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CORRESPONDING FREEDOMS: LANGUAGE AND THE SELF IN *PAMELA*

BY PATRICIA MCKEE

I

Ian Watt, considering the eighteenth-century novel in a historical context, emphasizes “the transition from the objective, social, and public orientation of the classical world to the subjective, individualist, and private orientation of the life and literature of the last two hundred years.”¹ Finding in Defoe’s “total subordination of the plot to the pattern of the autobiographical memoir . . . as defiant an assertion of the primacy of individual experience in the novel as Descartes’s *cogito ergo sum* was in philosophy,” Watt identifies “the rise of the novel” with the increasing social, political, and philosophical sovereignty of the individual in the eighteenth century.² At the same time, the epistolary novel’s focus on private experience makes possible a deeper identification between its readers and its characters:

there had never before been such opportunities for unreserved participation in the inner lives of fictional characters as were offered by Richardson’s presentation of the flow of consciousness of Pamela and Clarissa in their letters.³

But if in the historical perspective it is the detailed privacy of experience that is most striking in the novel form, in another sense the form of a correspondence actually undermines any perception of the subject—either the subject as self or the subject of the narrative—as a separate and private individual phenomenon. The sense of “unreserved participation” in the life of another that Richardson’s novels encourage implies that individual meaning exceeds the individual. As Roy Roussel suggests, it is because Richardson “conceives of human identity as an intersubjective relationship” that “he is led naturally to the letter as the most appropriate medium to express it.”⁴ Roussel’s reading removes *Pamela* from the tradition of individualism by insisting on the “act of correspondence” as “a rejection of the isolation of the self in society”: “insofar

as it is the form of love, it involves the choice of another as the ground of a new identity.”⁵

I wish to consider a further qualification of individuality in Richardson’s *Pamela*. For the implications of an intersubjective identity involve not so much an extension or displacement of the grounds of meaning as a loss of any firm grounds whatever for meaning. The experience of individual identity in the novel can be described as a recognition of a self whose multiple and equivocal meanings exceed the bounds assigned by individualism. The self that Pamela represents is neither independent nor indivisible; she remains both dependent on and inseparable from others. For the self is given meaning in relation with others, and thus becomes a social rather than an individual phenomenon: subject to change, and a changing subject. In a narrative that precludes individual sovereignty or distinction just as it precludes the social distinctions of class and sex, the self is neither self-possessed nor determined by others but is always part of a relation. Richardson’s first novel suggests that to shift emphasis from public to private concerns does not represent a shift of priorities or a changed order such as Watt describes, but a shift from the experience of order to experience that exceeds order.⁶

If *Pamela* begins in correspondence with her parents, who insist on her sovereignty and sufficiency, she continues writing only “in correspondence” with B, a relationship characterized by indecisive and inconclusive exchanges. Moreover, the indeterminate exchanges in which Pamela and B take part are not resolved by but repeated by her representation of them. And it is just this indeterminacy that enables Pamela and B to come together, after B reads Pamela’s expressions of sympathy for him even among her expressions of enmity. Roussel, in considering the characters’ dependence on writing, emphasizes the ability of letters to “reveal as they conceal”; thus writing maintains the tension of distance and presence necessary to Pamela and B, who both fear exposing their feelings.⁷ This, however, is only one advantage offered the characters by the fact that their correspondence depends on language. For their correspondence entails both spoken and written language, and in fact their conversations reveal that the meaning of spoken words is as indeterminate as the meaning of written words. They themselves argue about the meaning of the terms they use. Pamela’s and B’s insistence that they use the same words differently, moreover, yields a crucial discovery: it means that they are

already engaged in a relation that leaves room for both of them as radically different beings.

To identify the excess of meaning in language with gain rather than with loss is to contradict prevalent eighteenth-century, as well as more modern, concepts of order and excess.⁸ Martin Price, in *To the Palace of Wisdom*, writes of the Augustan enterprise as an attempt “to define an ideal order of the mind” that would unite disparate human interests that threaten to defy order. Price insists on the Augustans’ need to come to terms with excess, in order both to construct an inclusive order and to avoid the division of different individuals, “locked in self-enclosed and self-subsistent orders, seeming to use the same words but in fact unable to comprehend each other’s meaning.”⁹ In an essay that considers Pope’s coming to terms with the breakdown of Order, Murray Krieger has suggested that Pope represents the distinction between order and discord as the distinction between the classical unity of *The Rape of the Lock* and the modern historical reality of *The Dunciad*. Pope displays a nostalgia for the inconsequential, sufficient, and unified form of art as well as a recognition of the real and consequential discord and partiality of human beings. Krieger thus suggests that Pope wishes for the unified world of art even as he recognizes that world as what Price calls a “self-subsistent” order, cut off from reality.¹⁰

Pamela, however, by embracing the disorderly excess of experience, may be seen to constitute a reconciliation both of the real differences among human beings and of those between reality and art. For B and Pamela are partial and they are different; but they are increasingly incapable of self-subsistence and increasingly subject to change in relation to each other. The characters begin as “self-enclosed” orders, exactly in Price’s terms: “seeming to use the same words but in fact unable to comprehend each other’s meaning.” Yet, I want to suggest, it is the capacity of language to include their different meanings that makes their union possible. Thus partiality and difference are “realized” in a relation that makes them inconsequential; for they do not lead to division. *Pamela*’s art is thus precisely the means of representing both the differences between individuals as indecisive differences, and representation itself as an inclusive phenomenon. In *Pamela*, life and art come to correspond in their mutual acceptance of excesses, and this is the means by which human beings are united in their differences.

The novel's excesses are multiple, for the narrative itself is difficult to "order" and therefore difficult to place in a development or history of the novel. Verging on tedium, it exceeds the bounds of plot with a representation of experience that is both repetitive and redundant. Although critics who read in the context of a history of the novel usually assume that this is the mistake of an early and inexperienced novelist,¹¹ it may in fact be one of *Pamela's* various refusals to treat experience or representation as a means to an end. For the experience of reading the novel is one of episodes that do not contribute to a clear objective.¹² Even re-reading the narrative, we may not see the early episodes leading to an end; they remain ambiguous, as likely to lead to rape as to marriage. Any episode could go either way, since Pamela does not determine their significance. Although the content of episodes varies, the form is a replay—she goes back to him and he tries it again. Even after the marriage, the confrontation and the evasion of resolution are re-enacted by Pamela with B's sister, Lady Davers, whose threat similarly forces Pamela to escape out of a window.

This is to say that events are not plotted, or that they are present in excess of the requirements of a plot. And the order imposed by a plot is always suspect in this narrative. The suspicion on the part of Pamela and B that the other is plotting is exactly a suspicion that the self is being imposed upon. If we read the novel as a struggle for mastery and possession, B wants to possess Pamela and she wants to marry him; or he wants to get her and she will not give herself unless she gets him in return. The fact that Pamela and B remain engaged in their struggle can be assumed to mean that each has an end in view; critics like Henry Fielding assume this, and the characters assume it of each other. But though we may take their words for it, we cannot plot their desires. Instead, we must accept that their meanings are ambiguous or inconsistent, are as difficult to get hold of as Pamela is for B and B is for Pamela. The narrative is unwilling to allow impositions, either those of one character on another or those of one event on another, to be final or determinant. Thus the novel proceeds as a repetition of exchanges that evade rather than effect possession. The evasion of mastery and possession seems to me to be a goal of the narrative, even as it is a goal that precludes finality and certainty. The cumulative experience of the novel seems to be to allow meaning to exceed plots: to accept redundancy rather than impose consequential or decisive development on experience.

I will consider the fact that both the narrative and its characters are redundant, therefore, not as a sign of a lack of development nor as a mark of the novel's immaturity, but as a mark of *Pamela's* engagement with the issue of development itself. The novel suggests that in such "undeveloped" forms as the unplotted narrative and the dependent self, in both of which distinction remains dubious, lies a realm of freedom and power unavailable to forms of development that define differences and reduce excesses. This unsettling consideration is generated by the recognition that language itself refuses to settle differences, encouraging ambiguity and redundancy instead. It is through its engagement with the power of language to unsettle determination that *Pamela* is able to exceed the bounds that usually limit our conceptions of meaningful experience and meaningful selves.

II

Pamela begins her narrative with determination: "I will die a thousand deaths, rather than be dishonest any way," she writes to her parents (47), and she proclaims to B that, "if you were a prince, I would not be otherwise than honest" (55).¹³ She represents a clear sense of choice and a clear sense of her own independence and consistency. The two most crucial values in the novel, truth and individual meaning, are invariable and definite here. No matter what else offers, both statements imply, Pamela will hold on to what she is. Her self-possession entails a definition of truth and self that distinguishes both, making them independent of what differs from them.

But it is this conception of meaning that is threatened in Pamela's dealing with B:

"Well may I forget that I am your servant, when you forget what belongs to a master."

. . . "Have I done you any harm?" "Yes, sir," said I, "the greatest harm in the world: You have . . . lessened the distance that fortune has made between us, by demeaning yourself, to be so free to a poor servant."

(55)

It is self-possession that is lost here with the failure of memory to keep hold of things. Having vowed never to "forfeit my good name" (47), Pamela here describes her relationship with B as one of mutual forfeiture in mutual forgetfulness. Both the losses and

the mutuality involved endanger her ability to claim her own meaning as a secure possession. For not only does she let go her grasp of what she is and what belongs to her; she does so because he forgets what belongs to him. Her meaning is now doubly insecure, both subject to being lost by her and subject to what lies outside her bounds in its dependence on his behavior. That she is not distinct from him is suggested by her recognition that he has "lessened the distance" between them. But it is even more forcefully suggested by her failure to differentiate his behavior from her own. Hers is no longer her own; it is owing to him. The turn from claims to disclaimers, by which she moves from owning up to her actions to disowning responsibility for them, marks a further loosening of her determination. Not only has she let go of her meaning as determined, but she has lost the sense that that meaning is exclusively hers.

This loss is mutual, however. B also finds that he cannot maintain his determination because of Pamela's behavior, and who is responsible for or benefits from the "freedom" of their exchanges is not itself determined. Shortly after the above exchange, Pamela dresses in her peasant clothes, in which she plans to return home. And B, apparently mistaking her for someone else, again makes advances, for which he blames her: "I was resolved never again to honour you with my notice; and so you must disguise yourself, to attract me." She then speaks "disrespectfully" to him, but blames her behavior on his provocation (90–92). The freedom of their behavior with each other is marked by the impossibility of confining what either character means to that character. Neither "means" to do what she or he does. The meaning of each is thereby opened up to include more than either can determine, and is made fluid rather than fixed as it changes in response to the other. Meaning is free here because it is neither confined nor stable. But Pamela and B speak suspiciously of the freedom of the other's behavior, identifying it with their own loss.

On one level, their freedoms are a matter of stepping out of the bounds of their proper social positions. He has moved lower than his position, having "degraded himself to offer freedoms to his poor servant" (54). She has moved higher, having exhibited pride and having "taken freedoms" with his name (63). When free, then, they are out of place. But that such freedom is threatening seems due not simply to the insecurity of place or of possession but to their assumption that they can therefore be placed or possessed

by the other. The economic language that is used or suggested in their accusations implies a conception of exchange that identifies all values as subject to possession and determination: if someone loses something, someone else gets it. That B “offers” freedoms or Pamela “takes” freedoms makes freedom itself an object that can be exchanged and possessed. That both characters see the freedom of their behavior as caused by the other identifies such freedom as a loss of self that is the other’s gain.

In fact, neither character claims anything or feels the gain of anything in these exchanges. But because both experience freedom as a loss of what they have had, and because they represent this in economic terms, they are threatened by the perception that if one is out of control, the other must be in control, that one’s losses must be the other’s gains. Giving up something for nothing is exactly what Pamela’s parents have warned her against: “we *fear*—you should be *too* grateful, and reward him with that jewel, your virtue, which no riches, nor favour, nor any thing in this life, can make up to you” (46). This conception of exchange insists that Pamela must get equivalent compensation in return for whatever she gives up; to exceed a fair exchange, to be *too* grateful, is frightening. The difficulty, then, is not just that Pamela and B no longer have secure possession of what they are. It is that they call this sheer loss, one for which they can identify no compensation. It is the conception of their exchanges as matters of definitive and exclusive gain and loss that endangers their freedom, for what they are potentially freed from *is* definitive gain and loss. What they actually do in the novel is to give up possession of themselves; what they get in return is not something definite but freedom—freedom from possession, freedom to be indeterminate. To recognize this as liberation, as the freedom to mean more than definition permits, is the project for which the experience of language is crucial.

The meaning of words is a matter of constant debate early in the novel. Not only do Pamela and B question the meaning of each other’s words; Pamela also expresses disapproval of the “free” talk of the ladies who visit B because, she insists, ambiguous words are neither true nor trustworthy. The ladies

toss their jests about, and their *double meanings*, as they own them, as freely as the gentlemen. But whatever reputation these freedoms may give to their *wit*, I think they do but little credit to their *hearts*.

(84)

The freedom of double meanings from definition is equated here with duplicity. Pamela herself, when confronted with B's freedoms, and with the sudden multiplication of meanings that his freedoms make possible, wants to single out one version as the truth:

O this angel of a master! This fine gentleman! . . . (yes, I *must* call him gentleman, though he has fallen from the merit of that title) has degraded himself to offer freedoms to his poor servant: he has now shewed himself in his true colours. . . .

(54)

Calling him both a gentleman and not a gentleman, Pamela assigns B two conflicting meanings. She reads him as duplicitous and identifies that duplicity as part of a design against her. For Pamela, then, the truth is not that he is genuinely variable or ambiguous but that he is tricking her. Similarly, B identifies Pamela as a hypocrite when she dresses in peasant clothes (90), as someone who pretends to be what she is not in order to attract him. Arguing with his housekeeper about Pamela's character and the freedom of her behavior, B recognizes that there is more than one meaning for her; but he insists that the truth is that she is artful:

"She is," replied she, "an innocent young creature. . . ."
"Innocent! again; and *virtuous*, I suppose. . . ."
". . . she keeps herself so much to herself, and yet behaves so prudently, that they all esteem her. . . ."
"Ay," says he, "that's her art."

(60)

For both Pamela and B, the fact that the other can be given more than one meaning is suspicious and means that the other is both untrue and artful. Artful representation here is seen as misrepresentation, or misinterpretation, of true meaning. It involves turning one thing into another thing—a thing it is not—and thus is identified with artifice. This art is practiced not only in the misrepresentation of the other by the other, but in the misrepresentation of the self by the other. Each feels that the other makes her or him into something she or he is not.

as light as he makes of the words *virtue* and *innocence* in me, he would have made a less angry construction, had I *less deserved*

that he should do so; for then may be, my *crime* would have been my *virtue* with him; wicked gentleman as he is!

(61)

“Precise fool!” said he, . . . “I was bewitched I had not gone through my purpose last Sunday night; and then your licentious tongue had not given the worst interpretation to little puny freedoms, that shew my love and my folly at the same time.”

(248)

In the first passage above, Pamela insists that B’s constructions of meaning would make a virtue of crime, and that she would only deserve his kindness if she were in truth an undeserving person. In the second, B insists that she equally misrepresents him. For he interprets his failure to go through with the rape as a sign of both love and folly, while she interprets it at its worst—as an intended rape. He, then, she thinks, would see her crime as a virtue; and she, he thinks, would see his virtue as a crime. Both feel that the other is artful—is engaged, that is, in making the self into something it really is not.

Art, then, is the realm of freedom in which things are what they are not: crime can be virtue and virtue can be crime, and artful meaning is multiple meaning. Pamela and B open up meaning for each other. They exceed its confinement and stability as they recognize room for interpretation. And although they do not trust meaning that shifts its grounds in such ways, their experience of each other is an experience of meaning that is neither clear nor stable. “Is it not strange,” Pamela writes of B’s inconsistent behavior, “that love borders so much upon hatred? But this wicked love is not like the true virtuous love, to be sure” (86). In order to be sure, truth and virtue must be unambiguous. Like the lessening of distance between Pamela and B that she identifies with his freedoms, love and hatred are too close here to remain distinct. And the confusion of the properly distinct and exclusive threatens the security of truth just as it threatens the security of self.

Yet Pamela uses language in her exchanges with B in ways that increase such confusions and preclude the security of truth. Her ability to shift the bounds of meanings, and her ability to shift the grounds of meanings, make truth itself a shifty proposition. This is the art of her representation; and it is in the practice of this art that she frees truth from the confinement of secure borders. Truth itself becomes something that cannot be told except as an excess

of meaning that defies definition, as Pamela's way with words allies the forces of art and truth. And it is in the increasing inability of the narrative to tell the difference between the artful and the truthful that its characters find their freedom.

Pamela's refusal either to keep her words within bounds or to admit that she is doing anything dishonest—her refusal to discriminate between her excessive writing and the truth—is what angers B:

“And so I am to be exposed, am I,” said he, “*in* my own house, and *out* of my house, to the whole world, by such a saucebox?”
“No, good sir,” said I, “and I pray your honour not to be angry with me; it is not *I* that expose you, if I say nothing but the truth.”

(62)

Here what seems to be at issue for B is his exposure. His description of how that occurs emphasizes that it is Pamela's refusal to make proper distinctions that is most threatening to him. He sees her as breaking through the bounds of propriety, property, and privacy by sending her stories “out of a family” (44). She thus refuses to distinguish properly what is his own and what she can give away to the rest of the world, or what lies inside and what lies outside his house. She does not seem to accept his limits as determinant or decisive; she acts as if they make no difference.

Refusing, by writing letters home, to keep what she says about B within bounds, Pamela initiates the most fundamental confusion in the novel. By making dubious the difference between inside and outside, her narrative will unbind the limits imposed by that distinction, replacing fixed bounds with shifting possibilities of meaning. The difference between inside and outside stands simply in their opposition, but that opposition is what Pamela's writing ignores. And because that distinction is arbitrary, her refusal to accept it makes it disappear. Rather than accept the distinction as fixed, she makes its meaning subject to interpretation. Since she is part of two “families” at once, her own and his, Pamela can interpret her behavior as well within the prescribed bounds of propriety even as it exceeds them.

Doubling meaning, Pamela both remains within and exceeds bounds; and this opens up a multitude of improper possibilities. That B cannot enter her body and that she cannot enter his social class, both of which are definite and exclusive assumptions at the beginning of the novel, are rendered uncertain by the undoing of

the elementary difference between in and out. That these concepts can be confused leads to the eventual recognition that she has already incorporated him, and his class her, even as he and she remained on the outside. They can both be in two places at once. Thus once the difference between inside and outside is made dubious, numerous boundaries are subject to dispute and not subject to clear settlement.

But this is not the only confusion Pamela is responsible for in this passage. For she does not answer the question B poses; she changes the subject by disagreeing not with the substance of what he says—that he is being exposed all over the place—but with his assignment of responsibility to her. The issue thus shifts from whether the exposure occurs to who is doing the exposing. Pamela's ability to elude B is suggested here by her ability to open up holes in his argument. Through these, she gets out of answering the question he poses and escapes from the position in which his words had put her.

"Interpretation is like a football game," Geoffrey Hartman has written. "You spot a hole and you go through. But first you may have to induce that opening."¹⁴ Pamela responds to that part of B's question with which she can take issue and in which she can make room for another interpretation. She opens up the meaning of his question by undermining any definite sense of causality. What she says implies that maybe the truth will come out on its own, or that maybe B himself is at fault. Moreover, in a sense she does not have to reinterpret the exposure itself: that already leaves him wide open. Her interpretations and representations work to put more meanings into things, insisting on meaning in excess of definition and thereby also dependent on other meanings, or dependent on interpretation, *for* meaning.

Able in this passage to combine what B perceives as clearly distinct—inside and outside—and able to separate what he perceives as obviously connected—her behavior and his exposure, Pamela unsettles meaning because she keeps differences in play, refusing to let them settle. She opens up the boundaries that keep differences distinct and takes apart the connections between such differences as cause and effect. She demonstrates, then, both her power to change meaning and the inability of language to fix meaning so that it isn't subject to change, even as she seems to claim, for both herself and language, the capacity to speak the truth. But she does not, of course, exactly make that claim. In-

stead, truth itself is left in the realm of possibility rather than certainty—it is located only conditionally. Truth becomes “iffy”; it depends. Pamela’s true role in this depends on whether she speaks the truth; or, her true role in this depends on how you interpret it.

So although she keeps changing the subject, Pamela does not privilege or certify any version or any subject. She makes the limits of meaning indefinite, perceives oppositions as inclusive rather than exclusive of each other, allows meanings to overlap, and insists that meanings are dependent on rather than independent of other meanings. Related to each other but in constant flux, differences vary; differentiation is mobilized and shifts around. Like the agent of exposure in the above exchange, which is never positively identified, truth is not something Pamela can claim to know. Nor does she allow any claim to be made on her; the self also is a changing subject here. The possibility of truth really functions as part of Pamela’s disclaimer of her own role in B’s exposure: if she in fact is writing exposition, she is only the means that elucidates, rather than the cause of, exposure. Like B’s passive construction, which frees *him* from responsibility, Pamela’s own representation of self gets her out of rather than owns up to responsibility for what is going on. She also, that is to say, represents herself as dependent (“I pray your honour not to be angry with me”), making no claims for self whatever. The implicit disclaimers of both characters’ speeches, as if to say ‘*I’m* not doing anything,’ insist that the self remain as shifty as the other subjects of this exchange: subject to the other and subject to differing interpretations.¹⁵

Pamela’s and B’s relationship thus works as the “undoing” of both self and other. The tactics of deconstruction are socialized in Richardson’s novel, as each character uses language to undermine the claims of the other, and to disclaim responsibility for doing so. But this results in no loss of meaning. Critics have identified the “absence” or “fiction” of selfhood in other eighteenth-century writers. Homer O. Brown, for example, has suggested that “Defoe’s project seems to have involved the creation of more or less autonomous voices, themselves without a center. . . . Or, rather, voices whose center is a felt lack of center.”¹⁶ And Juliet Flower MacCannell, focusing on Rousseau’s “deconstruction of the concept of self-love,” has concluded that for Rousseau

The self is hypothesis, a fiction, that exists, as do all fictions, in

the manner of a presentation. Its mode, that of the *as if*, suspends from the outset questions of definite knowledge.¹⁷

In *Pamela*, the self is also suspended in its meaning as it is suspended between one person and another. But this does not render the self absent.¹⁸ The suspension seems instead to extend the self and enlarge its powers, even as it renders the self groundless and dependent for its meaning on what lies beyond it, in exchanges that disable any sense of self-possession. Precisely because it is no longer clear to whom it belongs or how it can be located—given representations that keep it indeterminate—the self is freed from the limits of individuality and self-possession. To come undone, *Pamela* suggests, is to gain a self of potentially limitless meaning.

III

The struggle in which Pamela and B engage even while they try to disengage themselves is the central focus of the pressure the narrative exerts in order to keep meaning at issue. Their opposition never clearly *is* an opposition. That is why the novel is subject to interpretations such as that of Fielding's *Shamela*, in which roles seem to be reversed as the scheming whore plots to marry the simpleminded squire. In fact, Pamela and B are, at various points in the novel, liable to turn into each other or switch positions. The beginning of their relationship is clearly enough a property dispute, in which he wants to possess her while she claims a self-possession that makes her independent of him. But this is almost immediately confused by his sense that she, with her letters and talk, is giving him away. The issue of B's mastery and possession of Pamela keeps slipping into the issue of B's humiliation and dispossession by Pamela, with each supposedly distinct objective verging on its opposite. As in the exchange about his exposure, it is also often difficult to tell the exact difference between the two characters themselves, for that difference isn't clear. Pamela isn't absolutely denying B here and is even praying for his favor; but she isn't in agreement with him either. Because she both is dependent on him and differs from him, it is impossible to say exactly where she stands in relation to B. She is both subordinate and insubordinate, as he is both master and victim. The characters' meaning is thus suspended between the poles of oppositions that provide distinct and decisive meaning.

The loss of the clear subordination of one character to another

is implied in all the lost distinctions of the narrative, and it is because subordination shifts from one side to another of any proposed distinction that those constructions fail *as* distinctions. This is why Pamela and B are not simply reversing the sexual and social hierarchy of their society. For they are disabling hierarchy altogether by identifying positions as always reversible and as always in flux. Other oppositions are represented as convertible and insecure in similarly indefinite exchanges. This is true not only of exchanges between the characters but of exchanges set up between one word and another. If, especially at the beginning of her narrative, Pamela can insist that some values are subject neither to change nor exchange (as with “if you were a prince, I would not be otherwise than honest”), it is more characteristic of her, once she sets up an exchange, neither to define nor redefine by means of it. Instead, she identifies flexible equivalences.

For example, when Pamela seems to want to clarify differences between herself and B by insisting that each values the same thing in opposite ways, the results are not definitive:

“My *crime* would have been my *virtue* with him. . . .”

“What does *he* call honour, think you?” “Ruin! shame! disgrace!” said I, “I fear.”

(61, 160)

These differentiations do not provide clear distinctions. For if they insist that things are different for B than they are for Pamela, they also insist on the equivalence of opposite values. That crime equals virtue and honor equals disgrace suggests not that distinction prevails between Pamela and B, but that he or she can undo distinctions by equating them and then converting one into the other. What seems a means of distinction in fact makes distinction uncertain, putting meaning in flux rather than settling it.

When Pamela constructs maxims, something similar happens. “Your *poverty* is my *pride*,” she writes to her parents. And she preaches to Mrs. Jewkes that “an *hour* of innocence . . . is worth an *age* of guilt” (175). Such statements seem to mean to confirm the value of Pamela’s poverty and innocence. But they also mean that these qualities are dependent for their meaning on their opposites, and the expression of the opposition as an equivalence means that such qualities as poverty and innocence are interchangeable with their opposites. Meaning becomes convertible. If

Pamela's parents' poverty is the equivalent of Pamela's pride, then they can't really *be* poor, and she can't really be proud, even as they are these things. Or, if the grounds for poverty and pride are the same grounds, they can all be both at once. The second exchange also denies the determination of its own differential. The equation of an hour of innocence with an age of guilt distinguishes the qualities by the quantities. But if an hour is worth an age, this can increase or decrease its value: increase it in that sixty minutes is as great as sixty years, or decrease it in that it is an hour that seems to last an age. And if an age of guilt is the same as only an hour of anything, it doesn't seem to amount to much. Thus the implication is that there isn't in fact much to choose between them, or the choice doesn't make much difference. To conflate such contradictory meanings in these ways, then, is to challenge the certainty of difference and to free language from security. But it is also to risk undifferentiation and meaninglessness.

"Art does not add itself to the world of meanings: it makes room in meaning itself." Geoffrey Hartman's essay "The Voice of the Shuttle" considers how, in the language of literature, "words are released from their bondage to meaning."¹⁹ Such language, he says, both underspecifies and overspecifies, both crowds meaning with an excess of possible interpretations and compels silence. Pamela uses this kind of language. The power of her representation lies in its ability to increase the variable potential of meaning: both because she conflates meanings, by interpreting apparent differences as similar, and because she breaks meanings apart, by interpreting apparent similarities as different. In a sense, the pressure she exerts is the pressure of the pun that Hartman calls "the redundancy principle": "You can define a pun as two meanings competing for the same phonemic space or as one sound bringing forth semantic twins, but, however you look at it, it's a crowded situation."²⁰ Pamela crowds. She crowds B even as she eludes him so that he feels as threatened as she; and she crowds her narrative with a constant sense of excess meaning. When Pamela uses them, words always seem to possess more meaning than any use can account for. She threatens with a kind of oppressiveness, then, a uselessness or meaninglessness, even as she delivers freedom. For her language is both overdetermined and indeterminate.

The two passages on which I will focus in considering how Pamela and B's exchanges always defy rather than effect distinction and possession do not function as decisive passages in the novel. Each

seems merely to repeat other indecisive exchanges, and each seems of minor importance both in that larger context and in the context of the passages themselves. For these are picky and petty fights. But if to argue about one word, as happens in the first passage, seems childish, as if Pamela and B will use the slightest excuse for their mutual retaliations, the issues at stake are large. They are large because they are psychologically primitive issues. These characters pick on each other's words in order to take apart the linguistic constructions with which they defend themselves against incursions by the other. For it is in the reinterpretation of the other's representations that each finds room for the self. Here the defenses of each are also used as the offenses of the other. But the persistence with which Pamela and B repeat their maneuvers—maneuvers which insist that neither can have anything the other cannot have—suggests that it is not really possession they are fighting for. They seem to push these exchanges as far as they do not in order to establish possession but in order to establish that possession cannot be determined, that they, therefore, have nothing to lose. Their exchanges work to free them from exchange as a means of determination and possession.

The first of these representative exchanges is a larger section of the conversation about exposure:

“And is it thus, insolent as you are! you taunt and retort upon me! But still I will be answered directly to my question.” “Why then, sir,” said I, “I will not tell a lye for the world: I *did* tell Mrs. Jervis; for my heart was almost broken; but I opened not my mouth to any other.” “Very well, bold-face,” said he, “and equivocator again! You did not open your *mouth* to any other; but did you not *write* to some other?” “Why . . . you could not have asked me this question, if you had not taken from me my letter to my father and mother, in which (I own it) I had broke my mind freely. . . .”

“And so I am to be exposed, am I,” said he, “*in* my own house, and *out* of my house, to the whole world, by such a saucebox?” “No, good sir,” said I, “and I pray your honour not to be angry with me; it is not *I* that expose you, if I say nothing but the truth.”

(62)

In this passage, each character represents the self as both helpless before and threatened by the aggressive behavior of the other. Neither Pamela nor B claims self-possession or self-determination. Both “own” only what is no longer their own: she claims the privacy of her letter, and he claims the privacy of his house, but these

are exactly the properties whose bounds the other has transgressed. So that their claims are claims of dispossession. Both, moreover, only own up to behavior that can be blamed on the other. The identification of the self as passive and dependent contributes to each character's denial that she or he has any responsibility for what is happening.

Thus neither perceives his or her self as initiating or causing anything. Each demand on his part and each acknowledgment on her part is qualified by a passive construction of self: he demands answers in the passive voice; she admits telling things only because, in the first instance, her heart was broken and, in the second, he had stolen her letters. Each presents the self as the victim of the other's duplicity. And each practices duplicity here. For if neither actually lies, each shifts the grounds of the argument repeatedly to make the other appear to be at fault or to have caused their current quarrel.²¹ The characters both pull the ground out from under the other and refuse themselves to take a stand.

Exchange is somehow dodged, then, as the agreement necessary to exchange—an agreement between or adequation of things given and taken—is deferred, and as each character defers to the other. And so is any distinct sense of self dodged. For if each time one is deferred to, that one responds with some version of "I'm not doing anything," no grounds are established for constructing a self. Both mastery of the other and self-mastery are evaded by such disclaimers. Neither self can be located in this exchange at all. Although each puts the other in place of the self and so escapes the other's representation of the self, such evasions are the limits of the characters' attempts at self-representation. There is no self-assertion, and evasions provide no limits to meaning.

Neither self draws a line that distinguishes what the self is independently of the other. In order to realize a difference between the characters, who is doing what to whom, and why, need to be distinguished. If Pamela said that she exposed B in order to protect her virtue, and if B said that he opened her letters in order to protect his name, these claims and defenses would distinguish them and their interests. But instead Pamela implies that she doesn't expose him or doesn't mean to expose him; she writes because her heart is broken, and if he is exposed that is only the effect of the truth. And B implies that he opens her letters because those letters hurt him. Both represent their actions as if they were involuntary reactions, emphasizing their dependence rather than

their independence: if the outside world were different, they would be different. They do not, then, determine themselves; what determines what they are and do is a confusion or interaction of internal and external causes and interests. Selves do not stand their ground here, nor do they claim there is any ground to stand on; they simply shift around, like the changing subjects of the conversation. Neither self nor other is ever put in possession, as each resigns mastery to the other but then evades determination by the other.

There is thus no security of meaning and no give and take that could provide security about the meaning of things; for what is given by one character and what is taken by the other never agree. More problematic, though, is the fact that Pamela and B do not even discriminate between the acts of giving and taking. They thus have no means of determining whether they stand to win or lose. Each offer either character makes is discounted by the other as not enough, and each demand as too much; and this seems to happen because the characters do not distinguish an offer from a demand. Each offer made is perceived by the other *as* a demand, and neither character admits making any demands that are not offers. B's "offer" of "freedoms" and "kindness" in the summer-house is interpreted by Pamela as a sexual demand. Her offers to leave and get out of his way are interpreted by B as demands for more money: "If the terms I have offered are not sufficient, I will augment them to two thirds of my estate" (232). This follows Pamela's rejection of B's written proposals of money, land, jewels, and clothes—offers she cannot accept because they demand her body in return. Pamela and B cannot enter into exchanges because they cannot give without feeling that they are giving up, or take without feeling that they are being taken. Each self's desire to be admitted by the other is indistinguishable from the fear of being "taken in" by the other.

This is to say that there is really no exchange at all between the characters, or at least none that can settle the differences between them or enable them to get anywhere. They seem always to be at a standoff. For the same thing occurs on both sides of any exchange, rendering the exchange itself redundant. That no differences can be determined threatens to mean that there are no differences; most frighteningly, that the self, because indeterminate, can disappear into the other. That the other can take over is what B and Pamela recognize in each other's behavior. Each char-

acter has the impression that the whole exchange has been initiated or caused by the other and that the self cannot help it. B claims to have been only a "little kind" in the summer-house, where he tried to kiss Pamela; Pamela claims to have told "hardly" anyone about it. Each implies: I did nothing, but you make something of it. So the other is seen to determine meaning. This indicates the sense of helplessness and dependence with which Pamela repeatedly begs B, as she does in the above passage, not to be angry with her even as she insists that he alone is the cause of that anger. Similarly, B repeatedly begs Pamela's sexual compliance but always accuses her of enticing him to do so. It's his fault that he finds fault with her, her fault that she finds fault with him. Such exchanges are short-circuited, for each character implies that both the demand and the response lie with the other. The other, having taken over, overdetermines the self's own meaning.

But if this ought to mean that there is nothing more to say, it also means that everything is left to say. For if exchange is frustrated or bypassed, it is also generated by the evasion of any common ground. Each character always finds something that the language of the other has implied, or left room for, but left unsaid. "You did not open your *mouth* . . . ; but did you not *write*?" ; "you could not have asked me this question, if you had not taken from me my letter." In these responses, B and Pamela seem to fill in meaning; but they always also make room for more. Meaning is pushed wide open as each punches holes in or, in Hartman's terms, induces openings in the other's representations. For even while claiming to be helpless, each character makes clear that he or she is able to open up such spaces, and so to free the self from any position assigned by the other, to evade any accusation made by the other. The misrepresented self insists on such openings *as* the representation of his or her own misrepresentation. In this sense, then, the realization that the other leaves things out or leaves things open is the realization that the self can *be* in the other, or can be represented in the other's language, but is not confined or held there. Each identifies the self in the other as an opening, indeterminate and able to be free.

The exchange of evasions, as the evasion of exchange, recurs as a continual reversal of meaning in scene after scene. Although B cannot get hold of Pamela and Pamela cannot hold B to his word, it is by their evasions that they in fact hold each other. Their willingness to take part in such exchanges represents their will-

ingness to let each other go even as they remain committed to each other. Yet because it is only in their misrepresentations of each other that they find room for themselves, their relationship proceeds as an exchange of inadequacies that implies the inadequacy of each self. If we can say of the experience of language in the narrative that to be able to secure no determined meaning is to free meaning from confinement and bondage, the recognition of this freedom in the characters' experience of self is more difficult. For the individual experience of indeterminacy seems a much more loaded issue. If we assume, that is, that we can live with language that threatens to be meaningless, we do not as easily assume that we can live with the threat that our selves are worthless.

Pamela's early recognition that B is "demeaning" himself when he is free with her persists in the narrative, and she is demeaned as well as he. That their relationship works as a demeaning process, a process of devaluation of both self and other that verges on debasement, is the novel's greatest risk. If we call the novel *risqué*, we associate its risk with indecency and impropriety, especially emphasizing the sexual nature of that impropriety. But if we recognize that the real indecency of this relationship is that it continues at the risk of individual worth, we come closer to perceiving the threat it represents.

In a much later passage, after the attempted rape in the bedroom, Pamela goes back to B in the garden to ask his permission to return to her parents. What follows is another inconclusive exchange, but an exchange more threatening, in its confusions, to the value of the self.

He made me sit on his knee; and still on my struggling against such a freedom, he bid me rely on his honour, solemnly assuring me that I might. But then kissing me very often, though I resisted every time, I told him . . . that I would not stay with him in this place. I would not be so freely used. And I wondered he could so demean himself.

(247)

"Who then am I?" "Why," said I, (struggling from him, and in a great passion) "to be sure, you are Lucifer himself in the *shape* of my master, or you could not use me thus." "These are too great liberties," said he, in anger. . . .

I was running from him; and had got at a little distance, when he in a haughty tone, called out, "Come back! Pamela, come back when I bid you!" . . .

What could I do? With unwilling feet, and slow, I went back . . . and wept, and said, "Pray, sir, forgive me." "No," said he, "rather say, pray, Lucifer, forgive me. You have given me a character, Pamela, and blame me not if I act up to it."

(248)

. . . "But begone," said he, taking my hand, and tossing it from him, "and learn more wit. I will lay aside my foolish regard for you, and assert myself." . . .

. . . "I cannot quit your presence till you pardon me. On my knees I beg you will"; and I kneeled to him. "I am truly sorry for my boldness. But I see how you go on: now you soothe, and now threaten me: and have you not as good as avowed my ruin? What then is left me but words? . . . judge for me, and pardon me."

"Pardon you," said he, "what! when you have the boldness to justify yourself in your fault?"

(248-49)

Here the shifts of feeling in each character and the shifts in power from one character to the other make any determination of feelings or power impossible. Reacting to each other's reactions, neither B nor Pamela seems in control of the self or the other. Again, in this passage neither seems to determine what he or she is, but each demands to be determined by the other: "Who then am I?" B asks her; and "What could I do?" Pamela demands, recognizing no choice but to do as he tells her. But giving in to the other doesn't last long. For although each insists on his or her own subordination, each also rejects any meaning given by the other. Thus neither character maintains subordination or mastery. Once one character seems to be subordinated, either the subordinate or the master switches positions. B grabs Pamela, and she runs away, refusing him control. But she comes back, and he then rejects *her*, refusing to allow her subordination. She both denies his mastery and does what he tells her to do; he both insists on her subordination and insists that she makes him do what he does. It is again impossible to distinguish a victim or an aggressor here. The concurrent subjection of the self and rejection of the other dislocate both selves from determination, as if the self were lost in the space between, belonging to and determined by no one, and so rendered ineffectual.

Yet this passage insists on the indeterminacy of the self as a devaluation of self. Dependent on each other for meaning, Pamela and B effect no exchange in which anything is taken as given; so the self is rendered unacceptable rather than simply indetermi-

nate. Both Pamela and B are able to make offers to the other, but neither is able to go through with an exchange. Neither will accept what the other gives, for one thing, as if any meaning given by the other is demeaning. When B gives her a kiss, or Pamela gives him a name, these acts seem to take away more than they give. But if neither can accept the other, nor can either be accepted by the other. For if the other's behavior is an act of acceptance of the proffered self, it still seems that the other takes too much: he takes too many freedoms when she sits on his knee, and she takes too great liberties when he asks her to name him.

Whether anyone's behavior here is an act of giving or taking, that is, is difficult to tell. Each character interprets any response given by the other as a response that takes something away from the self. Their exchanges of words are as demeaning as the physical rejections by which Pamela runs away from him and B throws her hand away. Instead of giving and taking, they give and take back or, as B does with her hand, take in order to give back. Unlike the incomplete exchanges in the earlier passage, these failed exchanges do not suggest a freedom of meaning from determination. For each character seems to determine that there is no room for the self in the representations of the other. The failure to find any adequate representation threatens to mean that they are inadequate to each other.

This is not because the characters do not ask anything from each other. But the very demands of the other character that something be given by the self seem to demean the self further. When Pamela, at the end of the passage, begs B to pardon her, his response points out that she is really giving him no say. She is asking for something she has already gotten on her own: "what! when you have the boldness to justify yourself in your fault!" Earlier, when she begs forgiveness, he insists that she has already identified him as a figure who can't be forgiving, so again she is just getting something she has already determined. Pamela, too, perceiving that B has avowed her ruin, implies that he only asks her for what he is determined to get on his own if she does not give it.

Thus each feels excluded and diminished by the other's representation, which seems to leave no room, either because it excludes the self altogether or because it confines the self to a prescribed position. It is as if each recognizes a plot on the part of the other: the other has determined meaning, independently of the self, and the other has taken over the part of the self in any

exchange. B puts words in Pamela's mouth: "rather say, pray, Lucifer, forgive me." Pamela puts words in his: "have you not as good as avowed my ruin?" Assigning parts to the other, each character insists that there is a plot afoot. Both Pamela and B turn the other's words against the other, as in previous exchanges. But each thereby uses the other's words not to make room but to diminish open spaces, to take away any choice about meaning. The self feels either thrown aside altogether or absorbed completely; but either way it has been wholly discounted.

The other is thus seen as self-sufficient in his or her capacity to fill in meaning independently of the self, even though dependence is expressed by both characters. Pamela's request that B "judge for me, and pardon me" is not a request that leaves him any room to differ from her. If you take my part, she says, you will pardon me; she isn't asking him to make a difference but to fit the part as she determines it. So, similarly, when later that day B says to her, "Now, Pamela, judge for me" whether he can marry her or not, she refuses to tell him what she thinks he should do: "what I can truly say to your question, may pave the way to my ruin" (251). Thus each character refuses to give the words that might fit the self into the plot of the other. Even to be asked to judge for the other is perceived as a trap and an imposition rather than as an expression of dependence. Thus to be offered any part by the other, even to be put in the place of the other (as in "judge for me"), is suspect here, and suspect because it seems determined.

Again here, giving the self and taking the other are indistinguishable; any offer may take away from the self, just as any gift may allow the self to be taken. The standoff suggests that Pamela and B perceive their separateness. But although each resists being taken in by the other's determination, each also insists that she or he is dependent. If the nondistinction of "judge for me" threatens to make the difference between them disappear, then, it is not the nondistinction that is resisted. What is resisted is the loss of the freedom to differ. Determination is resisted, even as the characters insist that their selves are inseparable.

But their responses to each other are thereby limited to de-meaning responses. To give what the other asks is to fit into a prescribed space, so their responses take away rather than give—and thus risk taking away meaning. Whereas in the earlier passage each takes away the words of the other, here each takes away the value of their selves. In the former case, representations are shown

to leave room for the self; here, the self is so reduced and devalued that no representation can positively hold it. Not only do they see their selves left out, but their own actions take those selves further away. And they take away each other's value, demeaning even what they themselves want. It is B's good name that Pamela devalues. Although that name is desirable to her, it is that name that he refuses to give her. So she takes it away, replacing it with "Lucifer." It is Pamela's body that B wants, but that is what she will not give; so he takes hold of it and throws it away. B does the same in his insistence that Pamela is not in fact virtuous, demeaning her virtue because it is not offered to him: "I shall not touch her: . . . she is for any fool's turn, that will be caught by her" (222).

These responses replace exchange with a kind of theft, although no one gets anything by such theft. Value is taken away from the other but is not acquired for the self, which in fact is correspondingly diminished. Pamela takes away B's good name but still kneels to him and begs of him, asserting his inadequacy but also representing herself in postures of submission that proclaim her own inadequacy, as if the real fault is hers because she is not worth marrying. Similarly, when B represents Pamela as a cheap slut he also represents himself as someone who wants but is unwanted by a cheap slut. No one gains in these exchanges; all value is taken away.

Except the value of the correspondence. For if nothing is exchanged, because nothing is gained by either character and everything is taken away, all valuation nevertheless remains a matter of correspondence between Pamela and B. The devaluation of the one means the devaluation of the other. And their devaluations and demeanings function as another form of the indeterminacy that marks their freedom. Selves without value, devalued out of exchange, they remain free of determination. For if one form of freedom is to go beyond the bounds of meaning, another is to fall short of these bounds, to become small enough to slip out of bounds. Both kinds of unfitness exceed the limits of definition and preclude the possession of exchanged meaning. Both insist that the loss of "fit" meaning is a loss without compensation, but therefore also a loss beyond the scope of determination: a loss free to be gain.

The exchange that *is* effected in this passage is the exchange of freedoms. This is not a fitting exchange, and there is no represen-

tation given that fits or fixes the meaning of what is represented. Indecent and improper, and always demeaning because they defy any determination of meaning, these freedoms are what Pamela and B get from each other throughout the narrative. It is the exchange of freedoms that moves their relationship out of the realm of definitive exchange, rendering it indeterminate. Give and take, gain and loss, self and other all become indistinct and reversible, impossible to secure or determine, as all meanings, even that of the self, become subject to the conflict of interpretations that is the guarantee of freedom. Once made free with, those things that are invaluable are also without value. His name and her body are the possessions that the other takes liberties with. Once liberated, however, that name and that body cannot be had. They cannot be taken away, and they cannot be held onto in any way that excludes the other from taking part in them. Once the freedoms are admitted, the self is free to admit the other.

That the loss of secure value is indistinguishable from the gain that exceeds valuation is given in Pamela's admission of love:

I must own to you, that I shall never be able to think of any body in the world but him! Presumption! you will say; and so it is: but love, I imagine, is not a voluntary thing—*Love*, did I say! But, come, I hope not: at least it is not, I hope, gone so far, as to make me *very* uneasy: for I know not *how* it came, nor *when* it began; but it has crept, crept, like a thief upon me; and before I knew what was the matter, it looked *like* love.

(283)

We may read this as Pamela's acknowledgment that she belongs to B. But that is not the way she puts it. The gift of herself is given here as a presumption: she has taken upon herself what she has no warrant to take. But if she herself presumes, she does so because love has presumed with her. Love has "crept like a thief" upon her, taken over, without warrant, her own volition. Thus Pamela does not represent herself as losing by the theft; she in fact repeats it with her own presumption. Unauthorized and improper, her feelings come to her without determination or choice and commit her to take what she has no justification for taking, even as she herself has been taken, by illegitimate means. This is not an exchange so much as the kind of reflexive reaction that characterizes the exchanges between Pamela and B throughout the novel.

Volunteering her love, Pamela volunteers here only an involuntary admission. Love has entered her mind; she did not let it in, but she nevertheless admits it. She admits love, then, because it has taken liberties with her. But she also admits love because her love has let her go: she is on her way home to her parents. Having been freed from the threat that B will take away “that jewel, your virtue, which no riches, nor favour, nor any thing in this life, can make up to you,” Pamela is free to see in herself the theft she had thought would come from the outside. She takes his part here and, taking him in, admits him without loss but with presumption. If love has taken liberties, then, it has also freed her to take liberties. The “liberty” of love seems to mean that Pamela cannot tell the difference between herself and B, and that she cannot tell the difference between her losses and her gains.

The theft here entails the loss of volition and the loss of security. Involuntary, inexplicable, without cause and unpredictable, love is recognized by Pamela in terms that preclude definition and determination. Identified with loss of determination, loss of consequence, and loss of possessions—only “owned,” that is, as a loss of self-possession—love is the resolution of Pamela’s experience precisely because it is represented in terms of irresolution. She did not mean this, and she is not sure what this means: it only “looked *like* love.” Both claiming and disclaiming love, Pamela represents love itself as something that cannot be adequately represented. This is not “true love,” unless truth itself is always uncertain, is only approximately subject to definition and possession by representation. She is not “*very* uneasy” then, because meaning itself is so uneasy that it cannot be determined. Free to exceed determination, love stands for her own freedom to be more than can ever be owned. Love corresponds to Pamela as Pamela corresponds to B.

The “history” of love given us in this novel, like the story given us in the above passage, is unplotted in its course and uneasy in its effects. It settles nothing as it leaves meaning indeterminate. The recognition of love doesn’t clearly make much difference to Pamela; it only makes it impossible to tell the differences that would separate her from B. Pamela remains suspicious, perhaps more suspicious than before, even as she goes back to him again. Yet she goes back precisely because she cannot tell the difference, finally, even between her imprisonment and her freedom: “I have made an escape from my prison, only to be more a prisoner” (284).

Thus the narrative, in the “form” of the correspondence, redundancy, and indecisiveness of differences, has given us the relation that will bind Pamela and B to each other. It is Pamela’s representation, and the art of her representation, that insists that differences cannot be told with any finality, and that the very impossibility of telling them opens up the possibility of being both committed and free.

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NOTES

¹ Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1970), 182.

² Watt, 15.

³ Watt, 208.

⁴ Roy Roussel, “Reflections and the Letter: The Reconciliation of Distance and Presence in *Pamela*,” *ELH* 41, no. 3 (1974): 398.

⁵ Roussel, 394.

⁶ Terry Eagleton suggests that what begin as personal, social, or sexual distinctions in the novel not only come to correspond; they in fact come to collaborate in the reinforcement of the hierarchical orders they seem to challenge. Eagleton puts pressure on the deconstructive standoffs he identifies in the narrative, both by considering their political and historical implications and by bringing to bear analogous conditions in Richardson’s life, given as necessarily of political and historical significance. In reality, he suggests, such tensions are either resolved or, in their irresolution, make no difference to the prevailing structure of power. Eagleton’s reading is compelling in its capacity both to acknowledge and resolve the irresolutions of the novel. Yet his method, it seems to me, insists on more resolution than the novel provides. See *The Rape of Clarissa: Writing, Sexuality, and Class Struggle in Samuel Richardson* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1982), 1–39.

⁷ Roussel, 389.

⁸ Modern thinkers whose economies attempt to identify experience as systems of exchanges include Freud as well as Marx. In both cases, experience that exceeds exchange may seem to be lost or devalued, by repression or alienation. Even more recent theorists such as Michel Foucault, who insists that power in society does not function as an economy, tend to identify the uneconomized excess of experience with alienation. Foucault, insofar as he identifies the means we have for considering power—discourses of knowledge—as themselves forms of order, suggests our inability to recognize reality in excess of orders.

⁹ Martin Price, *To the Palace of Wisdom: Studies in Order and Energy from Dryden to Blake* (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 290, vii.

¹⁰ Murray Krieger, “The ‘Frail China Jar’ and the Rude Hand of Chaos” (1961), rpt. in *The Play and Place of Criticism* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1967), 53–68.

¹¹ Mark Kinkead-Weekes, in *Samuel Richardson: Dramatic Novelist* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1973), insists convincingly that the “faults” of the novel are technical: “The first plank in the ‘hypocrisy’ platform, for example, is supplied by inadequacies of plotting. Richardson often overlooked the need for invention, as his habit of repeating himself shows, but he seems never to have noticed how failures to contrive could have unwanted psychological effects” (89). I do not claim that Richardson intended my reading, but nor do I think that Richardson, any more than Pamela, carries through his intentions with determination.

¹² Many readers identify an objective, of course, but my argument is that, on the basis of what Pamela writes, this is difficult to do. If marriage is the objective of the narrative, for example, it would not need to exceed that point by more than a hundred pages. Robert Alan Donovan, acknowledging this excess, suggests that "Pamela's central concern is with the clear and unambiguous definition of her social identity" and that the novel must extend beyond the wedding in order for her to accomplish this. See *The Shaping Vision: Imagination in the English Novel from Defoe to Dickens* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1966), 58. Mark Kinkead-Weekes provides an objective more sympathetic to my reading of the novel: "Human relationship and happiness can only be established when faith and trust, however dangerous and difficult, replace war and sexual intrigue." See *Samuel Richardson*, 56. It seems to me that "war" and trust are not so distinct in *Pamela*, however, but that the one makes the other possible.

¹³ Samuel Richardson, *Pamela* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1980). All quotations are taken from this edition and page numbers are cited in the text.

¹⁴ Geoffrey Hartman, "The Voice of the Shuttle: Language from the Point of View of Literature," in *Beyond Formalism* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1970), 351.

¹⁵ In a discussion of psychoanalytic narratives, Roy Schafer identifies the use of disclaimers in the reconstruction of experience by language as elements of fantasizing in which the self is "split up or split off" rather than a coherent unit. The worlds constructed by disclaimer tend to be animistic, full of surprises, and unmanageable: worlds such as Pamela inhabits. See "Action and Narration in Psychoanalysis," *New Literary History* 12, no. 1 (1980): 61–85.

¹⁶ Homer O. Brown, "The Displaced Self in the Novels of Daniel Defoe," *ELH* 38, no. 4 (1971): 583.

¹⁷ Juliet Flower MacCannell, "Nature and Self-Love: A Reinterpretation of Rousseau's 'Passion primitive,'" *PMLA* 92, no. 5 (1977): 900.

¹⁸ Patricia Meyer Spacks, in *The Adolescent Idea: Myths of Youth and the Adult Imagination* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), identifies Pamela's power as "Nobody's Power," because Pamela conquers B by means of her adolescent helplessness and inability to assert herself. Spacks sees Pamela's lack of identity as something we all grow out of and suggests that Pamela loses power once she takes on adult status and marries B. I am suggesting, however, that Pamela's dependence and power are not a matter of her youth, and are realized because of B.

¹⁹ Hartman, 352.

²⁰ Hartman, 347.

²¹ The fact that Pamela and B do not qualify as liars also suggests that they cannot realize their selves as individual or separate entities. For lying is a practice that assumes the clear distinction of self and other which Pamela and B never accomplish, as it insists on the difference between what the self knows and what others know. Thus lying can be considered a sign of improvement by psychotherapists: "The therapist working with the psychotic can be grateful when the patient can genuinely 'lie' again. He has at least restored secrecy, privacy, a separate identity." For the successful lie puts an end to the infantile stage of "omniscience of thought" and helps to establish definite ego boundaries. See John M. Schlien, "A Client-Centered Approach to Schizophrenia: First Approximation," in *Psychotherapy of the Psychoses: Perspectives on Current Techniques of Treatment*, ed. Arthur Burton (New York: Basic Books, 1961), 299.