Adultery in the Novel: Contract and Transgression* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1979).

¹⁴Frye, p. 164.

¹⁵*The Symposium*, trans. Walter Hamilton (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1951), 200e, p. 77.

¹⁶This is the basis of E. M. Forster's objection to the marriage-ending, which he refers to as "that idiotic use of marriage as a finale." Readers, he says, acquiesce in the farce because it panders to their illusion that love "will be permanent." See his *Aspects of the Novel* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1955). Forster's complaints, of course, are based upon a rather narrowly verisimilar aesthetic. See pp. 38, 55. See also Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984). Brooks makes the point that *all* narrative is predicated on the energy of desire: "We can, then, conceive of the reading of plot as a form of desire that carries us forward . . . through the plot" (p. 37). See esp. ch. 2, "Narrative Desire." ch. 2, "Narrative Desire."

¹⁷Frye, pp. 164-65, 172.

¹⁸*Pamela*, ed. Peter Sabor (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), p. 418. Further references are to this edition and are noted in parentheses in the text.

¹⁹Two recent studies of *Pamela* differ from me in focusing on the triumphs of Pamela's post-marital experience, rather than on the darker aspects I have tried to identify here. See Catherine Flynn, *Samuel Richardson, A Man of Letters* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1982), p. 215, and Terry Castle, "P/B: *Pamela* as Sexual Fiction," *SEL* 22 (Summer 1982):486.

²⁰The phrase is from Dryden's "Alexander's Feast," one of Richardson's favorite poems. Richardson places the couplet in which it appears ("Happy, happy, happy pair! / None but the brave . . . deserves the fair!") in the mouth of Greville, one of Harriet's rejected suitors, as he gives up his claim to her.

²¹Frye, pp. 163-64.

²²Terry Castle, *Clarissa's Ciphers: Meaning and Disruption in Richardson's "Clarissa"* (Ithaca and London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1982); Terry Eagleton, *The Rape of Clarissa: Writing, Sexuality, and Class Struggle in Samuel Richardson* (Oxford and London: Basil Blackwell, 1982); and John Preston, *The Created Self: The Reader's Role in Eighteenth-Century Fiction* (New York: Barnes and Noble, and London: Heinemann, 1970).

²³In Eagleton, see especially the long chapter, "The Rape of Clarissa," pp. 40-94; in Castle, the argument is pervasive, but is highlighted in the "Introduction" and in chs. 1 and 7.

²⁴Eagleton, p. 37.

²⁵Eagleton, p. 37. In "P/B: *Pamela* as Sexual Fiction," Castle argues that Richardson's first novel is an "incorrigibly patriarchal text" and an embodiment of a "myth" of female Oedipal fulfillment in which a young woman successfully transfers her libido from mother to father. See p. 488.

²⁶Dorothy Van Ghent, *The English Novel, Form and Function* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, 1953), p. 62.

²⁷I am thinking not only of Clarissa, whose death seems in some vague but direct way to follow from her rape, but also Mrs. Sinclair, whose death by gangrene appears to be a literalization of her sexual corruption, and also of what we might call Lovelace's murderous powers of insemination—his impregnated victims always seem to die in childbirth. For the latter, see *Clarissa, or The History of a Young Lady*, ed. John Butt, 4 vols. (New York: Dutton, and London: Dent, 1932), 2:147-48, 429-30.

²⁸4:532-33.

²⁹*Selected Letters of Samuel Richardson*, ed. John Carroll (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), p. 285.

³⁰See, for instance, Watt and Van Ghent, cited above, as well as Cynthia Griffin Wolff, *Samuel Richardson and the Eighteenth-Century Puritan Character* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1972), and V. S. Pritchett, "Clarissa," in *The Living Novel and Later Appreciations* (New York: Vintage, 1967).

³¹Stone, pp. 523-27.

³²*The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1963), IV, 439e-440a, p. 682.

³³Other instances of such "dangerous space" can be found in Sabor's edition on pp. 237 and 249.

³⁴William Hazlitt, "Lectures on the English Comic Writers," *Complete Works*, ed. P. P. Howe, 21 vols. (London: J. M. Dent, 1930), 6:118.