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P/B: *Pamela* as Sexual Fiction

TERRY J. CASTLE

Fifteen-year-old Pamela, persecuted and aroused, is confused about sex. This fact alone might seem a critical commonplace (who, in Richardson, is not confused about sex?), but what is interesting is the depth of Pamela's confusion. For one thing, her eyes are always playing tricks on her. Trying to escape from Mr. B.'s country estate and inef-fable, evil Mrs. Jewkes, Pamela is stopped short by the sight of a "nasty grim bull" that stands in the pasture beyond the house. On a second attempt right after, she sees the bull again, together with another, and the two beasts momentarily remind her of her human captors: "Well, thought I, here is double witchcraft, to be sure! Here is the spirit of my master in one bull and Mrs. Jewkes in the other" (158).¹ The incarnation of Mrs. Jewkes as a bull is perhaps a peculiar element in this fantasy, but the oddity is soon subsumed by a greater perceptual distortion. Pamela runs back to the house in fright, only to look once more and find that the "supposed bulls" are really "two poor cows, a-grazing in distant places." Witchcraft aside, the mixup here is a basic one—some might say *the* basic one. Pamela suppresses gender, then recognizes it. Her visual disorder is resolved only by renewed intense looking—the double take, in which sexual difference, after a delay, is at last acknowledged. Does Pamela like what she sees? The bull/cows frighten her "like a fool, out of all my purposes," and she collapses in a heap. "O," she writes, "how terrible every thing appears to me!"

Pamela's problem with what is male and what is female—conveyed symptomatically in her faltering sight—is not only immediately intriguing in itself, it points us toward a certain interpretation of her experience. Like a number of episodes in Richardson's novel, the encounter with the "supposed bulls" teases us by hinting at something mysterious, yet important about the heroine's psyche. Pamela's visual error is suggestive in every sense; it seems to call attention to deeper structures in her

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¹ Parenthetical notation gives page numbers in William M. Sale, Jr.'s, edition of *Pamela* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1958).

discourse. Her mistake is uncanny. It invites us to wonder, more than ever, about the inner life of this "pert little body," and possible hidden patterns in her turbulent history.

Surprisingly, few commentators on *Pamela* have tried to say in detail what the foregoing scene, and other equally remarkable instances of the heroine's sexual confusion, imply about her psychological condition.² This is the more strange because "psychological insight"—particularly in regard to the *minutiae* of erotic experience—has always been noted as Richardson's special accomplishment.³ In the case of *Pamela*, however,

²Until very recently, a tendency of Richardson criticism has been to redescribe Pamela's psychosexual experience in terms of other kinds of experience. The approach, it seems to me, subtly negates the impact of her discourse on the reader, and the reality of her anxiety. Robert Donovan, for instance, turns his attention away from the psychological dynamic and recasts Pamela's plight solely in sociological terms in "The Problem of Pamela, or Virtue Unrewarded" (*SEL* 3 (Summer 1963): 377–95). For Donovan, the "cow in the pasture" episode, like Pamela's abduction itself, is no more than one of Richardson's "clumsy and transparent devices" for moving the plot along, and the real tension of the book derives not from sexual anxiety but from Pamela's attempt to find a "social orientation." Mark Kinkead-Weekes, in *Samuel Richardson: Dramatic Novelist* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1973) sees the central concern in the novel as Pamela's "spiritual growth": she must "learn faith in God and Man" (p. 55)—with B. as the prototypical (and unproblematic) embodiment of the latter. For Kinkead-Weekes, Pamela must let go of an excessive punctilio in regard to her would-be rapist; Richardson's text thus becomes an extended "critique" of the Puritan virtue of prudence. In "Reflections on the Letter: The Reconciliation of Distance and Presence in *Pamela*" (*ELH* 41 (Fall 1974): 375–99), Roy Roussel gives a rather sentimental existential reading to Pamela's and B.'s relation: both must escape an essential solipsism through "love," which, in Roussel's analysis, remains vaguely defined, and without a specific erotic referent. In *A Natural Passion: A Study of the Novels of Samuel Richardson* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1974), Margaret Doody, finally, sees Pamela's change in the light of literary convention: her acceptance of B. is significant in that it enforces the transformation of the fiction into "pastoral comedy." Literary genre, in this case, determines the shape of Pamela's discourse, and the heroine's psyche is altogether absent. Two exceptions to the foregoing tendency (along with the Wilson text cited): D. C. Muecke's "Beauty and Mr. B." (*SEL* 7 (Summer 1967): 467–74) preserves the phantasmic element at work in the novel but—in its linking of various characters' symbolic functions with those of archetypal figures in fairy tales—gives more of a Jungian cast to the text than I have attempted here. John Dussinger's elegant "What Pamela Knew: An Interpretation" (*JEGP* 69 (July 1970): 377–93) defines *Pamela* as an "identity quest in fiction" and explicitly describes this quest in terms of psychosexual forces. Particularly in its early stages, he claims, the fiction is a "dramatization" of the hysteria resulting from Pamela's "sexual awakening." Dussinger remains, however, somewhat more interested in B.'s "Oedipal" configuration (acted out mainly with his sister) than the heroine's.

³Samuel Johnson's famous valuation of Richardson over Fielding initiates this kind of praise, of course; but Ian Watt's remark on Richardson's "subjective and inward direction" is also typical in this regard: "There are many equally probable and perhaps more interesting characters in literature before Pamela, but there are none whose daily thoughts and feelings we know so intimately." See *The Rise of the Novel* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1957), p. 176.

even the best of modern critics are curiously reticent about what this insight actually consists in. Most grant, willingly enough, that Pamela's actions in the novel are dictated to a certain extent by veiled, often conflicting psychic impulses, and that she undergoes some kind of psychosexual development (manifested in her ultimate acceptance of Mr. B. as husband and lover), but the underlying form of this "happy change" is left in the dark. One recent interpretation, Stuart Wilson's, is a case in point. With eloquence (and more sympathy than is usually accorded Richardson's problematic heroine) Wilson defines Pamela's process of change as a "prolonged, intense and disruptive emotional experience" in which "developing awareness of her own sexuality" is central.⁴ She is, he argues, an adolescent girl torn between "awakening natural instincts and the repressive dictates of her conscience," and the resolution of plot in the novel depends on the resolution of this sexual conflict. Wilson freely imports the vocabulary of depth psychology into his discussion: he notes Pamela's projections and repressions, her initial "hysterical" rejection of sexuality, her "unconscious" attraction "to what she fears most." Persuasive as Wilson's reading is, it falls short finally in that we are left to guess at the actual content of Pamela's "hysteria," the focus for her "natural" instincts. The object of her fear and desire — an "anatomy" for her disorder — is lacking. Is it simply Mr. B.? Is it something he represents? But what then of Mrs. Jewkes, who is so prominent for more than two-fifths of the novel? While Wilson's argument hints at a psychoanalytic context for understanding Richardson's work, it does not draw it out; he ultimately leaves several important layers of *Pamela* in censored form.

I would like to maintain that regarding the odd-seeming history before us, it is necessary to do a double take. A psychological content is indeed present in *Pamela*, and once we surmise its basic shape, it is hardly of the unfamiliar or mystifying kind. *Pamela* is in fact a closely determined, stereotypical fiction of sexuality. The heroine's "visions" (including the problematic ones, such as above) fall into place within a larger fantasy construct ordering Richardson's novel — a myth of female sexual development which is itself deeply inwrought in Western culture. To borrow a phrase from Juliet Mitchell's *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, *Pamela* delineates symbolically the "making of a lady." The text models metaphorically the process of female socialization. Pamela herself is an exemplary character, and *Pamela* is a sexual myth — of the kind that Freud would later, historically, subject to structural analysis. To analyze

⁴Stuart Wilson, "Richardson's *Pamela*: An Interpretation", *PMLA* 88(January 1973):79-91.

the undeniable power of Pamela's "blessed" transformation — witnessed in the climactic marriage to her would-be seducer — is to uncover the basic material informing the text.

Pamela is more than the tale of one young woman's extremely problematic courtship. It may be read also as symbolic plot. Speaking generally, this plot has to do with the discovery of the "nature" of male and female, and with the response of the self to this disclosure. The basic peripety recorded in the encounter with the bull/cows suggests as much; this paradigmatic anecdote shows the heroine experiencing the reawakening and resolution of an archaic enigma — that of sexual differentiation. The process of visual revelation and response rendered here is borne out equally, however, in the human configurations in which Pamela participates. Throughout her narrative, Pamela is disposed — held — between male and female characters in elemental, eroticized situations. In the household of Mr. B., she is pushed, shockingly enough, into a world of sexual dialectic, and comes gradually to assume a certain position in it herself. Yet as she is forced by B. and his accomplices to an awareness of her own "femaleness" in an adult context, she also recapitulates, or relives — in a symbolic way — the girl child's early, classic experience of sexual discovery and sexual self-definition. Her discourse expands out of the present (it is a "writing to the moment") but it also alludes subliminally to a past — to that primal catastrophic moment of cognition in which difference, and its implications, are first perceived. Viewed metaphorically, the text is a gloss on an archetypal vision of separation between male and female. I emphasize here the fact that Pamela's story involves confrontation with a world inhabited by both men *and* women (and not just the world of men) because this has often been lost in interpretations that concentrate mainly on her relation to Mr. B. Particularly as we reread *Pamela* in the light of contemporary feminist criticism, we are struck by the number of powerful female figures taking part in the action. "Mother" Jewkes is the most vivid and disquieting of these, of course, but there are several others. An interpretive imbalance is redressed when it is noted that Pamela is simultaneously caught up with both men and women, but, I hope to show, the fact is also an important clue to the nature of the psychic conflict and transformation that she undergoes.

Narrative in *Pamela* is in fact organized as a sequence of triangular situations. The triangle is the "pattern" (using Forster's term) of literal human displacement in the novel; it is also the pattern of psychosexual displacement. The writer/reader fiction around which the work is constructed takes the shape first of all of a triangle, in typically inverted form (Fig. 1). Pamela, at the bottom-most point in the figure, writes simultaneously to two readers, a female/male pair, her mother and father.

FIGURE 1:

Reader 1 (female)



Reader 2 (male)

Writer (female)

In the narrative proper this primary figure is repeated: Pamela is invariably situated in triangular relation to both a female and a male character, displaced at the other two vertices, and these characters in turn stand in a dialectical relation to each other.⁵ The reader “remembers” *Pamela* as a series of three-way scenes: Pamela at the death-bed of Lady B. with Mr. B. also in attendance, Pamela being shielded from her “diabolical master” by Mrs. Jervis, Pamela in bed with Jewkes and B., Pamela held prisoner by the incensed Lady Davers and her foppish nephew Jackie. The immediate effect may remind us of certain eighteenth-century visual structures, such as Ronald Paulson describes in *Emblem and Expression*. The English “conversation-pieces,” particularly the works of Zoffany, often employ the triangular human pattern, and Highmore, who illustrated *Pamela* in twelve engravings in 1745, uses three-figure compositions in several of the plates, with the heroine shown in relation at once to a male and female figure, one more prominent than the other, depending on the moment in the action depicted.⁶ In the fictional world, the “triangles” are often set off from

⁵It should be noted that I accord the basic position in the “triangular” situation to Pamela because I choose here to read Richardson’s text (as it seems likely he intended) “through” Pamela herself, and confine myself to describing the actions of the novel’s other characters as they intrude, physically and psychologically, upon the “field” of her narrative. It is conceivable, however, that one might wish to invert the triangular image, giving privileged status, say, to Mr. B. and the male perspective. Indeed, the analyses of John Dussinger and Mark Kinkead-Weekes (see note 2) implicitly attempt to read “through” B. and elucidate *his* psychic impulsions more than I have done so here. I am not sure of the success of these attempts, however. In the unfortunate sequel to *Pamela*, *Pamela II*, Richardson indeed lets B.’s side of things emerge, and B. himself becomes more of an actual “character.” In the case of *Pamela* itself, however, Richardson seems, in some sense, to have been satisfied that B. remain for the reader what he is for Pamela the narrator—radically other, a cipher.

⁶Of Zoffany’s “conversations,” Paulson writes: “The basic formal structure . . . is the triangle, which when used to define a group indicates solidarity. Thus when the triangle is splintered, solidarity is manifestly qualified, and smaller groups are defined in terms of affection perhaps or personal interests.” Likewise, he describes two of Highmore’s *Pamela* plates thus: “In [one] scene Pamela and the housekeeper Mrs. Jervis, whose friendship Pamela uses as a buffer against her master’s advances, take up the centre of the picture space with Mr. B. only a tiny face peering at Pamela through a window in a door: the distances and spatial relationships tell the story virtually unaided. In another Mr. B. is a lone figure off to one side, disguised as a maid, while Pamela prepares to get

each other by shifts in topography: as Pamela is shunted from place to place, say, from Bedfordshire to the Lincolnshire estate, and from one set of persons to another, the actual female/male pair to whom she is related changes, but the essential geometry is preserved. At any given moment in the text, Pamela's powers of observation are simultaneously directed at members of two sexes, and oscillate between them. The insistence of the triangular motif in Pamela's discourse suggests, perhaps, the special nature of her unconscious task: the coming to grips, not simply with "naughty" B., but with sexual dichotomy itself.

The repeating geometric structure holds out an important additional effect on the reader. While it provides an analogy for temporal process, the sequence of triangular configurations may also give us at times the sense of a palimpsest, or superimposition of one layer of experience on another. Mark Kinkead-Weekes notes that Richardson's fictional technique frequently involves the use of scenes which recall earlier scenes, "but with a new point or different emphasis."⁷ Pamela's narrative, composed of discrete yet identically ordered human clusterings, invites us to compare one grouping with another—to go back and forth between triangles and find relationships and differences. If we do so, one intriguing feature in particular stands out. At any moment in the fiction, Pamela's psychic investment indeed may appear to oscillate between female and male figures, but ultimately a shift in her primary focus is discernible. Across the narrative, Pamela tends away from initial concentration on the female vertex of the triangle, toward deeper psychological involvement with the increasingly intrusive male. The first paragraph of the fiction renders this dynamic in little: Lady B., the original source of power and influence in the heroine's life, is dying; she is about to be superseded in the household, and in Pamela's emotional world, by Mr. B., who stands by. Pamela describes first the mother, then the son—and this movement of her gaze (and discourse) from female to male hints at the final resolution of psychological conflict in the novel. When we relate succeeding triangles to each other, the total pattern becomes more visible. Female and male characters everywhere contest over Pamela (often literally over her body itself), but in the course of the narrative, female control over the heroine decreases precisely as masculine control increases. In a typical early triangle, for instance, the housekeeper Mrs. Jervis succeeds in protecting Pamela from Mr. B.'s advances. In a later scene reminiscent of the first attempted rape, Mrs.

into a large, prominent bed she has to share with the odious Mrs. Jewkes." See Ronald Paulson, *Emblem and Expression: Meaning in English Art of the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.; Harvard Univ. Press, 1975), pp. 131, 156ff.

⁷Kinkead-Weekes, p. 51.

Jewkes replaces Mrs. Jarvis in the basic configuration, and now, obviously, the female participant is no longer the heroine's helper. Mrs. Jewkes is Mr. B.'s second, his pawn. The triangular structure in *Pamela*, thus, is not stable, but reflects dynamic changes — changes which, on the level of symbolic plot, may in turn suggest alterations in Pamela's psychological focus.

The general resemblance of *Pamela*'s basic narrative "triangle" to the family triangle described by Freud and others, of course, is fairly obvious. Pamela's parents form with her the writer/reader figure on which the outward form of the fiction is based; we may already suspect that they also determine in some way the psychic content of her narrative — its inward form. I would like to suggest, however, a more specific use for the psychoanalytic analogue. The dynamics of the triangular situation in *Pamela* — the "transfer," in the course of the narrative, of the heroine's interests (and body) from female to male characters — models the process of socialization in the female child, in particular (following Freud's analysis), the transition from pre-Oedipal to Oedipal stages. *Pamela* marks out, via a symbolic modification of the structural figure, a channeling of libido, a pattern of psychosexual transformation involving parental surrogates.

According to the basic Freudian description, we may recollect, the psychic life of the child — male or female — begins with a primary attachment to the maternal presence. Sexual differentiation is unknown at this earliest of stages. The mother fulfills all needs for the child, and is the object of all desire and fantasies. Juliet Mitchell, reviewing Freud's *Ego and the Id*, has described this phase thus: "[Pre-Oedipally] sexual roles are in no way fixed, all variations and permutations of sexual phantasies with the mother are available to both sexes alike. The father, if he enters at all, is a 'troublesome rival,' no more."⁸ The pre-Oedipal infant is bisexual in impulse — "polymorphously perverse" in Freud's famous formulation from *Three Essays on Sexuality*. This idyllic prehistoric moment in the psychic life of the child is disrupted, however, by the child's impinging awareness of anatomical distinctions between the sexes. Entry into a new psychosexual phase, the Oedipal phase, is prompted in both sexes by sudden perceptual discoveries about the difference between male and female. Freud alluded to these discoveries, of course, in the concept of the castration complex. For the female child, the castration complex — the sudden knowledge that she lacks a penis — may initiate a complicated process of psychic transference. Interpreting her

⁸Juliet Mitchell, *Psycho-analysis and Feminism: Freud, Reich, Laing and Women* (New York: Random House, 1974), p. 96.

biological situation (and her mother's) as a "lack," as a threat to her ego, she begins to gravitate toward her father out of desire to appropriate the newly-perceived paternal phallus. This wish, as Freud noted in the *Three Essays*, may later be reinterpreted as the desire to bear a child by her father. The crucial and catastrophic change that is marked in the female castration complex is precisely, then, the shift from female to male, from the pre-Oedipal mother to the Oedipal father.⁹ The process can be visualized as the replacement of one version of the parent/child triangle by another:

FIGURE 2: Pre-Oedipal situation

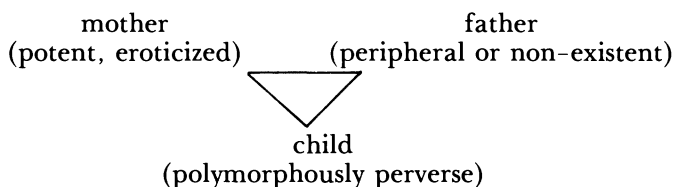
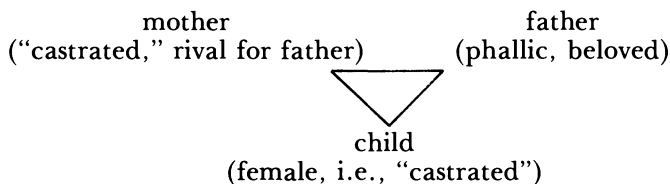


FIGURE 3: Oedipal situation



The girl who resolves the castration complex by transferring her desire from mother to father, as Freud noted many times, has fulfilled a culturally normative pattern of female psychosexual development, and enters into the larger cultural definition of "womanhood." She acts out that pattern of sexual expression identified and encouraged by society as "normal." Despite outward sanction, however, the psychic passage is not necessarily an easy one, and can be fraught with inner conflict. The girl may, for instance, resist indefinitely the notion of her own "castration," and fantasize that either she herself or her mother possesses a penis. Likewise, she may retrench altogether and refuse to break the original

⁹See Juliet Mitchell, pp. 110ff., p. 117. "The girl's Oedipal situation is a complete displacement of the mother-attachment on to her father. . . . The situation adds up to the fact that the shock of her lack, her 'castration,' and the end of her pre-Oedipal mother-love force the little girl to *take refuge* in the Oedipus complex."

tie with the maternal figure.¹⁰ But Freud stressed finally that cultural pressures on the female child—the pressures of socialization—are such that in most cases she will ultimately embrace the “normal” pattern, witnessed by erotic transfer to the father, and acceptance of her own (and her mother’s) “lack.”

Freud believed that the traumatic transitional moment in the pattern—the moment of Oedipal shift—could be relived by the psyche at any time in later life. In particular, with the end of the latency period and the start of puberty, memories of the original transfer of love from mother to father—and of the attendant problems this radical change involved—are especially active in the unconscious. The discourse of pubescent Pamela, whatever else it may be “about,” would seem to incorporate, through innuendo and symbolic incident, a memory of this shift. Her history contains, in more or less displaced fashion, all the elements in the classic psychosexual pattern: initial gravitation toward powerful maternal figures and resistance (marked by falsifying visual perceptions) to the notion of female “lack,” a traumatic disclosure of the facts of sexual difference and of her own “castrated” state, ultimate sublimation of phallic wishes through attachment to a father-substitute. The working out of the story however, may shock us: Pamela’s symbolic passage from pre-Oedipal to Oedipal stage is particularly sensational and intense, and is achieved only at a terrible psychic cost. Anthony Kearney has written that Pamela’s sexual fears “produce an almost instinctive recoil into words” in the novel.¹¹ *Pamela* derives its dramatic tension, its oscillatory quality (noted already in the dynamic aspect of its basic triangular structure), from the fact that the heroine evades for as long as possible acknowledgment of the “lack” which will determine her sexual role. Her history is characterized by moments of retrenchment, equivocation, and anxious withdrawal. Resistance is broken down only gradually, through acts of symbolic violence waged against the heroine. Pamela is left “maimed” (her own word) by her experiences. It is in this condition that she marries Mr. B.; it is this condition that she ultimately accepts as the necessary accompaniment to her “happy change.”

In the early “triangles” that Pamela’s discourse constructs for us, the heroine’s interests, as I mentioned before, are for the most part overseen by prominent female figures. This stage of her history would seem to

¹⁰See, for instance, Freud’s discussion of this in “The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman,” James Strachey, ed., *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 24 vols. (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1964), vol. 18.

¹¹Anthony Kearney, “Richardson’s *Pamela*: The Aesthetic Case,” *Review of English Literature* 7(July 1966):84.

parallel, in a generalized way, the pre-Oedipal phase. The first sections of Pamela's correspondence bespeak a powerful original attachment to the maternal archetype. Lady B. functions, historically, as the first of the maternal influences: though she never actually appears in the narrative except at the first on her deathbed, she stands behind it in some way, as an unconscious early presence. Her role, we learn, has been that of parent-surrogate to Pamela: she has raised and educated the heroine, taking her into service after Pamela's father loses his "place" and thereby occasions a family crisis. Lady B. is responsible for "making" Pamela what she is; she has filled the place of Pamela's own missing mother. (Pamela's real mother is of course at once intimate and distant in *Pamela*. She is one of the "readers" of the discourse (and in its most eroticized portions, the sole reader), but unlike Pamela's father, she never comes to see her daughter, and they remain physically separated to the end.) Lady B.'s final and most important function, the text implies, has been to block any masculine intrusion into Pamela's life. "According to Pamela," as Roy Roussel has observed, "the most important lesson taught to her by Mr. B.'s mother was to '*keep the men at a distance.*'"¹² Until the moment at which the novel begins, Lady B.'s presence, we presume, has prevented her son from exhibiting any interest in the heroine. In the deathbed scene Pamela gives no indication of ever having noticed the "young master" before that moment, and she is surprised by his first advances. As in the pre-Oedipal model, the masculine vertex of the family triangle is here for the most part unacknowledged.

With the death of Lady B., Mr. B. begins, of course, his penetration into Pamela's psychic realm. His presence is minimized at first because Pamela is protected by a second maternal figure, Mrs. Jervis. But this new triangle is relatively more unstable than the first: Mrs. Jervis's power over Pamela outweighs Mr. B.'s, but only temporarily. Still, the heroine herself clings to a vision of the all-powerful pre-Oedipal mother in her relationship with the housekeeper. As John Dussinger writes, the older woman is the "pivotal figure" in the early part of Pamela's discourse, and indeed an obvious "surrogate mother."¹³ At this stage in the psychic history, Mr. B. is only peripherally visible to Pamela, and she resists his alien presence by prolonging familiar archaic satisfactions with Mrs. Jervis. The good housekeeper, she is pleased to report to her parents, "uses me as if I were her own daughter" (9). Partly as a way of thwarting the master's new interest in her, Pamela takes to sharing a bed with Mrs. Jervis, but the arrangement would also seem to be a reconstitution,

¹²Roussel, p. 377.

¹³Dussinger, p. 379.

designed by the heroine, of that idyllic period of mother/child intimacy before the fall into Oedipal sexual awareness. Pamela tells Mrs. Jervis that if she can lie with her "on nights" she will "hide nothing" (19).¹⁴ In their physical closeness Mrs. Jervis and Pamela re-create momentarily a blissful, poignant time before separation — of subject and object, parent and child. "Mrs. Jervis could not help mingling tears with my tears: for I cried all the time I was telling her the story, and begged for her to advise me what to do" (19). They fantasize an escape, a regression away from Mr. B.'s growing influence: "[Mrs. Jervis] wished it was in her power to live independent; then she would take a little private house, and I should live with her like her daughter" (19). A weakening of the maternal presence is perhaps symbolically indicated in the fact that Mrs. Jervis cannot prevent Mr. B. from hiding in the bed-chamber closet (thus moving nearer to Pamela), but even here, while the housekeeper is physically present, B., significantly, still cannot get close enough to Pamela to make an actual attack on her virtue. When he springs from the closet in "a rich silk and silver morning gown," Mrs. Jervis interposes between master and maiden, and prevents him from "proceeding." Mrs. Jervis's diversions ("You shall not hurt this innocent, said she: for I will lose my life in her defense" (60)) give Pamela herself time to fall into a conveniently deep stupor. When she wakes, the "wicked wretch" (B.) is gone.

With Pamela's abduction to the Lincolnshire estate, Mrs. Jervis, and the archaic security she embodies, is lost to her. The good housekeeper is replaced by a demonic double, Mrs. Jewkes—the "squat, pousy, *fat thing*" whose nightmarish manipulations bring about Pamela's most intense internal conflict. Mrs. Jewkes's function in Pamela's psychic history is of course very different from that of earlier female figures. Unlike her predecessors, she is not concerned to shield the heroine from masculine intrusion, but functions in collusion with it. As Mr. B.'s instrument, she is aligned with precisely that presence which Pamela up to now has refused to acknowledge, to "see." (Part of Mrs. Jewkes's job will be to arrange a revelation scene, in which, the suggestion is, B. indeed "exposes" himself to Pamela.) Mrs. Jewkes may remind us of Mrs. Sinclair in *Clarissa*, or even Mother Needham in the first plate of Hogarth's *Harlot's Progress*. She is the willing bawd, an emblem of sexuality and corruption, whose task it is to prepare the heroine for some

¹⁴It should be noted of course that during this and earlier periods it was conventional for female servants to sleep together. The point I would like to make is that here, as in Defoe's *Roxana*, where details of sleeping arrangements are similarly described, the information may appear for symbolic reasons, as well as for reasons of verisimilitude. It is always significant, in both Defoe and Richardson, who is sleeping with *whom*.

kind of sexual sacrifice. Robert A. Erickson suggests that Jewkes fits contemporary descriptions of the midwife/witch: she will somehow "deliver" Pamela into Mr. B.'s hands.¹⁵ Similarly, she has formerly been an innkeeper: like a fairy tale figure, she is everywhere associated with images of transition and transformation. Within the psychoanalytic model already outlined, Mrs. Jewkes's role represents a significant modification of the maternal archetype. Mrs. Jewkes must be associated not, like Mrs. Jervis, with the benevolent and independent mother of the pre-Oedipal phase, but with the much more problematic mother of the Oedipal phase. The role of the Oedipal mother is precisely to effect the socialization of her daughter, to educate her into the facts of sexual difference and of female "lack." Together with the Oedipal father, she embodies the basic dialectic of absence and presence. She displays the female body in its "castrated" state; her function is to enforce upon the little girl a sense of her own lack, and the psychic necessity for loving the father. Mrs. Jewkes fulfills these functions: (to borrow a word from *Clarissa*) she is the female agent of Pamela's "enwomaning." Meeting her for the first time, the anxious heroine has the sudden feeling—as in *déjà vu*—that she has seen her "before." She cannot say where, but that "I was terrified out of my wits" (108).

The heroine's Oedipal situation—first clearly modeled in the emergence of the crucial symbolic triangle of Pamela, Mrs. Jewkes, and Mr. B.—is not, obviously, quickly or easily resolved. Pamela resists the "facts" her sexual tutors wish to teach her; she resists the new displacement of female and male power that the Oedipal family represents. Pamela's fantasies about Mrs. Jewkes in particular bespeak an initial, intense rejection of the new "female" dispensation her guardian embodies. A kind of sexual ambivalence informs Pamela's early descriptions of the "wicked procuress." Mrs. Jewkes is perceived by the heroine in their first encounters as a powerful, yet oddly hermaphroditic figure, a "man-woman." (Again, the comparison with the "masculine" Sinclair of *Clarissa* is attractive.¹⁶) Pamela cannot (or will not) "see" what sex her captor is. Pamela believes that Jewkes takes a sexual interest in her ("And once she offered to kiss me. But I said, I don't like this sort of carriage, Mrs. Jewkes; it is not like two persons of one sex" (109)); she hints that her keeper behaves more like a man than a woman. The

¹⁵Robert A. Erickson, "Mother Jewkes, Pamela and the Midwives," *ELH* 43 (Winter 1976):500-16.

¹⁶Judith Wilt comments on Mrs. Sinclair's nature and function in *Clarissa* in "He Could Go No Farther: A Modest Proposal about Lovelace and Clarissa," *PMLA* 92 (January 1977):19-32.

longest and most fantastic description of Mrs. Jewkes that Pamela gives us emphasizes her peculiar virility:

She is a broad, squat, pousy, *fat thing*, quite ugly, if any thing human can be so called; about forty years old. She has a huge hand, and an arm as thick as my waist, I believe. Her nose is flat and crooked, and her brows grow down over her eyes; a dead spiteful, grey, goggling eye, to be sure she has. And her face is flat and broad; and as to colour, looks as if it had been pickled a month in salt-petre; I dare say she drinks:—She has a hoarse, man-like voice, and is as thick as she is long; and yet looks so deadly strong, that I am afraid she would dash me at her foot in an instant, if I was to vex her. (116)

As Pamela writes, “I dread her huge paw most sadly” (136).

On the level of symbolic plot, the fantasy that Pamela betrays in all of this would seem to be, most simply, that Mrs. Jewkes possesses a penis. The “huge paw,” the “gigantic hand,” that she obsessively notices is but one fetishistic version of the phallic displacement: Pamela’s discourse holds out everywhere the subliminal belief that her guardian does not in fact “lack” anything. The distortion is maintained up to and including the scenes with Colbrand; Mrs. Jewkes and the Swiss are described in identical phallicized terms. Pamela’s vision of Jewkes as bull (even though the bull turns out later to be a cow) points to the same original fantasy content. (Significantly, the single male figure present during the greater part of the Lincolnshire episode is the curiously emasculated Williams. Pamela’s narrative minimizes him at the same time that it magnifies Jewkes. This suggests that while Williams is in some sense a portent of B. (he wishes to marry Pamela himself), he represents a masculine prerogative which is not yet, on the phantasmic level, fully realized. Pamela does not perceive the “little” cleric’s impotent, de-phallicized presence as a sexual threat.) Regarding Pamela’s insistent projection onto Mrs. Jewkes, we recollect, perhaps, Freud’s description of the important role the percept of castration plays in psychic processes:

while the child is at the highest point of its infantile sexual development, a genital organization of a sort is established; but only the male genitals play a part in it, and the female ones remain undiscovered . . . At this stage the contrast between the sexes is not stated in terms of “male” or “female” but of “possessing a penis” or “castrated.” The *castration complex* which arises in this connection is of the profoundest importance in the formation alike of character and of neuroses.¹⁷

¹⁷Freud, “An Autobiographical Study,” *Standard Edition*, 20:37.

In "On the Sexual Theories of Children," Freud notes, however, that children in the early stage of Oedipal sexual awareness often resist the frightening idea of castration by devising defensive psychic strategies against it—especially, by fantasizing that the mother possesses a penis after all. Freud calls the willful failure to perceive anatomical facts correctly the "falsifying perception," and relates it to adult neuroses involving disavowal and fetishism.¹⁸ Pamela's percepts are certainly of the falsifying kind, and suggest she is designing an elaborate fantasy defense against Mrs. Jewkes's archetypally female, that is, "castrated" state. Pamela, reliving analogically the early discovery of lack, misperceives Mrs. Jewkes's sexuality, just as she wishes, it seems, to misperceive her own.¹⁹

Pamela's distortion of Mrs. Jewkes into phallus-bearing female, still, is only one of the "falsifying perceptions" she is struggling to maintain at this point in her history. Until the moment of ultimate and violent crisis, she blocks out what she does not wish to acknowledge (male/female differentiation, presence vs. absence) and fills in, imaginatively, her own lack. Her moments of hysterical withdrawal, for instance, model the former mode of psychic resistance. Early in the narrative, Mr. B., who has been chasing Pamela around the house, plays a "castration-game" with her, and demonstrates to her—in one of the crudest symbolic moments in the text—the fact of her own lack: "He then put his hand in my bosom, and indignation gave me double strength, and I got loose from him by a sudden spring, and ran out of the room; and the next chamber being open, I made shift to get into it, and threw to the door, and it locked after me; but he followed me so close he got hold of my gown, and tore a piece off, which hung without the door; for the key was on the inside" (26). Pamela responds to this violent rending of her garment and the appropriation of her "piece" by Mr. B. by fainting away "with the terror," and is only revived by the presence of Mrs. Jervis. The fall into oblivion is typical: Pamela's "fits" correspond to moments in the text of imminent or actual sexual disclosure. She falls into a stupor just before Mr. B. is about to strip, in the first bedroom scene already noted; likewise, she passes out at the vision of the bull/cows. By assuming the repressive attitude, Pamela tries, desperately enough, to prolong refusal of sexual appearances.

¹⁸See Mitchell on Freud and the "falsifying perception," p. 77.

¹⁹Cf. Mitchell, p. 89. "At first the little girl just thinks she has personally done rather badly—later on her clitoris will grow. In other words, she too accepts that her mother is phallic. Gradually, she has to accept the applicability of castration to all females—of which she is one."

While blocking male “presence” and female “absence” in this manner, the heroine is also busy devising substitutes for what she already knows—on some level—is “lost.” Given the strength of the forces acting against her, however, the attempt at compensation becomes filled with pathos. Stuart Wilson calls attention to Pamela’s fascination with keys during the Lincolnshire episode, and notes the traditional bawdy symbolism associated with keys and locks.²⁰ He does not attempt to say what this detail implies about her psycho-sexual situation, yet the meaning of her obsession seems clear enough. When Pamela learns that the obliging Parson Williams has a key to the back door of the garden, she immediately wishes to obtain it. “You have a key to the backdoor garden, I have great hopes from that” (127). The key, and her “hopes” for it, dominate her mind throughout the early period of her incarceration before the arrival of Mr. B. The object, like so many in the novel, has both a manifest and a latent meaning for Pamela. On an obvious level, it is the means of escape. In terms of symbolic plot, it is that part, or extension of the self which she believes she must have in order to be whole, to be free of her “miserable hard fate.” The psychoanalytic *locus classicus* for the symbolic interpretation of Pamela’s key is, of course, Freud’s discussion of dream objects in *The Interpretation of Dreams*.²¹ The key-dream fails Pamela, however, because Mrs. Jewkes—true to her role in the heroine’s socialization—has changed the garden lock: “the wicked woman had taken off that lock, and put another on; so that my key would not open it. I try’d and try’d, and feeling about, I found a padlock besides, on another part of the door. O then how my heart sunk! I dropp’d down in grief and confusion, unable to stir, or to support myself for awhile” (178). Because her key is useless, Pamela is forced to try to climb the garden wall, with disastrous results. She falls, is hurt about the head and legs, and collapses in despair. In the suicidal interlude by the pond that follows, Pamela contemplates, among other things, that she is now “maimed.” After lying prone all night, she is discovered again by her captors, and Mrs. Jewkes cleans her wound: “they cut the hair a little from the back part of my head, and washed that; for it was clotted with blood, from a pretty long, but not a deep gash” (186).

The violence here prefigures the final violent breaking down of her psychic resistance. During the period of her greatest struggle with Mrs. Jewkes, Mr. B. is on the periphery of Pamela’s discourse, though his presence has been increasingly intimated by a surrogate, the sinister elongated Colbrand. B.’s arrival in Lincolnshire suggests that “maimed” Pamela is now prepared to receive him. Mrs. Jewkes’s ministrations, the

²⁰Wilson, p. 86.

²¹Cf. Freud’s chapter “The Dream-Work” on household objects in dreams.

text implies, have not been for nothing, and indeed find a natural culmination in the bizarre bedroom triangle involving herself, her charge, and the "master." This scene is at once the shocking centerpiece of *Pamela*, and a crucial point in the heroine's "enwomaning." It is a moment of transference, of transformation. "Mrs. Jewkes, by this time, was got to bed, on the farther side, as she used to be; and, to make room for the maid, when she should awake, I got into bed, and lay close to her. And I said, Where are the keys? though, said I, I am not so much afraid to-night. Here, said the wicked woman, put your arm under mine, and you shall find them about my wrist, as they used to be. So I did, and the abominable designer held my hand with her right-hand, as my right-arm was under her left" (211). Mr. B., of course, is present in the chamber, disguised as the maid asleep in a chair, "her apron over his face and shoulders." He then undresses partially, and joins Jewkes and Pamela in bed. With the man-woman Jewkes holding Pamela and offering verbal encouragement, the "pretended she" reveals himself as a man. In contrast to the earlier scene with Jervis, B., and Pamela, the heroine cannot avoid "seeing." The actual view of the phallus is suppressed on the surface level of Pamela's discourse; but there is a suggestion, in this warmest of "warm scenes," that Mr. B. exposes himself. The heroine's sexual confusion—her persistent distortion of gender—is resolved in a final catastrophic moment of seeing:

Now, Pamela, said he, is the dreadful time of reckoning come, that I have threatened—I screamed out in such a manner, as never anybody heard the like. But there was nobody to help me: and both my hands were secured, as I said. Sure never poor soul was in such agonies as I. Wicked man! said I; wicked abominable woman! O God! my God! this *time!* this *one time!* deliver me from this distress! or strike me dead this moment! And then I screamed again and again. . . .

Said she (oh disgrace of womankind!), What you do, sir, do; don't stand dilly-dallying. She cannot exclaim worse than she has done; and she'll be quieter, when she knows the worst.

Silence! said he to her: I must say one word to you, Pamela! it is this: You see now you are in my power!

(213)

Mr. B. says he offers "nothing" to her. "Is this *nothing?*" Pamela screams. One last wave of repression covers over the revelation—"Oh sir, said I, leave me but, and I will do any thing I ought to do. — Swear then to me, said he, that you will accept my proposals! With struggling, fright, terror, I fainted away quite" (213). But Pamela (unlike before) wakes up again immediately, only to find B. still there, sedate enough now, on the edge of the bed, "in his gown and slippers."

This scene suggests, then, the visual acknowledgment of masculine presence. Pamela is now fully implicated in the Oedipal situation which before she has rejected. One last form of symbolic capitulation still remains, however, to the heroine. Pamela must confirm herself the fact of her own "lack." She must undergo a voluntary self-castration. This would seem to be rendered in the event that precipitates Mr. B's ultimate proposal of marriage—Pamela's turning over of her journal. Pamela transfers the narrative itself, which we have read all along as uniquely hers, into the hands of the "master." Likewise, he takes the place of the parental readers in the writer/reader figure. The event carries a deep psychological significance. Throughout the discourse, we realize, Pamela's "writings" themselves—manufactured compulsively, "artfully," in secret, with stolen materials and against the wishes of Mrs. Jewkes—have been perhaps her primary means of reconstituting the fantasy object, the object of desire. For much of the narrative, she hides her papers in an odd place, under her girdle at groin-level, where, she says "they grow large." The wish for the phallus is thus extended and given form in the shape of the narrative itself. She gives intellectual expression to the fantasy content *within* her discourse; yet this discourse, in its physicality, takes its place in her world as material object, as fetish. It veils that very portion of her anatomy which is the hidden subject of the text. Mr. B., looking for Pamela's journal, intuitively finds its location, and threatens to strip her in order to find it. His gesture points toward the site of female absence; with the retrieval of the papers, Pamela's true "nature" will be uncovered:

Now tell me where it is you hid your written papers, your saucy journal?—I just beg your excuse for that, sir, said I. But indeed, answered he, you will not have it: for I *will* know, and I will *see* them.—This is very hard, sir, said I; but I must say, you shall not, if I can help it. . . . Artful slut! said he, What's this to my question?—Are they not *about* you?—If, said I, I must pluck them out of my hiding-place behind the wainscot, won't you see me?—Still more and more artful! said he—Is this an answer to my question?—I have searched every place above, and in your closet for them, and cannot find them; so I *will* know where they are. Now, said he, it is my opinion they are about you; and I never undressed a girl in my life; but I will now begin to strip my pretty Pamela; and I hope I shall not go far before I find them.
(244–45)

The threats are obviated, of course, because Pamela yields her journal up voluntarily. Returning to her closet, she has a moment of regret ("there I sat me down, and could not bear the thought of giving up my papers" (246)), but then undoes her "bold stuff," makes it over into

"parcels," and sends it to him the next day. She performs, thus, the final act of dismemberment herself. As in a dream, events speed up after this. Mr. B. reads the journal, and overcome by remorse, frees Pamela to go home to her parents. She sets off, only to be overcome herself by a sudden conscious desire for B. She returns, somewhat sheepishly, and accepts his ecstatically proffered marriage proposal. At this juncture, Mr. Andrews, who earlier has tried in vain to get to his daughter, now arrives at the Lincolnshire house. Mr. B. and Pamela are married with his blessing.

With marriage, Pamela's history resolves into an extended Oedipal comedy. The wedding is the primary sign provided by the text that the heroine's process of psychic transformation is over. Socialization is confirmed with this institutional ordering of relations with B. The heroine has completed the transference to the masculine vertex of the family triangle: the phallic wish is sublimated into desire for the father-surrogate. In the remainder of the narrative, Pamela now lives out the consequences of this "happy turn," so traumatically achieved. It is often pointed out that the marriage, coming midway in the novel, renders the rest of the history overlong and anticlimactic. I would disagree with this analysis of structure: the long denouement is necessary to the confirmation of symbolic plot. During the first half of the novel, the focus is on Pamela's psychic resistance to the Oedipal cathexis—this focus is reversed in the second half. The shift marks the depth of psycho-sexual resolution achieved.

Most important, perhaps, formerly powerful female figures are ritually subdued in the final episodes of *Pamela*. The pre-Oedipal mother is everywhere repressed. Pamela's change is tested, for instance, in the triangular scene in which she is held prisoner by Mr. B.'s sister, Lady Davers, and her nephew Jackie. This situation is a parody of earlier ones: Lady Davers seems at first to embody once again the magnified female archetype seen before, while silly Jackie models male insignificance. Dussinger writes that Lady Davers, with Jackie, "cast Pamela temporarily into her former night-mare world under the ogres"; and Roy Roussel calls attention to the fact that the sister, like Lady B. earlier, advises Pamela (albeit more scornfully) to "keep the fellows at a distance."²² Davers's tormenting of her "child" Pamela may represent an atavistic return of the archaic mother into the heroine's psychic life, but the sister's power is, significantly, short-lived. It is soon subsumed by male prerogative. In a turnaround of the earliest triangles, Pamela herself chooses against Davers. She flees confinement (this time successfully)

²²Dussinger, p. 390; Roussel, p. 377.

and seeks out Mr. B. for protection. The Oedipal transfer is thus repeated in little. When she and Mr. B. return to the estate, he immediately replaces the emasculated Jackie in the basic triangle, and asserts his potency against Davers. Assenting (after browbeating) to the marriage of B. and Pamela, Lady Davers reverts into the Oedipal mother, the weakened mother, the compliant mother.

Jewkes, Jervis, and the rest are likewise domesticated in Pamela's post-nuptial discourse. Mrs. Jewkes, we notice, "shrinks" in Pamela's perception: after the marriage, this once terrifying individual becomes simply a rather jolly and utterly harmless household servant. Mrs. Jervis, the "other dear mother," is reunited with Pamela in the end, but the essential quality of their relation has changed. Pamela speaks to her from across a social and sexual gulf: "Dear Mrs. Jervis, said I, you know not what I have gone through! You know not what God has done for me! You know not what a happy creature I am now!" (488). Sleeping arrangements have changed: Pamela sleeps with a man now, and is not likely to share Mrs. Jervis's bed again. Lady B. is present too in the last pages of Pamela's discourse, but not as the strong maternal presence she once was. Lady B. has in fact been so diminished that Pamela can *become* her. The "maimed" woman, Pamela, takes over Lady B.'s clothes and apartments in the family household, yet she does this solely at Mr. B.'s behest, and assumes none of Lady B.'s original power. Pamela's rights as the new Lady B. — as her appalling marriage articles make clear — are wholly overshadowed by masculine rights, those of Mr. B. She is thus Lady B. in castrated form — a reduced version of the novel's original woman, a stereotypic emblem of docile femininity. It is worth noting, finally, that the pattern of female domestication indicated here extends outward beyond the novel. An interesting, utterly predictable modification of the Oedipal triangle dominating *Pamela* occurs at the end: the heroine herself "moves up" to the maternal vertex. By becoming Lady B., she also assumes responsibility for Mr. B.'s now-revealed illegitimate daughter, Miss Goodwin, who in turn takes over Pamela's position as the child in the configuration. This new triangle not only suggests a future beyond the time of the novel itself, it points up an essential fact about Pamela's psychosexual history. Socialized herself as "female," she is now ready to socialize her newfound "daughter." The archetypal pattern of female emasculation is thus carried out over generations of women.

Symbolic plot in *Pamela* resolves into a sexual ideogram concealed at the most primitive level of the text. P and B are primary signs in the novel's mythic code: the opposition P/B marks off iconographically the basic sexual dialectic of absence/presence, woman/man. Pamela's P, to

adapt Roland Barthes, is an "initial of castration."²³ P lacks what B shows; P(amela) reconstitutes, metaphorically, her missing part by becoming (Lady) B. The transformation across the narrative of P into B thus models the larger symbolic process of Oedipal displacement, and the heroine's final appropriation, vicariously, of the object of desire.

My discussion of the "castration complex" at work in Pamela's psychic history has everywhere relied heavily, of course, on the Freudian description of female socialization. Given the highly eroticized content of Richardson's text, however, I do not think that such interpretation is either anachronistic or excessive. Likewise, Freud's analysis may provide a clue to what is finally the most striking thing about Pamela's history — its curious inevitability. Have we not known from the start that the heroine, for all her struggling, will be successfully "enwomanded"? Her story, above all, is familiar. As I noted earlier in a different context, Freud believed that libido is originally essentially free, and is only channeled in certain directions by pressure from without. Culture mythologizes the conventional channeling of libido, however, as "normal" or "natural." In patriarchal cultures, the transference of female libido from mother to father is sanctioned as the normal displacement of sexual energy. And thus the "myth" of female Oedipal fulfillment is born. In *Pamela* (an incorrigibly patriarchal text) this myth has a controlling function. The inevitability we sense in Pamela's marriage to B. points up the very pervasiveness of the underlying sexual fiction, the ideology articulated by the text.²⁴ The novel affirms, finally, a cultural

²³Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), p. 107. I do not speculate here, obviously, on what the mythology at work in *Pamela* may suggest about Richardson's own psychology. Other critics, including Watt, have written on the connections between Richardson's fictions and what we know of his private history. For more specifically biographical psychoanalytic readings of his work, I refer the reader to Morris Golden's *Richardson's Characters* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1964) and Gerald Levin's *Richardson the Novelist: The Psychological Patterns* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1978).

²⁴The psychosexual economy at work in *Pamela* relates, ultimately, to the sociological and religious themes noted already by critics Watt, Kinkead-Weekes, and Christopher Hill. While I have confined myself here to outlining the phantasmic elements in the text, it is possible to envision an expanded, synthetic reading of *Pamela* which would link its sexual ideology to its presentation of class relations and ideal Christian action. Pamela is simultaneously "woman," "servant," and pious "child" of God the Father. Her submission is thus marked out in three mutually reinforcing, metaphorically related realms. The feminist revision of Marxist thought carried on by Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953) and Shulamith Firestone in *The Dialectic of Sex* (New York: William Morrow, 1971) — both critics who find in the biological differentiation of the sexes the origins of the division of labor, social caste, and cultural institutions generally — would provide an obvious theoretical starting-point for an investigation of these three connected functions. Likewise, theologian Mary Daly's

stereotype of female sexuality; it celebrates the normative pattern in a powerful imaginative form. Pamela is an exemplary character in an exemplary drama. As the crude determinism of P and B suggests, she is fated to act out the prevailing Western fantasy of woman as castrated, as "maimed" human being. Her discourse thus may appall us, but it cannot surprise us.

Samuel Richardson, of course, leaves behind the myth-bound world of *Pamela*. If *Pamela* presents myth in an ultimately uncritical way, *Clarissa* does something else again. The later work, one could say, offers a critique of the very fictions of sexuality that order Pamela's experience. *Clarissa* is the greater work precisely because it analyzes, rather than simply exhibits, the controlling mythology. Its heroine achieves through death only a problematic liberation, but it is a liberation nonetheless. Pamela, however, remains a prisoner within her own text. In her world, there is no escape finally; the "happy change" itself is but a deepening of imprisonment. And sometimes she almost seems to know it: "Well, thought I, here are strange pains taken to ruin a poor, innocent, helpless, and even *worthless* young body. This plot is laid too deep, and has been too long hatching, to be baffled, I fear" (108).

Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973) suggests a philosophical underpinning for analysis of the way Christian dogma in *Pamela* works to reinforce the heroine's sexual submission. It is significant that the scene which confirms, on a phantasmic level, Pamela's "maiming" (the pond episode) is also the scene which confirms her as exemplary Christian. Her decision to abide by the decrees of Providence and reject suicide coincides with her resignation to the sexual "fate" represented by B. and his minions: the psychosexual and religious dynamics are merged in a single narrative economy.