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Author(s): John A. Dussinger

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Love and Consanguinity in Richardson's Novels

JOHN A. DUSSINGER

For my own part, I felt the conviction of consanguinity so strongly, that I could not help turning half round to look in her face, and see if I could trace out any thing in it of a family likeness—Tut! said I, are we not all relations?

In rendering the pleasure as well as pain in sexual relations, Richardson's novels are witness to the phenomenal outbreak of affective marriages among the privileged classes in Georgian England. While tracing the evolution of the family from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, Lawrence Stone identifies three important influences: the decline of kinship and clientage as the basis for organizing landed society; the corresponding rise in the power of the state, usually symbolized by the monarchy; and the spread of Puritan morality, which sanctified marriage rather than celibacy as in the medieval church and gradually substituted the family for the parish (the household patriarch taking over the spiritual functions of the priest).¹ Kinship, of course, continued to be politically important; according to Goldwin Smith, during the middle of the century some fifty peers and even fewer commoners could return two hundred members of Parliament, with merely seventy-five interrelated families controlling the House of Commons.² Nevertheless, the Walpole, Pelham, and Rockingham connections were just one side of a system gradually giving way to "bastard kinship," to surrogate connections,

John Dussinger, who teaches English at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, is presently completing a book on motion and emotion in Jane Austen's novels. This essay derives from research on the question of Austen's attitude toward love and charity.

The epigraph is from Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey*, ed. Gardner D. Stout, Jr. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1967), pp. 190-91.

¹ Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), pp. 123-50.

² Goldwin Smith, *A Constitutional and Legal History of England* (New York: Scribner's, 1955), p. 394.

as the power of the state increased and weakened the ties of blood.³ Even though the great sea change from the open, extended family to the modern nuclear structure took place over the course of two centuries or so, domestic instability in the seventeenth century was already reflecting the turmoil of the Civil War and the pervasive crisis of authority: "The opposition of parents and kin to the principle and practice of married love was based on a perceived threat to their power and interests."⁴ In this context Richardson's portrayal of the miniature community is deeply political; analogously to the "bastard kinship" evolving in government, his novels tend to deprecate the actual blood ties in favor of an ideal fellowship. Harriet Byron, the heroine in Richardson's last and almost neglected novel, was imbued with the idea "that families are little communities; that there are but few solid friendships out of them; and that they help to make up worthily, and to secure, the great community, of which they are so many miniatures."⁵ The parallel here between "solid friendships" and the "great community" underlies Richardson's questioning throughout his narratives of the family; namely, what is it that motivates free individuals to associate with each other in binding institutions?

It was this question that Dr. Johnson contemplated while tracing the collapse of the Scottish Highland culture:

Money confounds subordination, by overpowering the distinctions of rank and birth, and weakens authority by supplying power of resistance, or expedients for escape. The feudal system is formed for a nation employed in agriculture, and has never long kept its hold where gold and silver have become common.⁶

³ Stone, pp. 127–28.

⁴ Stone, p. 138. Swift addresses this threat in *Gulliver's Travels*, where the Lilliputian state has complete authority over children and allows the parents to visit them no more than twice a year. See "A Voyage to Lilliput," chapter 6.

⁵ *The History of Sir Charles Grandison*, ed. Jocelyn Harris, 3 vols. (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1972), 1:25. All further references to this novel and edition are included in parentheses within the text, by volume and page. That Richardson's novels, especially his last, reflected the new interest in the family is evident in the early readers' reactions. The Marquise de Deffand, for example, wrote to Horace Walpole (who deplored Richardson as a vulgarian): "J'aime tous les détails domestiques; j'aime les lettres de Racine parce qu'elles en sont pleines. . . . c'est ce qui me fait préférer les romans de Richardson à ceux de La Calprenède, et à tous nos romanciers" (4 July 1769), *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, ed. W. S. Lewis, 48 vols. (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1939), 4:255.

⁶ Samuel Johnson, *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*, ed. Mary Lascelles (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1971), p. 113

In centering on this post-feudal loosening of social ties and resultant solitariness, Richardson's novels explore three principal forms of emotive bonding reflective of the new monied culture with its stress on affective marriage: self-fulfillment through pleasurable sexuality, through surrogate family relationships, and through specific public charities.⁷

I. Sexuality

Except for pornographic literature, certain taboos regarding the body, sexual relations, the "primal scene," and even the childhood fears prompted by this experience require an evasive style. "Of how many English novelists can one claim," A. O. J. Cockshut asks, "that they emancipate themselves from convention, from convenience, from mere personal impressions and predilections, and present a coherent view of the world, with sexual morality in its due, logical place?" The authors who spring to his mind are Richardson, Jane Austen, and D. H. Lawrence.⁸ Some readers may protest that Fielding surely belongs to this hallowed circle, but despite the appearance of a liberal ethic his comic novels depend largely on a conventional reticence toward the body of the heroine (Tom must rely on Sophia's muff and on vicarious gratification with lower-class females). Laughter in his fictional world often generates from an unacknowledged dread of sexuality that is suddenly alleviated by some distancing device. Thus Parson Adams's quixotic rescue of a "damsel in distress" (Beau Didapper in the clutches of Slipslop) presupposes a childlike innocence in the tactile awareness of the male and female anatomy:

[Adams] made directly to the Bed in the dark, where laying hold of the Beau's Skin (for *Slipslop* had torn his Shirt almost off) and finding his Skin extremely soft, and hearing him in a low Voice begging *Slipslop* to let him go, he no longer doubted

⁷ Besides my large debt to Lawrence Stone, the following studies should be gratefully acknowledged: Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (New York: Knopf, 1965); David Hunt, *Parents and Children in History* (New York and London: Basic Books, 1970); Lloyd de Mause, *The History of Childhood* (New York: The Psychohistory Press, 1974); and Gordon Rattray Taylor, *The Angel Makers: A Study in the Psychological Origins of Historical Change, 1750-1850* (New York: Dutton, 1974). Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1960) remains the best sociological approach to Richardson. Jean H. Hagstrum's *Sex and Sensibility: Ideal and Erotic Love from Milton to Mozart* (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1980) appeared too recently to influence the argument here, though the chapter on Richardson also stresses the positive view of erotic love in the novels (pp. 186-218).

⁸ A. O. J. Cockshut, *Man and Woman: A Study of Love and the Novel, 1740-1940* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1978), p. 27.

but this was the young Woman in danger of ravishing, and immediately falling on the Bed, and laying hold on *Slipslop's* Chin [?], where he found a rough Beard, his Belief was confirmed; and he therefore rescued the Beau.⁹

Although Tom's promiscuity evinces his youthful vigor and generous nature, the narrative stays utterly clear of any physical description of his bedroom romps; but the moral revelation of the hypocritical philosopher Square involves his being exposed naked in Molly's bedroom "among other female Utensils" and in a posture "not greatly unlike that of a Soldier who is tyed Neck and Heels; or rather resembling the Attitude in which we often see Fellows in the public Streets of *London*, who are not suffering but deserving Punishment by so standing."¹⁰ The reduction to a mere female "utensil" and the unhappy resemblance to the posture of defecating obviate any redeeming equality in Square's liaison with Molly.

In contrast to Fielding's comic manipulation of the body, Richardson tends to keep it well hidden and to emphasize instead the fetish of clothing. As Ian Watt observes wittily, the ambivalence of the middle-class sexual code gave shape to the first English novel, "a work that could be praised from the pulpit and yet attacked as pornography, a work that gratified the reading public with the combined attractions of a sermon and a striptease."¹¹ Yet except for stolen kisses or the gesture of inserting the hand in the heroine's bosom (Sophia, we recall, also suffers this abuse from Lord Fellamar), reference to the body or to physical touch is minimal in Richardson. So reticent is his style, in fact, that not everyone can agree on what actually happens in some scenes, as demonstrated most recently by Judith Wilt's contention that Mrs. Sinclair and not the presumably impotent Lovelace carried out the rape of Clarissa.¹²

Richardson's erotic style mystifies the body by keeping it at least partially clad as in Hellenistic sculpture, revealing nothing below the bosom (or "neck" in the code language of the period). It implies the

⁹ Henry Fielding, *Joseph Andrews*, ed. Martin C. Battestin (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1967), pp. 331-32.

¹⁰ Henry Fielding, *Tom Jones*, ed. Fredson Bowers (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1975), p. 229. Robert Alter interprets perceptively the sexual allusions in Fielding's style. See *Fielding and the Nature of the Novel* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1968).

¹¹ Watt, p. 173.

¹² Judith Wilt, "He Could Go No Farther: A Modest Proposal about Lovelace and Clarissa," *PMLA* 92 (January 1977):19-32. For an equally amusing speculation on the possibility that Mr. B. exposes his genitals in the famous bedroom scene when Mrs. Jewkes is on hand to restrain the heroine, see Terry J. Castle, "P/B: *Pamela* as Sexual Fiction," *SEL* 22 (Summer 1982):484.

contradictory function Roland Barthes attributes to the French striptease: "Woman is desexualized at the very moment when she is stripped naked"; the whole ritual of undressing to the limit of the conventional triangle of the G-string implies a fear that underneath there is nothing.¹³ As Fielding well understood, Pamela herself seems more than half aware of her role as striptease and of Mr. B.'s role as voyeur hiding in her bedroom closet. Early in the Bedfordshire scenes, while having good reason to suspect that Mr. B. is watching her, she first reveals her breasts (pulling off her "stays") and legs before walking "slip-shod" (in slippers exposing the heel seductively) toward her lover secretly enjoying the action. Whatever the logic of motive, the *mise en scène* for Virtue in Distress necessitates appropriate deshabelle and piety combined; likewise, as stage hero, Mr. B. "rushed" from the closet, attired handsomely "in a rich silk and silver morning-gown," rather than being caught naked like the indecently squatting figure of Square in Molly Seagrim's bedroom. Furthermore, as Lovelace's keyhole-peeping suggests, it is the manner of viewing as well as the object of interest that conditions the sexual arousal, something akin to the birdwatcher's pleasure in stealing upon the forbidden space of a rare plumage through the privileged eyes equipped with binoculars. Clarissa dressed in a white damask nightgown after the rape embodies the idea of something sacred that has been violated; but more importantly, from Lovelace's special perspective she is raised to an object of aesthetic contemplation on a par with other distressed heroines such as Rubens's or Reynolds's depictions of Dido.¹⁴

The English novelist's reticence, as Cockshut points out, is curiously more pronounced in legitimate than in illicit sexual relations. Despite the conventional respect for marriage in literature and its use in resolving most comic plots, the festive rituals themselves are usually postponed beyond the story, summarized in a final chapter quite different in tone from the previous narrative.¹⁵ Although Cockshut

¹³ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), pp. 84-87.

¹⁴ See *Pamela*, Everyman's Library, 2 vols. (London: Dent, 1962), 1:47-49. Cf. *Clarissa*, Everyman's Library, 4 vols. (London: Dent, 1962), 3:218. Not even Clarissa is above thinking about fashion by way of giving us an aesthetic perspective: "I was not displeased to see him in his riding dress" (2:205). For Lovelace's keyhole-peeping, see 2:506-14. Belford's view that Clarissa is too ethereal for marriage supports her romantic image of the unattainable and mysterious woman, *la belle dame sans merci* (2:243). Parenthetical references in the text are to the Everyman editions of these novels, by volume and page. Jean Hagstrum comments insightfully on the baroque theme of Dido in *Sex and Sensibility*, pp. 280-81.

¹⁵ Cockshut, p. 23. Northrop Frye remarks on the festive marriages celebrated at the end of comedies, *Anatomy of Criticism* (New York: Atheneum, 1968), p. 163.

credits Fielding with breaking free from this convention in *Amelia*, with its portrayal of passionate love between husband and wife, Richardson's first novel is unabashedly open about the heroine's sexual excitement on her wedding day and in the sequel about her interest in holding on to his affection during her pregnancy. After detailing every moment of Pamela's triumphant day — from her quivering condition and spilling of chocolate, the very words of the wedding ceremony and her grateful curtsying, to her drinking "two glasses of champagne, and afterwards a glass of sack" (whether for the purposes of an aphrodisiac or of an anesthetic remains unclear) — the journal breaks off at eleven o'clock that evening when the heroine enters the marriage-bed. Of course, the sexual act cannot be represented; but there is no mistaking the next morning its effect on her identity: "At breakfast, when I knew not how to see him, he emboldened me by talking of *you*, my dear parents: a subject, he generously knew, I *could* talk of: and gave me assurances that he would make you both happy" (1:315–17). As we shall discuss in the next section, Mr. B.'s invoking his bride's parents to alleviate sexual guilt after the nuptial defloration introduces the motif of surrogate family relationships, reverting here to the father's parental authority to ease the transition to the husband's.

Contrary to the Victorian stereotype of denying libido in the woman, appetite in Richardson's heroines appears to be normative for the sexual relationship. Even without Freud's theory of the oral stage of the child's development, eating and sexual gratification were widely associated. For instance, the naked Nuer tribe of the Sudan have a strict prohibition against not only unmarried males' and females' eating together but even their *mentioning* food to each other, a taboo as extreme as in medieval European culture, where gluttony and lust were interchangeable "deadly sins" — witness the eating scene with Tom and Mrs. Waters in Book IX, chapter 5, of *Tom Jones*.¹⁶ A telltale sign of Pamela's true feelings toward Mr. B. before their eventual reconciliation thus occurs in an eating scene:

"Cut up," said he, "that chicken." I did so. "Now," said he, and took a knife and fork, and put a wing upon my plate, "let me see you eat that." — "O Sir!" said I, "I have eat a whole breast of chicken already, and cannot eat so much." But he said I must eat it for his sake, and he would teach me to eat heartily; so I did eat it; but was much confused at his so kind and unusual freedom and condescension. You can't imagine how Mrs.

¹⁶ E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Kinship and Marriage among the Nuer* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), p. 55.

Jewkes looked and stared, and how respectful she seemed to me, and called me *good Madam*, I'll assure you, urging me to take a little bit of tart.

(1:187)

Although her adroitness in carving the chicken presumably assures Mr. B. that she is eligible to dine in polite company, his coaxing her to indulge for his sake implies a nurturing role that establishes their intimacy. This sexual meaning of food comes out most clearly in the long altercation between Pamela and Lady Davers after the marriage. When Pamela offers to leave the room after Lady Davers and Jackey have finished their dinner:

"I suppose I may now depart your presence, Madam."—"I suppose not," said she. "Why, I'll lay thee a wager, child, thy stomach's too full to eat, and so thou may'st fast, till thy manly master comes home."

Earlier, Jackey jests by innuendoes about which part of the chicken to offer to Pamela. Lady Davers suggested "a pinion, or breast, or anything":

"But, may-be, child," said he, "thou likest the rump; shall I bring it thee?" and then laughed like an idiot, for all he is a lord's son, and may be a lord himself."¹⁷

References to food, like the "taps" on the cheek or shoulders that constitute a "beating" of the heroine, are metonymic of the whole conflict in the novel over possessing her body. Though perhaps lacking the gustatory concreteness of *Pamela*, *Clarissa* and *Sir Charles Grandison* also link eating to sexual love as shown in the obvious contrast between Clarissa's fasting and mortification of the flesh after the rape and Harriet Byron's joyful wedding feast.¹⁸ Sometimes orality dwindles to mock heroic violence in the drawing room, as in Mr. Greville's cannibalistic biting of Harriet's hand while exclaiming, "By my soul, I could eat you" (1:101).

¹⁷ As Peter Sabor points out, Richardson emended "rump" to "merry-thought" or wish-bone in the last corrected edition, published in 1801. See Sabor's Penguin edition based on this text (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1980), p. 410, and footnote 303. Quotations in text above are from Everyman edition, 1:352 and 348, respectively.

¹⁸ In her narcissistic rejection of her family Clarissa dines alone in the ivy summer-house, her favorite place for taking her meals, a footnote informs us, and thus symbolic of her unconscious adolescent awakening; later, after the trauma of sexual violence, her refusal to eat or undress is part of her spiritual withdrawal from the world, from "reality" (1:445, 465; and 3:78).

II. Kinship and Family Surrogates

As if rendered obsolete by the new system of friendship-surrogates, with idealized authority figures replacing kinship ties, the old family patriarch is strangely distant in Richardson's novels. Without the happy evasions of *Pamela*, where Mr. B's father is mentioned only once in the sequel, and of *Sir Charles Grandison*, where the hero's wayward father dies conveniently to allow good works to begin, *Clarissa* explores relentlessly the triangular conflict between father and daughter concerning lover; but even so, for dramatic purposes the mother, brother, and sister are the most visible antagonists. Although extreme sexual differentiation, totemic division of property, and marriages of convenience are underlying causes of the tragedy, at a more general level it depicts the war between generations and sexes that Johnson remarks: "The opinions of children and parents, of the young and the old, are naturally opposite, by the contrary effects of hope and despondence, of expectation and experience, without crime or folly on either side. The colours of life in youth and age appear different, as the face of nature in spring and winter."¹⁹ The internecine struggle between father and daughter, brother and sister, and several generations of kin doubtless shows the frightening truth of the family organization that all three novels try to resolve. Lovelace, the last scion of an aristocratic family much older and prouder than the Harlowes (the assonance with "harlot" is significant), is an unwilling pawn in this system, of marriage à la mode; and to some extent he may be genuinely sympathetic with Clarissa's rebelliousness. Both begin as allies against the patriarchal tyranny, and, however different their destinies, both rely on their psychic resources to confront a system ostensibly unchangeable. Although a more egalitarian, nuclear family, based on a companionate, affective marriage is the implicit norm, and although Clarissa is moved by an unconscious libido toward Lovelace from the outset, their conflict goes beyond the mundane feminism of Anna Howe and the misogyny of the Harlowes. Clarissa's ultimate weapon is her commitment to suicide, carefully hedged, of course, by the requirements of a proper Christian death. She stands outside time as she progresses from one house of confinement to another—Harlowe Place, Sinclair's, Moore's, Smith's, and finally, her "Father's House," or coffin.²⁰

¹⁹ Samuel Johnson, *Rasselas*, chapter 26.

²⁰ I have discussed in detail the medico-theological basis of Clarissa's death, in *The Discourse of the Mind in Eighteenth-Century Fiction* (The Hague: Mouton, 1974), pp. 113–25. Margaret Anne Doody comments well on the house iconography in *Clarissa, A Natural Passion: A Study of the Novels of Samuel Richardson* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), pp. 188–215. For a more exaggerated emphasis on Clarissa's suicide, see Carol Houlihan Flynn, *Samuel Richardson: A Man of Letters* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1982), pp. 37–41.

Clarissa is thus a masterstroke against the illusions of kinship as property, appealing to the higher metaphysic of the soul's essential freedom from the flesh and parents. This lofty perspective of eternity depreciates the identity of house and family to transitory relationships; and in the end, the landed estate, brothel, inn, and prison become eerily blurred with the heroine's diseased body. Throughout her journey from Harlowe Place a number of misplaced surrogates lay claim to her, and Mother Sinclair and her sisterhood are only the more blatant forms of human betrayal along the way to death. A temporary respite from her isolation occurs at the Smiths': "she is for finding out something *paternal* and *maternal* in every one (the latter qualities in Mrs. Lovick and Mrs. Smith) to supply to herself the father and mother her dutiful heart pants after" (3:469). Since the removal of the father's curse pertains only to the next world, she cannot return to Harlowe Place alive; and thus her dying hours have the comfort of substitutes — the reformed rake Belford sharing the honors with Dr. H. and the apothecary Mr. Goddard of being truly "paternal" and the only men permitted near her. The crowning substitution is the "Heavenly Bridegroom" for her earthly suitor, an ironic proof of Lovelace's fear that "marriage is the grave of love."

After the tragic dissolution of all worldly ties in *Clarissa*, Richardson's last novel projects impressively the hedonism of the new family order that we have been considering. A vigorous environmentalist in the Lockean school, Richardson implies that good surrogates are better than bad parents and siblings. He shows an ideal community (really an orphanage!) held together by an exemplary fraternal authority, capable of sentimental rapport with women in contrast to the early Mr. B. or Lovelace, modeled on the Don Juan figure. Throughout the novel two basic world views clash — the old patriarchal, feudal system, with its obsolete military code for the male and its utter subjugation of the female, and the new association based on individual merit and sensibility. The Italian element of the story enlarges the cultural significance of the obsolescent kinship system, throwing into relief the superior liberal Protestant society flourishing simultaneously in England.

Like the family developing in the sequel to *Pamela*, that at Grandison Hall is strongly matrist, the hero identifying with the mother, whose religious piety divided him from his father's aristocratic standards of manhood: "From her instructions, I had an early notion, that it was much more noble to forgive an injury than to resent it; and to give a life than to take it" (1:261). Although he is a complaisant husband, leaving the domestic burden entirely to the mother and eventually causing her death by his duelling and wenching (obvious upper-class evils attributed to the Continent), Sir Thomas proves a tyrant

toward his daughters concerning marriage, and threatens to disown them entirely; and like all the other unconverted rakes he dies from his vices. Sir Charles's first duties after inheriting the estate are to make amends for his father's neglect of the family, to provide dowries for his sisters and even support for his father's former mistress and children. His "continual round of good offices" toward women in his growing circle of admirers is a latter-day knight-errantry, a wish-fulfillment to atone for the evils of the old patriarchal system: "A father and a brother in one!" (1:138).

III. Philanthropy

Along with the inward turn in eighteenth-century domestic life, celebrated in Richardson's fiction, there is a deeper sense of the ills afflicting society in the mass. Just as the family assumes responsibilities traditionally functions of the Church, so self-interested monetary schemes, particularly the associated charities based on the joint-stock company in trade, supplement the parish for welfare services.²¹ Whatever the religious or secular incentive, charity was first of all to have some tangible benefit for the donor. The resurgent worldliness, furthermore, went against medieval Christian doctrines of unconditional relief of poverty and an intensified work ethic that incriminated the poor. Defoe's *Giving Alms no Charity, and employing the poor a grievance to the Nation* (1704) deliberately exploited Parliament's readiness to believe that pauperism generally results from moral deficiency rather than from social and economic causes.²²

In Richardson's fiction the poor are useful to the landed rich mostly as faithful tenants and servants who reflect the feudal *noblesse oblige* of their masters. It is important to both Pamela and Clarissa to discover that their lovers are respected on their estates, for instance, a situation developed fully in the visit to Pemberley in *Pride and Prejudice*; and for the heroines a great inducement to marry is the prospect of sharing the landlord's power. Harriet's daydream of matriarchy goes even beyond the estate:

I wish, with all my heart, that the best woman in the world were queen of a great nation; and that it was in my power, for

²¹ For a comprehensive, if dated, survey of the rise of private charities in the eighteenth century, see Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *English Local Government: English Poor Law History: Part I. The Old Poor Law* (London and New York: Longmans, Green, 1927). See also B. Kirkman Gray, *A History of English Philanthropy* (London: Cass, 1967); David Owen, *English Philanthropy, 1660-1960* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 1964); and W. K. Jordan, *Philanthropy in England, 1480-1660* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1959).

²² Sidney and Beatrice Webb, pp. 114-16; and James Sutherland, *Defoe* (London: Methuen, 1950), pp. 128-34.

the sake of enlarging Sir Charles's to do good, to make him her royal consort. Then am I morally sure, that I should be the humble means of making a whole people happy!

(1:193)

But though the Friend of Mankind may busy himself in setting up little dowries for marriageable girls in both France and England (2:11) and improve his estate with a new church (2:7), he demonstrates only a conventional eighteenth-century attitude toward the poor: "Husbandry and labour are what are most wanting to be encouraged among the lower class of people" (2:478); and in a novel inspired with patriotic Whiggism, moreover, Clementina's dismay on her tour in England hints at the urban squalor: "I have been ten days in this great, and, as it seems to me, ugly city: A vastly populous one: People very busy. I thought your London people were all rich — But what is this to write to you about?" (3:333). Her remark is somewhat cryptic, but the author's ambivalence may betray a certain fear of the city, a fear that is driving the upper middle classes to the suburbs in imitation of the landed gentry.

The pronouncement that there are "few solid friendships" outside the family — part of a larger retirement theme reaching back to classical pastoral and satire, and familiar in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century poetry — appears to contradict the heroic image of the Friend of Mankind and of the Citizen of the World. But, as in *Clarissa*, the sincere ideal requires withdrawal from the world, a commonplace stance in the sentimental cult later in the century.²³ Though an ambassador of British, Protestant culture, Sir Charles is at heart a private man: "I live not to the world: I live to myself; to the monitor within me" (1:206). Being a devoted husband, father, and landlord is a spiritual vocation; and it requires a form of retirement that avoids on the one hand the solitariness of the celibate priest and on the other the corrupt gregariousness of the politician: "My chief glory will be, to behave commendably in the *private* life. I wish not to be a *public* man; and it must be a very particular call, for the Service of my King and Country united, that shall draw me out into public notice" (3:99). Hence, by becoming a brother to Clementina, Sir Charles reaches the apogee of his cosmopolitan proselytism: "Friendship, dearest crea-

²³ Lionel Trilling sets forth this ideal cogently in *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1972). See also Leon Guilhamet, *The Sincere Ideal: Studies on Sincerity in Eighteenth-Century Literature* (Montreal: McGill Univ. Press, 1974), and R. F. Brissenden, *Virtue in Distress* (London: Macmillan, 1974). Henri Peyre's *Literature and Sincerity* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1962) describes this obsessive theme in Continental literature.

tures, will make at pleasure a safe bridge over the narrow seas; it will cut an easy passage thro' rocks and mountains, and make England and Italy one country. Kindred souls are always near" (3:454). There is the understanding, of course, that the kindred souls of this brave new world belong to the same social class, no matter the differences in religion and cultural tradition.

Like that of the joint-stock companies in the period, Sir Charles's "glorious philanthropy" is also highly selective, focusing on promoting the interests of women. To deny any erotic motive in this knight-errantry would be idle, since the female recipients themselves constantly titillate over his benevolence and become desperate at lacking the means of repaying him. Harriet's cry, which amused Jane Austen, suggests the woman's dilemma: "But what shall I do with my gratitude?" (1:167). Sir Charles may complain, "Why have I such a feeling heart?" (2:45); but Clementina unabashedly remarks the egotism in all this male goodness: "Are *you* the only man on earth, who have it in your will, and in your power, to confer obligations, yet can be above receiving returns?" (2:612).²⁴

To what degree Richardson was aware that the power "to confer obligations" may be only a lusting after feminine patronage is unclear; but a century later, when philanthropy becomes suspect in Dickens's *Bleak House*, one of Harold Skimpole's "playful speeches," Jarndyce's favorite, undercuts the degrading necessity of dependents in charitable activity:

I envy you your power of doing what you do. It is what I should revel in myself. I don't feel any vulgar gratitude to you. I almost feel as if *you* ought to be grateful to *me*, for giving you the opportunity of enjoying the luxury of generosity. I know you like it. For anything I can tell, I may have come into the world expressly for the purpose of increasing your stock of happiness.²⁵

²⁴ To preserve the romantic atmosphere of wish-fulfillment Richardson endows his heroines securely. Harriet may reflect, "I am such a nothing!" (2:295), but she is worth at least £13,000. Emily Jervois is the heiress of £50,000 and thus poses a serious difficulty to any guardian worried about fortune-hunters. In contrast, Esther Summerson in *Bleak House* really does begin life as "such a nothing" and regards it a moral duty to be happy once she is provided with a guardian. Richardson's own charitable practices gravitated toward women. For his interest in the Magdalen House, founded in 1758 for penitent prostitutes, see T. C. Duncan Eaves and Ben D. Kimpel, *Samuel Richardson: A Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 463-65.

²⁵ Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*, ed. Andrew Lang, 2 vols. (New York: Scribner's, 1905), 1:86.

It is the nature of the child to receive without the power to make returns; hence Skimpole, that "child of the universe" in an age of "telescopic philanthropy," has the political intuition to play out his role for all that it is worth. But as a woman, Harriet is painfully sincere as the model beneficiary, full of indebtedness and guilt: "What a consciousness of inferiority," she says, "fills even a mind not ungenerous, when it labours under the sense of obligations it cannot return!" (1:204). Mary Wollstonecraft, by contrast, resented the fact that her society gave women no other option to the man's financial support than "to consider their persons as the proper return."²⁶ Clementina, we recall, is driven mad when religious scruples prevent her from the union needed to employ her gratitude to Sir Charles. Thus Richardson leaves unanswered the problem for those condemned to unrequited generosity and spiritual dependence; and he apparently could not decide finally how to dispose of Clementina, whether to send her to a convent or to a worse fate in marriage to the Count of Belvedere.

Unlike many previous commentaries that found Richardson's alleged prurience an embarrassment to his explicit morality, this discussion has stressed the erotic energy in his novels as a vital motive toward social good. Sexual love radiates its force mysteriously in the text, charging every material thing with erotic significance — clothing, food, and even pen and ink. The first movement in each Richardsonian novel is from some pristine innocence, when space was polymorphously available to the child, toward the crisis of the bedroom and its profound social ramifications. The sexual act — in marriage or out — indicates the dying of the parentally directed self to a new bond or bondage; and in *Pamela* and *Grandison* it leads to the nuclear family that frees itself from the clan and establishes more useful relationships in society through money. The second movement reverses the inward turn and cautiously reaches out to selective charities, mostly toward unmarried women, to eroticize wealth and power

²⁶ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (New York: Norton, 1967), p. 151. Harriet's frustration reflects ironically the aggressiveness of the hero's "goodness": "A most intolerable *superiority*! — I wish he would do something wrong; something cruel" (2:89). Whatever the claims to universal brotherhood in *Grandison*, it appears obvious that the giver enjoys more than the receiver the fruits of the much touted division of labor in classical economics: "Whether giving creates the class society or class society gives rise to giving may be a matter of dispute, but one thing is certain: it has a specific, material effect on the development of classes and cannot be interpreted as a purely sacral, wholly noneconomic phenomenon," Ernest Borneman, *The Psychoanalysis of Money* (New York: Urizen Books, 1976), p. 337. For an example of the complex affect of giving and receiving in prose narrative, see my essay "Philanthropy and the Selfish Reader in Goldsmith's *Life of Nash*," *Studies in Burke and His Time* 19 (Autumn 1978):197–207.

under the aegis of universal brotherhood. Although presented as an egalitarian ethic opposed to hereditary privilege, the bourgeois prototype in Richardson's myth actually creates new forms of subordination and clientage while replacing the old. The connection between sexual love and monetary patronage is troublesome in *Grandison* because it is only partly recognized and articulated, but it looks ahead to Jane Austen and later nineteenth-century novelists for fuller scrutiny.