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**Resisting Richardson:
Sarah Fielding, Frances Sheridan, Charlotte Lennox, and the Didactic Novel**

by

Ann Elizabeth Ellsworth

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Washington

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Approved by Thomas Jordan
Chairperson of Supervisory Committee

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to Offer Degree Department of English

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Abstract

**Resisting Richardson:
Sarah Fielding, Frances Sheridan, Charlotte Lennox, and the Didactic Novel**

by Ann Elizabeth Ellsworth

Chairperson of the Supervisory Committee
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In this dissertation, I challenge the prevailing twentieth-century notion that didacticism in the eighteenth-century novel is too overt to warrant further investigation. Although many eighteenth-century authors boast that their works are designed "to instruct," I propose that the reader must look beyond that seemingly formulaic claim to see the ways in which the novels themselves embody, test, or fight with the idea that fiction can instruct and that language itself has the capacity to affect behavior.

In the introduction, I define didacticism in eighteenth-century terms, explore the twentieth-century's critical response to didacticism, and demonstrate that feminist readers do not need to view didacticism in women's novels as an obstacle to their appreciation of early women authors' achievements. Each subsequent chapter provides a text-specific discussion of didacticism in an individual author's works with a specific focus on novels centered around women characters. After examining the form and content of novels by four writers, Samuel Richardson, Sarah Fielding, Frances Sheridan, and Charlotte Lennox, I find that each writer contributes to the debate on the didactic capacity of the novel in different ways: Both Richardson and Fielding argue that fiction can and should instruct the reader whereas Sheridan and Lennox suggest the limitations of didacticism. While Richardson works relentlessly to instruct the reader about gendered codes of moral behavior, Fielding, Sheridan, and Lennox address the ways in which both sexes learn about

moral issues and suggest that, at least on this subject, distinctions cannot and should not be made based on gender.

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**To my parents,
Vivian Sies Ellsworth and Robert Fred Ellsworth,
with love and thanks for all their support**

Introduction

Didacticism and the Feminocentric Novel

In this dissertation, I provide a sustained, text-specific discussion of didacticism in the eighteenth-century novel and focus on works centered around women characters. Didacticism may appear anachronistic to many twentieth-century critics, but as a fundamental element of eighteenth-century fiction, it should not be ignored. Leopold Damrosch writes that "the eighteenth-century novel was very much a novel of ideas. It did not simply illustrate or allude to ideas; it embodied them, tested them, and fought with them" (2). Although many eighteenth-century authors boast that their works are designed "to instruct," I propose that the reader must look beyond that seemingly formulaic claim to see the ways in which the novels themselves embody, test, or fight with the idea that fiction can instruct and that language itself has the capacity to affect behavior. J. Paul Hunter argues that one of the six features of eighteenth-century didacticism is "its faith in language to affect the behavior of readers in rational and predictable ways" (Before Novels 231), but my research shows that, while Samuel Richardson and Sarah Fielding may evince such a faith, Frances Sheridan and Charlotte Lennox do not. All four authors, however, contribute to the debate on didacticism in highly individualized ways that constitute the center and focus of this study.

Defining Didacticism in Eighteenth-Century Terms

Theoretically, didacticism and didactic are value-neutral terms indicating instruction or teaching,¹ but in practice, eighteenth-century writers question the didactic capacity of the novel as they do almost every aspect of the novel form. In her Novel and Romance, 1700-1800: A Documentary Record, Ioan Williams highlights the attempts of writers to define the differences between the romance and the novel, to argue about the novel as "a threat to cultural and moral standards," to debate whether or not prose fiction was "a branch of

literature on equal terms with poetry and drama," and to describe the novel's "characteristics and formulate its rules" (1). Against this background of often heated controversy about the novel, she notes that, although

comparatively minor points, like the relative merits of narrative forms, were frequently and well discussed, issues of more far-reaching importance met with much less consideration. One of the most surprising examples of this failure is the absence of any coherent thinking about the relationship between the technical features of a work and its moral design. (20-21)

Despite Williams's assertion to the contrary, the relationship between technical features and moral design is frequently discussed, both in the novels themselves and in the responses to those novels. Most often, these debates center on an author's method of teaching and what he or she teaches in the novel itself. Although such disputes may appear unmethodical to the twentieth-century reader, they certainly undermine the idea of instruction as a value-neutral concept in eighteenth-century fiction.

Generally speaking, eighteenth-century novelists do not declare their works to be didactic; rather, they insist in their prefaces or novels that "the purpose of this work is to instruct." Such repetitive claims would seem to suggest that the role of didacticism in the novel was understood and accepted uncritically. Choose almost any preface from the period, and one feels as if he or she has read it all before. The preface to Daniel Defoe's The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe (1719) will serve as an example:

The Second Part, if the Editor's Opinion may pass, is (contrary to the Usage of Second Parts), every Way as entertaining as the First, contains as strange and surprising Incidents, and as great a Variety of them; nor is the Application less serious, or suitable; and doubtless will, to the sober, as well as ingenious Reader, be every way as profitable and diverting; and this makes the abridging this Work, as scandalous, as it is knavish and ridiculous; seeing, while to shorten the Book, that

they may seem to reduce the Value, they strip it of all those Reflections, as well religious as moral, which are not only the greatest Beautys of the Work, but are calculated for the infinite Advantage of the Reader. (Williams 64-65)

Despite its references to the first part of the work and to unauthorized abridgments, this preface is nonetheless similar to others throughout the period. Defoe may not actually employ the term "instruct," but he clearly stresses the serious purpose behind his work and its profitable (read "instructive") nature.

The relatively overt declaration of instructive intent is complicated, however, by Defoe's means of instruction: the religious and moral reflections that "are calculated for the infinite advantage of the reader." In theory, there is a distinction between the didactic and the moral. Under the definition of didactic, the OED cites one example from the eighteenth century, and the citation, from Joseph Warton's An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope (1756, 1782), reads "a poem of that species, for which our author's genius is particularly turned, the didactic and the moral." Although moral and didactic seem easily separated, such is not the case, because much of the instruction in the eighteenth-century novel concerns moral issues and behavior. In Defoe's preface, for example, the complex interrelationship between didacticism and morality becomes clear as he indicates that the religious and moral reflections are one of the means by which the reader shall be instructed.

Defoe's contemporary Charles Gildon criticizes both Robinson Crusoe and The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe in An Epistle to Daniel Defoe (1719), and his response suggests that the way in which the author attempts to teach is integrally linked to what the author tries to teach and that, therefore, instruction in the novel is and should be subject to debate. His approach may not seem systematic to the twentieth-century critic, but Gildon's complaints need to be seen as serious objections to Defoe's work. In his argument, he pays particular attention to Defoe's prefatory claims:

I cannot, however, omit taking particular Notice of the Editor's Preface, because it is not only written by the same Hand, but also very singular in its kind....as to the Variety of the Subject, it will be a hard Matter to make that good, since it's spread out into at least five and twenty Sheets, clog'd with Moral Reflections, as you are pleas'd to call them, every where insipid and aukward, and in many Places of no manner of Relation to the Occasion on which they are deliver'd, besides being much larger than necessary, and frequently impious and prophane; and always canting are the Reflections which you are pleas'd to call religious and useful, and the brightest Ornaments of your Book [Gildon's emphasis; he is quoting Defoe directly], tho' in reality they were put in by you to swell the Bulk of your Treatise up to a five Shilling Book; whereas, the Want of Variety in your Subject would never have made it reach to half the Price; nay, as it is, you have been forc'd to give us the same Reflections over and over again, as well as repeat the same Fact afterwards in a Journal, which you had told us before in a plain Narration. (Williams 66-67)

Underneath the querulous tone are serious reservations not only about the moral content of Defoe's work but also about the way in which Defoe integrates the moral reflections into his novels. Gildon seems openly hostile to Defoe's religious views, labelling them impious, profane, and canting, but he objects to their presence on more than just religious grounds. Gildon certainly addresses the relationship between technical features and moral design as he criticizes Defoe for placing moral reflections in his text without any attempt to contextualize them more successfully and for repeating them so often. He attributes the repetition to Defoe's attempts to swell the bulk of the work so that it could command more money, rather than an effort to reinforce important points for a potentially inattentive reader. However cynically stated, Gildon's objections constitute a valid and coherent critique of Defoe's didactic technique and moral content and indicate that didacticism in the novel was not accepted without question or comment.

The Twentieth-Century Critical Response to Didacticism

The didactic capacity of the novel was subject to debate in the period itself, but in the twentieth century, the issue is almost universally ignored. Hunter notes that literary theory "has recently helped us to rethink all kinds of issues but not this one; didacticism for modern readers lies as still as a dead horse, and if they sometimes point to it as an emblem of the silly or the sad, they no longer bother to beat it, or flay it, or ask why it died" ("Fielding" 6). Hunter believes that the twentieth-century reader's resistances to eighteenth-century didacticism

are of several kinds and spring from various causes. Most involve our disbelief and distrust: disbelief in systems of value and dogma that then prevailed, in the rhetorical power of writing to do what it professes, in the whole process of history and change; distrust of piety, moral earnestness, simplicity, directness, confidence, and the zealous tones of intrusion. (Before Novels 228)

Ironically, much of what Hunter argues about the modern reader applies to Gildon's critique of Defoe. So, why is didacticism a topic engendering controversy in the period and yet a dead horse in the twentieth century?

As Hunter notes, terminology plays a part: most glossaries and dictionaries consider "didactic" a deprecatory term" ("Fielding" 4-5). When twentieth-century readers think of instruction, especially moral instruction, they appear to view the topic monolithically and negatively, dismissing the morality as outdated and the instruction as too overt to require further investigation. In her review of Patricia Meyer Spacks' Desire and Truth, Janet Todd commences her appraisal by claiming that

few critical studies of eighteenth-novels now fail to find them "subversive", despite the novels' clear and conventional moral messages. Reading against the grain and refusing to be guided by the author or narrator has become so common that it's almost impossible for the critically aware person to recapture a state of mind that

might take advice and comfort from overt didactic statements or naively and cheerfully accept the author's expressed exemplary purpose.

Todd continues by suggesting that Desire and Truth "is no exception to these generalizations...and, like most recent critics, she [Spacks] treats the works she studies as subversive texts that say something quite other than what their writers claim to be saying" (Times Literary Supplement 953).

By ignoring overt didactic statements or refusing to investigate what the authors claim to be saying, however, the reader misses the moral and didactic nuances that characterize an individual author or work. Period arguments about the role of fiction do not always take place in separate essays on the topic; rather, much of the debate is waged in the novels themselves. For example, Richardson takes great pains to enlighten the reader as to his works' moral and instructive purposes by describing these objectives in the prefatory material and other framing devices around his novels, much as Defoe does. In the postscript to Clarissa, he focuses on a common criticism of his work--its length. He writes that some readers "were of opinion, that the Story moved too slowly, particularly in the first and second Volumes, which are chiefly taken up with the Altercations between Clarissa and the several persons of her Family" (AMS 297).² In defending the length of his work, Richardson essentially summarizes the way in which he believes a novel must be read and judged:

But is it not true, that those Altercations are the Foundation of the whole, and therefore a necessary part of the work? The Letters and Conversations, where the Story makes the slowest progress, are presumed to be characteristic. They give occasion likewise to suggest many interesting Personalities, in which a good deal of the instruction essential to a work of this nature is conveyed. And it will, moreover, be remembred, that the Author, at his first setting out, apprised the Reader, that the Story (interesting as it is generally allowed to be) was to be principally looked

upon as a Vehicle to the Instruction. (AMS 297)

Like Defoe, Richardson argues that the length is necessary for the instructional purposes of the work. But his words here are more than just the belated defense of a beleaguered author: he is directing the reader precisely as to the way in which he hopes to achieve his moral and instructional goals. The focus on the minute particulars of the plot is more than just a means of adding bulk to the work; those particulars constitute the means of instruction.

George Sherburn, the editor of the abridged Riverside edition, does not include Richardson's postscript, but he indicates briefly that it "deals with poetical justice, the doctrine of rewards and punishments, and the theory of tragedy. The ideas are conventional for their time" (Riverside 517). While Sherburn exercises his editorial rights to shorten the work, his comments do not do justice to Richardson's purpose. Richardson is not merely reiterating platitudes; rather, he is outlining his views on the novel. His references to the history of tragedy are more than just a recapitulation of literary history; instead, he means for the reader to view his work in the light of that history. Richardson's claims for his work may appear overt or conventional to the twentieth-century reader, but they reveal his individual approach to the question of instruction in the novel and his contributions to the contemporary debate about the didactic capacity of the novel.

One of the few who bother to examine the dead horse, Hunter recognizes the centrality of didacticism to the eighteenth century and argues that the "refusal to honor face value at all has the effect of dismissing as irrelevant a full quarter of the English literary tradition" (Before Novels 227). Modern critics who do discuss the issue in print tend to elaborate on the defining features that are present in a didactic text, much as Hunter does in Before Novels; these brave souls also focus on related issues, such as morality or the problems associated with imitation, rather than addressing didacticism directly; or they cull isolated examples from texts from a range of genres and disciplines (philosophy, science,

religion, and history, among others) to support their theses about the subject.³ These discussions can be informative and even brilliant, but they do not necessarily reveal an eighteenth-century author's individual position on the question of didacticism. In order to proceed from a fragmentary evaluation of the works to a more holistic appraisal, the critic must view individual examples or quotes within the context of the authors' works as a whole. For example, if one analyzes the so-called "Johnson" chapter from Charlotte Lennox's The Female Quixote, in which Arabella is cured of her reliance on romances, then one might believe that Lennox finds instruction useful in effecting changes in an individual's character. However, the reader is forced to reevaluate these remarks when that chapter is placed in the context not only of the rest of the novel but also the rest of Lennox's other novels. Despite the differences in her heroines over the course of her career, Lennox evinces an essentialist view of human nature as primarily virtuous, which renders instruction unnecessary, or vicious and therefore impervious to instruction.

One of the few twentieth-century critics to address didacticism as an integral part of an author's work is Jan Fergus, who argues that Austen "practices an emotional didacticism which her contemporaries and even her greatest predecessors often sought and missed: a refining that amounts to an educating of judgment and sympathy" (7). In Jane Austen and the Didactic Novel, Fergus purposefully highlights Austen's didacticism by focusing on the themes, techniques, and intentions of the novels, and she provides a close examination of individual novels as part of the author's larger literary objectives. While I think Fergus underestimates the achievements of Austen's predecessors, she does at least attempt to resuscitate the dead horse in a direct, comprehensive manner.

Bridging the Gap between Didacticism and Feminism

Feminists are not any more likely than other twentieth-century readers to investigate didacticism fully; instead, they prefer to focus on subversive messages rather

than overt declarations, as Spacks does in Desire and Truth. In The Rise of the Woman Novelist, however, Jane Spencer devotes a chapter to the "didactic tradition," giving it equal time and emphasis with her chapters on "the tradition of escape" and "the tradition of protest." Spencer is wary of calling eighteenth-century women novelists "feminists," because "of course no woman of the time thought of herself as 'feminist', as the word was not in use then" (x-xi), and she questions the tendency of feminist critics to assume that "women's writing must [Spencer's emphasis] have a feminist meaning, must in all cases be a gain for feminism" (xi). With these reservations in mind, Spencer believes that "women's role in the novel's rise has been underestimated," and her intention is "to recall some of these achievements, and thus contribute to the feminist project of uncovering women's history" (viii).

Like many other feminist critics, however, Spencer finds it difficult to account for didacticism in women's writing. She generally sees the didactic novel as the author's "advice to women...that they should conform to the accepted feminine role" (107), although she admits that this is not always the case. In an attempt to rationalize the didacticism in women's novels, she suggests "that women writers were drawn to the didactic tradition not because they wanted to preach female subordination, but because this tradition could be used for the development of a new and more complex treatment of female character" (143). Considering Spencer's ambitious goal of trying to recall women's achievements in order to show that women's role in the development of the novel has been underestimated, her arguments about didacticism in the novel are too narrowly focused and do not give enough credit to the women writers.

My goal in this dissertation is similar to Spencer's in that I want to highlight women's contributions to the development of the novel. As a feminist reader, however, I do not see didacticism as an issue to be ignored or to require excuses. I believe that in actively contributing to the period's debate on the didactic capacity of fiction, Fielding,

Sheridan, and Lennox do not limit themselves to exclusively female concerns; rather, they address the ways in which both sexes learn about moral issues and suggest that, at least on this subject, distinctions cannot and should not be made based on gender.

The first step toward recognizing the achievements of these women is to accept that didacticism was not a dead issue in the period as it is in the twentieth century. It is not enough, therefore, to tell the reader that didacticism is a contested issue during the period; it is necessary to show the reader the ways in which the authors contribute to that debate. My approach, then, is to examine the novels themselves, both in terms of form and content, in order to determine the ways in which each author envisions the role of instruction and its application to moral issues. One of the weaknesses of Spencer's argument about the didactic tradition is that she ignores the form of the works under discussion. Nowhere is this oversight more obvious than in her section on "Sarah Fielding's and Jane Collier's The Cry." If ever a work called out for an evaluation of its technical merits in a chapter on didacticism, then the formally complicated The Cry is that work! Despite having recognized that "women novelists after Richardson have usually been seen too simply as his imitators" (89), by focusing so closely on moral content in her own analyses, Spencer merely continues to reinforce the critically limited perspective on women's fiction that originated in the eighteenth century.

Williams argues that by the middle of the century, reviewers crafted their critiques based on the "attitudes" of Richardson and Henry Fielding. She suggests that for the mid-century critic, "Richardson not only made fiction respectable, but also provided a basis for criticism from which the novel as it was practised by other writers could be attacked, [sic] Fielding gave a great impetus to criticism which depended on Aristotelian classification and terminology" (23). Although Sheldon Sacks disagrees with the "polar view" of Richardson and Henry Fielding's contributions to the novel, he acknowledges that "it is common to regard Richardson as primarily and consciously a moralist who accidentally made important

contributions to the new genre, in contradistinction to Fielding, who was a novelist first and a moralist, if at all, incidentally" (236). This polarized view of literature, with Richardson at the moral end and Henry Fielding at the technical one, has had an important influence on the reception history of novels by women. Discussions of their novels, both in the period and in the twentieth century, tend to revolve around moral content rather than formal techniques or a combination of the two.

Unlike Spencer, who concentrates primarily on the moral content of the novels she investigates in her chapter on didacticism, I discuss both form and content in the novels of Richardson, Fielding, Sheridan, and Lennox in order to determine their relative positions on the question of the didactic capacity of the novel. By examining both technical aspects and moral content, the reader can gain a greater appreciation of the authors' whole designs and thus a better sense of the authors' contributions to the debates about the novel.

Although Richardson has been viewed primarily as a moralist, I focus on his technical efforts to instruct his readers on the way in which his works should be read. Because women novelists have so often been compared to Richardson, both within the period itself and later,⁴ I have chosen to study three women writers who were personally acquainted with Richardson and praised him and his work, either in print or private; who sought his professional advice; and whose correspondence with him survives. With the exception of Sir Charles Grandison,⁵ I examine novels with women as eponymous or central characters, because of the inclination of the contemporary reviewers, at least, to designate the novel as an appropriate vehicle of instruction for women, especially when the protagonist is female.⁶

Although modern critics view didacticism as too overt to require further investigation, my study of novels by Richardson, Fielding, Sheridan, and Lennox suggests that even the most open declarations of didactic intentions contain subtle nuances that need to be acknowledged and explored. Because Richardson and Fielding argue that fiction can and should instruct the reader, the technical aspects of their fiction occupies a prominent

place in my discussion, whereas with Lennox and Sheridan, there are fewer technical complexities, which means my discussion focuses more on the moral content of their works. The diminished emphasis on instruction in Sheridan's and Lennox's works does not, however, suggest that they merely sought to entertain the reader; rather, it indicates their views of the limited didactic capacity of the novel.

As different writers have individual approaches to didacticism, so too do their understanding and representations of morality vary. A closer look at each of these writers indicates that while Richardson works relentlessly to instruct the reader about gendered codes of moral behavior, Fielding, Sheridan, and Lennox view moral behavior in a more gender-neutral way. Even if one does not consider Fielding, Sheridan, and Lennox as feminist writers, feminist critics do not need to see didacticism and moralizing in their works as an impediment to an appreciation of their achievements. When discussing a moral issue such as the importance of chastity, a dead horse in the late twentieth century if ever there was one, the three women authors in this study are doing more than just reinscribing cultural stereotypes about women's natures. If a chaste woman cannot reason with her unchaste sister, as happens frequently in Lennox novels, then how else can she hope to affect her sister's behavior? Lennox's portrayal of the two sisters is more than a validation of the chaste sister's virtue; when examined in the context of Lennox's other novels, the reader sees that Lennox is reflecting on the inadequacies of exemplary behavior and even of language itself. The textual particulars, beyond providing a comment on contemporary moral behavior, are directly related to the author's more general questions about didacticism: If one person cannot persuade another person through direct discourse, then how can the novel hope to achieve any impact or teach correct moral behavior? Does language have the ability to "affect the behavior of readers in rational and predictable ways"? The answers to these questions should be of interest not only to the feminist critic but also to anyone interested in the history of the novel.

The novelists of the period do not usually articulate their positions in nonfictional forums, such as essays or pamphlets; instead, they deliberate the issue in their correspondence, prefaces, and, primarily, the novels themselves. Therefore, I examine prefatory material and the authors' correspondence in addition to the novels themselves in order to add to our understanding of the ways in which the author views his or her own writing, what kinds of themes they address, and what are their intentions. I begin each chapter by examining the author's correspondence, because, as Richardson says of the letters in *Clarissa*, the "Letters and Conversations...are presumed to be characteristic. They give occasion likewise to suggest many interesting Personalities, in which a good deal of instruction essential to a work of this nature is conveyed" (AMS 297). Because so many of Richardson's letters have survived, one can gain a good appreciation of his literary goals from his correspondence. The relative lack of extant correspondence for the women writers means that there are fewer opportunities to view their nonfictional responses to their own novels and to those of other people, but those few glimpses contribute to a fuller perception of the authors' work nonetheless. I focus on their correspondence with Richardson when possible but include other letters if they illuminate the author's fictional subjects or methods.

Although these women admire Richardson in their letters and in print, they resist him either in their fundamental belief in the didactic capacity of fiction or in the moral focus of their fiction. This does not mean, however, that I compare their novels with Richardson's on a minute, character or plot, level. In fact, most of the similarities between their texts' are relegated to footnotes. I am more interested in illustrating the larger literary differences between them. Finally, the reference to resisting Richardson in the title of this dissertation applies to the tendency, originating in the period itself and surviving still in the twentieth century, to assess eighteenth-century women's novels from a Richardsonian or primarily moral perspective. While recognizing the inescapable presence of Richardson

in the production and reception of these novels, I hope to emphasize these women authors' technical achievements and contributions to the debate about the didactic capacity of the novel as part of my own endeavor to reanimate the dead horse and revive the controversy over didacticism in the novel.

Notes to the Introduction

¹ Because didacticism and didactic are seen as such derogatory terms, I believe it is important to review the precise definitions of these terms: "Didacticism" is defined as "the practice or quality of being didactic or aiming at the conveyance of instruction" and "didactic" is defined as "having the character or manner of a teacher or instructor; characterized by giving instruction; having the giving of instruction as its aim or object; instructive, preceptive" (OED).

² In the introduction, the Richardson quotes all come from Clarissa but from the different editions specified after the quotes.

³ In addition to those critics quoted in the introduction and body of this dissertation, the following people discuss didacticism and related topics in either articles or chapters: Kevin Cope, B. G. MacCarthy, Robert Pierce, Ralph Rader, J. M. S. Tompkins, Robert Uphaus, and Joel Weinsheimer.

⁴ For the reviewers' comparisons of Richardson's work to those of women novelists, see the specific reviews in chapters two, three, and four.

⁵ I have included a discussion of Sir Charles Grandison in the Richardson chapter, although the central character is male, because of the importance of Richardson's continuing interest in the technical apparatus surrounding the novel. See the chapter itself for more information on the relationship between Richardson's final novel and his first two.

⁶ See the reviews of Lennox's The Female Quixote in chapter four. See also Williams' anthology and the selections from the middle to later part of the century, in which discussions of novels center increasingly around the appropriateness or the dangers of fiction for women specifically.

Chapter 1

From Parts to the Whole in Richardson's Novels:

Seeking to Contain the Debate on Meaning and Interpretation

In a letter dated November 7, 1748, to Aaron Hill, Samuel Richardson berates the intelligence of his contemporary readers: "And a Son of Thunder is wanted to rouse the Public out of <their> its Stupidity, and tell <them> it what <they> it should, and what <they> it should not, approve of" (Carroll 100).¹ He then continues, illustrating the relationship of the writer to the reader with the example of Pope who "could not trust his Works with the Vulgar, without Notes longer than the Work, and Self-praises, to tell them what he meant, and that he had a Meaning, in this or that Place. And thus every-one was taught to read with his Eyes" (Carroll 100). Richardson believes Pope to be a self-inflating character, who has "by Arts only He (as a Man of Genius) could stoop to," made himself "the Fashion" (Carroll 100). Richardson clearly dislikes Pope, questioning if indeed Pope does have any meaning in his writing; what further disturbs Richardson, however, is not only that Pope has succeeded in teaching the reader to interpret his works as he wants them to be seen but also the corollary that the reader then is complicitous in the process by his willingness to be led so easily. The irony underlying Richardson's complaints about Pope, however, is that, in his own novels and even his personal letters, Richardson ultimately requires his readers or correspondents to read from his own perspective and accept his vision.

Twentieth-century critics such as Terry Castle, Terry Eagleton, Carol Houlihan Flynn, and William Beatty Warner tend to focus on Richardson's inability to control meaning in his texts, specifically his novels, by arguing that the epistolary form leads to multiple interpretations from the lack of any overt authorial presence.² Castle argues that "the absence of authorial rhetoric and the shifting of authority to the reader makes the classic epistolary novel marvelously unfit, obviously, for didacticism of any kind" (168).

Although Castle is perhaps the most adamant of these critics in her dismissal of didacticism in Richardson's work, the other authors also suggest that the slipperiness of meaning in Richardson's work ends in the defeat of any didactic purpose. According to these critics, Richardson's didacticism is treated as failing in its purpose, as a mere cloak that provides moral license for his creations, as being misdirected, or perhaps even just as a "vulgar" intrusion.³

In contrast to these critics, I want to propose that Richardson tried to avoid open-ended interpretation of his works, that his didacticism was deliberate, and that his aesthetic purpose was very much related to, not in conflict with, his didactic goals. Although it would be naive merely to dismiss the views that Richardson's texts are open to interpretation and that each new reader brings a new outlook, it is necessary to recognize Richardson's relentless efforts to direct the meaning of his texts for his contemporaries. The emphasis on revision, both literally and figuratively, in his own novels and in his letters to his correspondents, cannot and should not be dismissed as an unwarranted intrusion.⁴ Despite the appearance of dialogue in his novels and correspondence, Richardson's didactic method ultimately serves to promote his own moral perspective. His correspondence serves as a particularly useful way of gaining entrance to his novels in that you can witness clearly in his letters the way in which he attempts to control meanings and gain acceptance for his own views. What becomes equally clear in his correspondence is his overriding concern with women's domestic responsibilities and women's place in relation to the patriarchy. The dominating and prescriptive tone he employs with women in his correspondence reappears in his novels, and his views on appropriate roles for women exert a lasting influence on women's novels and the critical response to those novels. While Richardson relies on discussions of and elaborations on correct moral behavior, especially for women, in his plots, he links these particulars to an increasingly complex and lengthy framework in each of his successive novels. Richardson knows that, when viewed individually, elements

of the plot by themselves may be challenged or questioned, but he expresses his continuing faith in the didactic capacity of fiction by linking those parts to the whole, including the prefaces, postscripts, collections of sentiments, index, and other framing devices.

Perhaps one of the few contemporary critics to address Richardson's didacticism as a serious enterprise is Tom Keymer. In his preface to Richardson's Clarissa and the Eighteenth-Century Reader, Keymer argues that Richardson employs the epistolary form, not to make the task of interpretation clearer for the reader but rather to force the reader to struggle with the text:

By withholding any presiding authorial voice, or by dissolving it instead into a multiplicity of competing epistolary voices, Richardson knowingly fostered the active participation of his readers, whom he expected to become 'if not Authors, Carvers' of the text. The instructiveness of the novels, I shall argue, derives precisely from this method of putting readers, morally and intellectually, on their mettle. It is by an active encounter with difficulties, and not by the passive reception of lessons, that Richardson's reader may learn. (xviii)

Given Richardson's views on the "indolent" nature of his contemporary reader (Carroll 98) and the deliberate avoidance of an omniscient narrator in his own novels, it is easy to believe that Richardson rejects Pope's mode of operation and requires his reader to do his own interpretative work. Unlike Pope, who will not allow the reader to read with his own eyes, Richardson's purpose is to force the reader to do just that, according to Keymer. Throughout his book, Keymer notes that Richardson challenges his contemporaries to become better readers: "...in the absence of synthesis, or of any objective guidance in matters of evaluation and judgment, the reader is pushed into the most exacting and creative roles. He must make sense, for himself, of all the text's confusions, complexities and quarrels" (xvii). In contrast to Pope, Richardson apparently equates the better reader with the more independent reader.

Keymer is right to focus attention on the way in which Richardson wants people to learn and not just on what they learn. Using Johnson's Rambler No. 4 as a guide, Keymer argues that novels educate by involving the reader "in instructive 'mock encounters' with difficulties, challenges and dilemmas closely related in kind to those he will encounter in life itself" (xviii). With this understanding of the didactic function of the novel, Keymer hopes to show "that much of the complexity of form, debatability of meaning and urgency of implication for which we value the novels today are not only consistent with, but in great measure attributable to, the conscious didactic purposes which moved their author [Richardson] to write them" (xviii). Keymer distinguishes himself from other critics on this particular point: that the slipperiness of meaning in Richardson's work is intentional rather than unconscious. According to Keymer, the form of Richardson's novels then is at least as much a part of his message as the content of those novels, if not more so. However, his argument that Richardson allows the reader interpretative freedom does not hold, either in terms of the novels or even within his own correspondence. Richardson is concerned with the "inevitability of slippage between world and word" (Keymer xvi), but ultimately he seeks to exercise control over meaning by minimizing the inherent heteroglossia of language. Indeed, Richardson's didactic method relies more on the stylistic appearance of dialogism rather than an intrinsic dialogism.

Keymer mentions Mikhail Bakhtin only briefly in his book, but many of his terms suggest Bakhtin's ideas about the novel. Although he rejects the application of Bakhtin's idea of polyphony to Richardson's work, other key phrases of his analysis resound with Bakhtinian overtones. Keymer considers Richardson's elusiveness as part of his aesthetic, "an aesthetic of difficulty," in which "complexity and openness take the place of simplicity and closure" and the results are "far more subtle and dynamic processes of education-- processes arising not from authorial insistence, but from the very considerable activities and efforts demanded of the reader by virtue of its very absence" (66). In Bakhtin's

novelistic paradigm, the notions of complexity and lack of closure arise from both an internal and external dialogism, in which the word itself is "shot through with intentions and accents" and in which the word interacts with an alien word and is thus transformed (279, 293). Keymer's assertion that Richardson allows for numerous voices and numerous interpretations of those voices, which leads to an opacity out of which the reader must create meaning, does not take into account the fact that Richardson ultimately suggests, both in his novels and in his letters, that there is only one way to read, one way to interpret a situation, and finally, one way to act. Although Richardson creates an apparent dialogue, his own thoughts and sense of what is correct dominate both his novels and his letters: while his didactic form appears to embrace "complexity and openness" in the construction of a dialogue, he actually seeks to limit heteroglossia and invest words and situations with clearly determined meanings.

In viewing Richardson's epistolary work, Keymer presumes that the multiple voices of the characters challenge the reader to choose the right interpretation, especially when faced with the "deformations that arise from the rhetorical or performative tendencies of first-person discourse" (xvi). The result of the absence of the authorial persona, according to Castle, is that the author "loses an essential means for exerting control over the reader" (167). According to Bakhtin, however, true heteroglossia does not reside in the form of the work: double-voicedness can occur even without speech markers, such as quotation marks, and he argues that the "internal dialogism of authentic prose discourse...is not ultimately divisible into verbal exchanges possessing precisely marked boundaries" (326). Certainly, true double-voicedness

makes its presence felt by the novelist in the living heteroglossia of the language, and in the multi-linguagedness surrounding and nourishing his own consciousness; it is not invented in superficial, isolated rhetorical polemics with another person.

(Bakhtin 327)

In her argument, Castle seems to be relying heavily on the "superficial, rhetorical polemics" created by Richardson in his novelistic letters; however, what she derisively dismisses as "the elaborate, bathetic editorial apparatus Richardson began adding in the second and third editions of *Clarissa*" (165) is exactly the means by which Richardson seeks to overcome incipient heteroglossia in his novels.

The Debate on Meaning and Interpretation in Richardson's Correspondence

In his letters, Richardson relies on direct debates with his correspondents in order to limit the instability of language. At the most obvious level, Richardson's personal letters and his novels are linked stylistically; in terms of content, too, both contain discussions of the way in which people read, or interpret situations, and particularly of the way in which women, both fictional and real, should behave. Richardson himself blurs the boundaries between his letters and his novels by frequently citing his novels in his letters as evidence for his point of view and, more suggestively, by referring to his creations as real people and even quoting them as authorities.⁵ Warner suggests that Richardson encouraged the "artful play" about issues from the novels between himself and his correspondents as if he "welcomed the disease of misreading so he might fortify the text with antibodies against its recurrence" (146). The focus of much of Richardson's correspondence is, indeed, on his own novels, and he certainly gathered the objections of his correspondents and responded accordingly in his next revision of his novels.

Because much of Richardson's surviving correspondence is with women, one result is his "reputation for fatuous and condescending authoritarianism" (Keymer 64). In a bout of wishful thinking, Keymer suggests that if more of the surviving correspondence were with men such as Fielding, "we should doubtless have a different view of his thinking" (64). Keymer correctly suggests that Richardson's tone varies "markedly according to the character and status of each recipient" (64) and that with women, mostly younger than

himself, his "approach is at once inhibited and patronising" (64). Although his dominant tone might be less fatuous if there were more surviving letters to men, ultimately Richardson approaches all of his correspondents, male or female, similarly: he appears to be asking for help or to be trying to engage them in a dialogue, but actually he tells them what he thinks and then implies that they should think that way as well.

In his letters, Richardson manifests his concern for his readers' capabilities by making overt references to his contemporaries' incapacity for thought and by making subtler reflections on even his own friends' capacities for reading his work. The reference to Pope, in which Richardson implicitly maligns the lazy reader, is not an isolated occasion; his letters are filled with uneasy references to his audience. When writing to Aaron Hill, Richardson tries to reassure him of the value of Hill's works: "Your writings require thought to read, and to take in their whole force; and the world has no thought to bestow. Simplicity is all their cry..." (Carroll 98). In another letter to Hill, Richardson's complaints about readers take on a more personal, though much more deferential, tone. Hill had offered Richardson some suggestions to help him shorten *Clarissa*, but as usual Richardson responded so defensively that a bewildered Hill destroyed his other suggestions (Carroll 78). Richardson reacts to Hill's first efforts by commenting,

with regard to the Character of Lovelace, I dare say your Judgment is not to be disputed; and I am inclined by it to think, it would be the public Judgment too. And I will consider it again from your kind Hints. Yet I must own, that I am a good deal warped by the Character of a Gentleman I had in my Eye, when I drew both him, and Mr. B. in Pamela. (Carroll 79)

Richardson solicits advice from his close friends, but then as often as not, he rejects much of the advice but explains himself so that his friends understand what his true meaning or intent was. Further on in the same letter to Hill, he hopes, on the one hand, to exonerate himself from any possible charges of rudeness for rejecting Hill's changes and, on the

other, to show Hill exactly what he meant to do in his novel. He prefaces the explanations, "I hope, Sir, you will forgive me a few cursory Observations, on the Seven Letters you have been so good as to send me; were it only to acquit myself from any Imputations that might lie against me for Tenaciousness" (Carroll 79). In his subsequent point by point refutation of Hill's proposals, Richardson acknowledges that one of Hill's hints regarding abridgement would have been of use to him, "altho' I had dispensed with your Words and your Manner" (Carroll 80). Despite the outward appearance of wanting his close friends to help him with his novels by pointing out faults or ways to shorten them, Richardson is clearly "tenacious" about the meaning of his work. Although in this instance he does not directly say it, the implication of his rejection of Hill's changes is that Hill has not really gotten his meaning correctly or else he could not have possibly suggested those particular changes. The rebuff is delivered gently, but the implication is clear: Hill is not paying sufficient attention to Richardson's subtleties and nuances.

Later in the letter, Richardson continues to be deferential but with a more urgently despairing tone. He confesses his mortification that Clarissa's behavior in running away with Lovelace should be mistaken by Hill: "that what I have so much laboured, as to make it manifest...That this should be called, by such a clear Discerner; a rash Elopement with a Man" (Carroll 82). He moans "I am very unfortunate, good Sir, let me say, <to be so ill-understood:> To have given Reason, <I should say,> to be so little understood" (Carroll 82). In a bit of disingenuous flattery, he casts doubt on his own "Conduct in this Story, when, if I did not, I must question your Attention to it, in the most material Point of all, respecting my Heroine's Character, and, as I may say, one of the principal Morals that I proposed to be drawn from my Story" (Carroll 82). Even his friend Hill shows a tendency to need to be led in the proper direction, but unlike Pope, Richardson guides the erring reader with an apparent self-abasement that actually implies that the reader, not the author, lacks discernment.

In contrast to his self-deprecating, if somewhat pained tone with Hill, Richardson is often more forthright in pointing out his women readers' inattention and in requiring them to reread his novels with more care. Richardson writes to Sarah Chapone about Clarissa's refusal to marry Solmes and after a lengthy paragraph explaining Clarissa's position and showing how her letters should act as a plea "against forced Marriages" (Carroll 207), he ends admitting "--However, let me add, I have found myself mistaken by two of the most ingenious, and I flatter'd myself, most attentive, of my Readers" (Carroll 207). As with Hill, he does not directly say his readers have been wrong, but he certainly implies that his readers have, indeed, been inattentive. With Frances Grainger he is much more direct: "I wish, my dear Miss Grainger, you had vouchsafed to consider the History of Clarissa more attentively than you can have done" (Carroll 141). Keymer sees Richardson's relationship with his correspondents, such as Hill, Chapone, and Grainger, as "geared not to explanation but to interrogation, and rather than correcting readers it [Richardson's letter] invites them to correct themselves" by sending the reader back to "re-examine the text" (65); however, I believe that Richardson's invitations, or sometimes direct commands, to the reader to go over the text again are orders for the reader to look again at what they have been saying and to see the fallacy of their arguments.

With his male correspondents, Richardson's tone is often polite even if engaged in an argument over his novels, but it is with his female acquaintances that he fully discusses his novels and corresponding sentiments and ideas. With his women correspondents, his tone is lighter and more playful, and at the same time, ironically, less deferential and more dictatorial. When Lady Bradshaigh protests that she will not finish Clarissa because she cannot bear the thought of a tragic ending, Richardson responds that the "story is designed to strengthen the tender Mind, and to enable the worthy Heart to bear up against the Calamities of Life" and counsels her to "read my Story through and you will see [that] in the Example Clarissa sets, Meekness of Heart is intirely consistent with that Dignity of

Mind..." (Carroll 116). Although the words are simple enough, the phrasing "you will see" conveys the imperative that she will understand why the story must end with Clarissa's death, especially now that Richardson has told her the way in which the ending must be viewed as a positive example.

With the younger, unmarried Frances Grainger, Richardson is much less hesitant about directing her understanding. In the context of an argument about parental authority over children, Richardson answers one of Grainger's questions designed to show that children can have more sense than their parents with an emphatic "No! No! No!--The very worst Sentence you ever wrote" (Carroll 140). He continues to discredit her claims about the age of discretion for women with "Wrong! Wrong! Egregiously wrong, here again!" (Carroll 140). Although his emphatic disagreements here are more overt than in most of his correspondence with women, Richardson manages to imply much the same sense of control in his on-going debates with women over a range of other issues. I do not mean to suggest that Richardson is a tyrannical and absolute dictator; rather, I want to argue that despite the light-hearted tone he often assumes in his correspondence, he has some very decided opinions that he aims to have his reader, particularly his female reader, share.

Despite the appearance of open debate in his correspondence, Richardson manages to suppress conflicting interpretations, and, ironically, as much as Pope, he teaches his correspondents to read with his own eyes. Richardson acknowledges to Lady Bradshaigh that he likes to stir people up in his writings, in this case about Sir Charles Grandison and the fate of Clementina: "Some debatable Things I have inserted, others let go, purely to be called to Account; and, if the Piece be read, to set People into Debates" (Carroll 244). In both novels and his correspondence, however, he creates or sets up debates whose conclusions are predetermined by his own moral agenda. He writes to Lady Bradshaigh that "when I love my correspondents, I write treatises, you know, Madam, rather than letters" (Carroll 184). Despite the tone of debate that dominates much of his

correspondence with Lady Bradshaigh, and his other women correspondents, the underlying sense is that he is writing a treatise on a particular subject. Often those treatises relate to the subject of women's domestic duties and how women define specific words like love or understand specific relationships such as those with their husbands or potential husbands.

In his letters to several women correspondents, including Susanna Highmore, Sarah Chapone, Hester Mulso, Sophia Westcomb, and Lady Bradshaigh, Richardson's discussions are dominated by general questions about a woman's domestic duties and then specific questions about the meanings of key words, such as love, and the definition of a woman's role in marriage or courtship. Although he will take an opposing view for the sake of an argument, Richardson's views about women and their place in society revolve around their first priority, the domestic realm and a woman's place within it. Richardson focuses often on the question of female morality and ties those questions definitively to issues of domesticity: as long as a woman knows that her first priority is the domestic sphere, and she restricts her activities to that sphere, she will not only avoid trouble but also will appear to be empowered as a moral exemplar.

As a self-appointed champion of the fair sex, Richardson's view of women's intellectual capacities is generally positive, as long as they know that their first duty lies in their domestic responsibilities. In conversations with young, unmarried Sophia Westcomb and Susanna Highmore and even the older, married Lady Bradshaigh, Richardson expresses his views on women's domestic duties. To Sophia Westcomb he writes that "all the intellectual pleasures a lady can give herself, not neglecting the necessary employments that shall make her shine in her domestic duties, should be given; but otherwise that she should prefer the useful to all theoretic knowledge (Carroll 65-66). To Susanna Highmore he makes his views more specific in terms of class: Girls of middle-class families can amuse themselves at public diversions "once, twice, thrice in the season; and not so often as thrice, if ... they were likely to be drawn from domestic usefulness by the indulgence" (Barbauld II,

214). He further elaborates on the benefits of domesticity to his unmarried friend by offering her a "plan" in which she should stay in one place, instead of gadding about: "As you love your father, love your father's house. Domesticate yourself. You will want no company there. The young fellows, as well as old ones, will know where to have you....The lovers like to come home to a girl" (Barbauld II, 222-23).

In the context of a longer argument with Lady Bradshaigh about women and learning, Richardson expands upon his view of women's duties and once again privileges their domestic duties. According to Richardson, unlike young men who are sent away from home to learn, women should be "brought up to a knowledge of the domestic duties" (Barbauld VI, 60). Lady Bradshaigh agrees with Richardson's assessment about the importance of domesticity in keeping young girls occupied: "let them study that, domestic duties, and other necessary acquirements, and they will have employment enough to keep them out of mischief" (Barbauld VI, 70). Richardson does not mind if women acquire learning as long as they

not think themselves above their domestic duties....I acknowledge that the great and indispensable duties of women are of the domestic kind; and that, if a woman neglects these, or despises them, for the sake of science itself, which I call learning, she is good for nothing. (Carroll 178)

For both married and unmarried women, Richardson's recurrent theme is that women need to be domestically inclined, which is a common view of his period that Lady Bradshaigh obviously shares.

Although Richardson does not encounter much resistance to his general ideas about domesticity from his female friends, several of his specific ideas generate more heated debate and illustrate the way in which he manages the dialogue so as to impose his own terms on his correspondents. With Hester Mulso and Lady Bradshaigh, for example, he discusses precise usages, such as of the word love, in order to define their exact meanings

rather than to explore and accommodate the many different meanings that such words might have. With Hester Mulso, under the guise of a debate, Richardson in effect writes a "treatise" on the relationship between love and gratitude. In Richardson's view, the meaning of love is always accompanied by a sense of duty. Richardson quotes back to Mulso several of her sentiments about love, including her assertion that "you and I have different ideas of the passion" (Barbauld III, 176). Richardson refuses to allow for this difference of opinion and responds to her assertions by arguing,

if that passion is not little and selfish that makes two vehement souls prefer the gratification of each other, often to a sense of duty, and always to the whole world without them, be pleased to tell me what is? And pray be so good as to define to me, what the noble passion is, of which so few people of either sex are capable.

(Barbauld III, 176-77)

Although he ends the letter by suggesting that his questions are not meant to "bamboozle" her and that he is interested "purely for information" (Barbauld III, 177), at this point he has the last word on the subject and his questions sound like rhetorical questions in which there is really only one right answer. In a nine-and-one-half page printed response to Mulso's further reflections on love and duty, Richardson continues to query her ideas and lightly ridicule them by calling them "Fine talking! Pretty ideas!" (Barbauld III, 183), and by asking her to "consider the matter over again, in this its best light" (Barbauld III, 184). He continues by quoting her response to him and then adding his own thoughts, "In virtue, I will presume that you include duty; and not only duty, but prudence; and then I will admit that love, such a love, shall be called noble" (Barbauld III, 187). He comes to allow that love may be called noble, if Mulso includes those factors of duty and prudence, which he takes the liberty of presuming and assuming she does. This particular debate is ended when he again quotes from her,

'You did not, you say, mean to exclude gratitude, &c.'--I know that you did not; and

there I own myself to be designedly a cavallier; but in pleasantry too, to make you rise upon me, and say right things in your usual beautiful manner. And my end is answered. I suffer.--You shine. (Barbauld III, 190)

The case is thus lightly closed with his mock heroics, but over the course of the exchanges, he has managed to force her to define her terms in a way so that his own argument that love must include gratitude is answered. He concludes that he suffers and she shines, but the reader senses that he assumes that the word love no longer has the larger meaning for Mulso that it once did before she debated with him.

Richardson engages in a similarly constructed debate with Lady Bradshaigh on the role of love and fear in marriage in an exchange almost as long as and much more heated an earlier debate they had over the issue of women and learning. In this argument, Lady Bradshaigh is much less conventional in her approach than her views on women and learning might have suggested. Richardson begins the exchange by suggesting that in order to make happy marriages men should assert their power and women accept their dependence. He gleefully adds, "And now will your Ladyship rise upon me! I expect it" (Barbauld VI, 130). And she does so. She rejects the notion that a man's tyranny will result in a happy marriage and strongly asserts that instead the result will be

hell, indeed, Sir; this world's hell, I call it. There are [men], who expect their wives to love, serve, honour, and obey, only because they have vowed to do so; but what men are they? And what woman could value such from her heart, or be happy with such a man?--When love is reciprocal, sweet is the bondage, and easy the yoke; where that is, nothing is wanting; for ever banished be fear, the bane of happiness in every shape; at least with one of my temper. (Barbauld VI, 142)

Lady Bradshaigh can hardly believe that she clearly understands Richardson's view on love and fear: "There is some misconstruction; some words, or tone of voice, wrong understood" (Barbauld VI, 143). She knows that he likes to provoke her, but in this case, she feels he

cannot be merely engaging in a whimsical debate on a subject about which she feels so strongly.

Richardson pursues the argument without relenting, however, asking her to compare a woman's relationship to her parents to that with her husband and to define the difference, especially in terms of the role of fear in love: "Will you be pleased to shew me in what the two sorts of fear, if two sorts there be, differ?" (Barbauld VI, 148). He doubts her distinctions but wants her to be precise about her definitions. Bradshaigh refuses to relent and argues that if she loves her husband, she cannot fear him, and adds questioningly, "I know not whether that is not something different from what you mean by fear" (Barbauld VI, 155).

As this conversation comes after that about women and learning, Bradshaigh views Richardson's debating technique with suspicion: "have you but now found out the way to make me an advocate for my sex?" (Barbauld VI, 144). She admits that he has "made" her become an advocate for women and concedes, "What a blundering brain have I! For ever producing dirt to be thrown in my own face!" (Barbauld VI, 145). He turns her own arguments against her and thanks her, "You have most charmingly strengthened my argument: I thank you, Madam!" (Barbauld VI, 161). His triumph is complete even as Lady Bradshaigh's own arguments suggest that his position is the correct one:

I was not wrong, therefore, I think, when I asked your Ladyship why fear should mingle with your love of an indulgent parent...and produce hatred to a husband? You will answer me as above. Your Ladyship knows your answer....Nor, as your Ladyship seems to have proved, was I much out of the way.... (Barbauld VI, 162)

Despite Richardson's insistence on his own understanding of love and fear in marriage, Lady Bradshaigh still refuses to give way to him and says "I am not yet convinced that fear is a necessary ingredient to love. You terrify me by insisting upon it; though, why should I be terrified? for sure I am that I love, and as such that I do not fear" (Barbauld

VI, 176). But Richardson expressly disallows her the use of her own experience as a valid basis for her argument: "I will not allow you to look at home, and determine by yourself. You can know nothing of the world, nor of the argument, if you form your conclusions upon the conduct of a single pair" (Barbauld VI, 149). He then distinguishes between their debating skills: "I confirm by experience what you advance only from conjecture" (Barbauld VI, 166) in which case, she will never win the argument despite his polite remonstrances with her that he merely loves to provoke her and that "I also love to agree with your Ladyship, in material articles" (Barbauld VI, 165). Because of his vast experience with the world, Richardson argues, his position and opinions are more valuable and thus he becomes the final arbiter of meaning.

These running battles may seem interminable, or lacking in closure, but inevitably Richardson forces his women correspondents to acknowledge that he knows more about women and women's position in society than they do. Richardson's exchanges with Lady Bradshaigh highlight his didactic approach in which he argues, flirts, teases, sometimes taking one side, sometimes another, until his correspondent gives in to his opinion. Richardson's role in these debates with his women correspondents seems to be avuncular, whether or not they are young, old, married, or unmarried. In a letter to Frances Grainger, he comments on the role of the parent and argues "which is most likely to be right, the Parent, who has lived twice the Time in ye [sic] World, or the Daughter?" (Carroll 141). Although his remark is in the context of a discussion on parents and children, the attitude is one that pervades his discussions with his female correspondents. As a self-appointed tutor or father, with a wider knowledge of men and the world, Richardson is presumably then more qualified to be a judge of women than women themselves, whose primary duties, as he suggests, are to tend to private matters in a domestic setting. The domestic world, in turn, does not provide them with adequate experience to judge the world, so women will always have to defer to men like Richardson, even on the subject of women themselves. Even

when the outcome of the debate is favorable to women, the fact remains that Richardson takes authority for the issue. Despite the appearance of a dialogue, Richardson doesn't concede any ground; rather, he requires his opponents to accept his definitions of what constitutes proper thought and behavior.

Form and Content in the Novels

By featuring such heroines as Pamela and Clarissa in his novels, Richardson apparently privileges women's voices and experiences, and frequently this foregrounding of women's issues has led critics to argue that Richardson was at least a proto-feminist, if not a more serious champion of women's rights. A close look at the novels reveals that, as in his correspondence, Richardson applauds female intelligence while demanding that women's first priorities revolve around their domestic duties. As in the correspondence, there is the illusion of dialogue, but in reality Richardson has specific messages in Pamela, Clarissa, and Sir Charles Grandison that he expects his readers to assimilate. For the purposes of this project, I shall be concentrating primarily on what he expects women to derive from his novels, which center primarily on women and domestic events. There may be consequent implications for men and public affairs--indeed, Margaret Anne Doody notes that Richardson pictures a "civilized life, which begins with the family, and radiates its influence outwards to society at large" (Natural Passion 81)--but his focus is on educating women for their proper role in society.

To discuss the content of Richardson's novels without discussing their form is to address only one part of his endeavor. Bakhtin writes that "form and content in discourse are one, once we understand that verbal discourse is a social phenomenon--social throughout its entire range and in each and every of its factors, from the sound image to the furthest reaches of abstract meaning" (259), and Richardson is certainly aware of this connection, as he manipulates both form and content to achieve his stated objectives. As

Richardson made his frequent revisions from one edition of a novel to the next, adjusting his text to answer criticisms from the reading public, so too did he move from novel to novel as if in response to reactions to his previous novel. The result is an increasing reliance on an external framework to reinforce the moral content as Richardson progresses from one novel to the next. The twentieth-century critic may find the apparently post-modern problems of interpretation in *Clarissa* worthy of extensive study, but in order to understand Richardson's didactic goals fully, all of his novels must be considered.

While critical interest in *Grandison* has been mixed, the prevailing view of the last two volumes of *Pamela* is one of outright contempt.⁶ One of the few people to treat the sequel to *Pamela* in any depth, Doody titles her chapter "*Pamela* Continued: Or, The Sequel that Failed." Even T.C. Duncan Eaves and Ben D. Kimpel note "the slight intrinsic interest of this continuation" ("Richardson's Revisions" 62). By dismissing the sequel, the reader may spare him or herself almost a thousand more pages of reading, but, more importantly, the reader will miss the way in which Richardson seeks to validate the first part of the story and to restate the "moral" of his story more clearly and render it less liable to misreading. The relationship between the original and the sequel deserves close attention, because it parallels the connections among each of the three novels and their revisions as Richardson tries to limit the debate about meaning in his works. One might expect that Richardson's experiences with his audience's ability to misinterpret his intentions would have made him less certain about the didactic capacity of fiction, yet this was not the case. Instead, he continued to strive to link potentially debatable plot particulars to an increasingly directive overall framework.

Making Textually and Morally Fine Distinctions in *Pamela*

To begin the discussion of *Pamela*, I want first briefly to review the publication history of both parts. Thanks to William Merritt Sale, Jr. and Eaves and Kimpel, much of

the publication history of Richardson's novels has been well established. During Richardson's lifetime, there were eight editions of the first part of the story (volumes one and two) and four editions of the sequel, volumes three and four (although several reissues of earlier editions made that number seem higher) (Sale 13). In an extremely detailed article on Richardson's revisions of the original Pamela, Eaves and Kimpel note the vast number of changes between each editions, particularly between the last edition published in Richardson's lifetime and the 1801 edition. The 1801 edition, they argue, represents Richardson's final changes to his work, and they remark that there are over "8400 changes in Volumes I and II, ranging from single words to whole pages cut or added. Hardly a paragraph is untouched" (Studies in Bibliography 78). When choosing a copy-text for an edition, they indicate that either the first edition or this 1801 edition should be used. Their own preference is for the first edition, however:

for anyone who simply wants to read Pamela for enjoyment, we believe that the text of the first edition should be the one reprinted. It is closer to the Pamela whom Richardson actually imagined, whereas all succeeding texts try to approach the Pamela he thought he should have imagined. ("Richardson's Revisions" 88)

The suggestion here is that Richardson's didacticism interferes with the aesthetics of the text. While I think an argument can be made that the first edition should provide the copy-text for a modern edition because of the historic impact that the novel had upon its first readers, for my purposes here it is necessary to look at the final editions of each novel and see how they have evolved in response to Richardson's readers' criticisms and comments.

The emendations between editions of Pamela are numerous as Eaves and Kimple point out, but it is important to note that while there are changes in the substantives, there are far more changes to the accidentals.⁷ Many of the changes to the accidentals are a matter of emphasis, either adding an exclamation mark or frequently adding or shifting italicization. A look at bibliographical minutia will illuminate the relationship between the

printing histories of the novels and the actual overall form of the novels. The interest he showed in defining terms and words throughout his correspondence, as discussed earlier, is clearly present in his control over even the smallest textual details of his own novels. As a printer, Richardson was acutely aware of the importance of such technical devices such as italicization for highlighting words or adding shades of meaning. While many critics discuss the epistolary style that he employs in his novels, it is necessary to remember that form includes seemingly minor functions such as italicization, as found in Pamela, and the more prevalent framing devices of prefaces, footnotes, indexes, and collections of sentiments, as found in Clarissa and Sir Charles Grandison.

The first part of Pamela exhibits Richardson's epistolary style at its most monolithic. For the most part, Pamela's voice predominates and represents the voice of authority for the first two-thirds of the novel. Nancy Armstrong argues that when Pamela and Mr. B marry, what takes place is a "wedding of her moral authority to his particular economic practices and social place" (130). Pamela's moral authority exists from the novel's beginning and is generally presented as a fairly straightforward matter of Pamela acting correctly and Mr. B, or Mrs. Jewkes, behaving incorrectly. The famous proposals scene typifies the dichotomy between Pamela's and Mr. B's moral values: for every immoral suggestion or action he makes, she quickly responds with the morally correct and defensive response. Although presumably Mr. B's words are transcribed exactly as he had written them and therefore represents his unmediated voice, the proposals and Pamela's rejoinders do not represent a true dialogue or exchange of ideas: hers is always the last, definitive word, at least during their peculiar courtship.

Pamela functions as the moral authority in the novel, and as moral arbiter, she distinguishes between what is acceptable and what is not. The most graphic image of Pamela as arbiter or distinguisher is when she lays out before Mrs. Jervis her three bundles, which include items given to her from her deceased employer, items received from Mr. B,

and those items that either belonged to her when she arrived or were purchased by her. Although she refuses to take neither the things given to her by Mr. B nor her late mistress, she carefully explains the difference between those bundles to Mrs. Jervis. Whereas Mr. B gave her certain articles "to be the price of my shame," the items from Lady B cannot be taken with her to her parents' home because they would cause envy among her neighbors (I, 94). Pamela does not merely sort her bundles into two distinct units, those that she will take away and those that she will not, because she wants to emphasize that some of the possessions were obtained in a morally acceptable manner while those of Mr. B were given to her for morally reprehensible reasons.

The bundle-sorting scene establishes the tone for the remainder of the novel in that Richardson invests Pamela with the ability and predilection to make morally fine distinctions. Although Henry Fielding mocks Pamela's "virtue" in *Shamela* (1741), the issue of her virtue is subsumed by the larger question of honor in both men and women. Clearly, honor for women means virtue, but one of the main conflicts between Pamela and Mr. B revolves around competing definitions of honor and what honor means to a man and how it means something different when applied to a woman. In the question of defining honor, Pamela again plays the role of arbiter.

Richardson establishes the framework for the theme of honor that occurs throughout the novel, in much the way that certain themes run through his correspondence; he banters ironically and playfully, in this case with Pamela's incessant appellation of Mr. B as "your honour." Near the beginning of the novel, after Mr. B has first evinced an interest in Pamela, she immediately responds by reminding Mr. B of their difference in rank and that his actions debase his rank. She defends her severe reaction to his attempts before both Mr. B and Mrs. Jervis:

When a master of his honour's degree demeans himself to be so free as that to such a poor servant as me, what is not to be apprehended? But your honour went

further; and talked of Lucretia, and her hard fate. Your honour knows you went too far for a master to a servant, or even to his equal. (I, 33)

The subject under discussion is actually what befits Mr. B's honor, but the term "honour" is not yet applied. The liberal use of "your" or "his" honour in reference to Mr. B in every sentence not only symbolizes Pamela's correct behavior as his servant but also ironically highlights the distance between his status and his actions.

The debate over honor becomes more explicit when Pamela is abducted and removed to the Lincolnshire estate. To Mrs. Jewkes, Pamela openly scorns Mr. B's professions of honor and then challenges Mr. B outright on their differing notions of honor. The absent Mr. B defends his abduction of her by promising in a letter that "I mean to act by you with the utmost honour" (I, 174), but Pamela distrusts him and sarcastically writes back to him, "I can make no doubt what my master's honourable professions will end in" (I, 156). Richardson's use of italicization, of course, leaves the reader in no doubt as to Pamela's scorn for the way Mr. B views honor. Before Mr. B arrives, Pamela engages with Mrs. Jewkes on the question of honor. Mrs. Jewkes assures Pamela that she has nothing to fear from Mr. B "when my master himself assures you of his honour," but Pamela shrewdly counters by questioning Mrs. Jewkes, "what do you call honour?" (I, 160). Mrs. Jewkes responds by deferring to the absent Mr. B and asking Pamela, "what does he call honour, think you?" Pamela's immediate response is "Ruin! shame! disgrace!" (I, 160). While Mrs. Jewkes believes that handsome settlements in exchange for virtue are honorable, Pamela clearly disagrees.

Pamela addresses Mr. B directly on the issue of honor both in a letter and in person. In her letter, she charges that

I too much apprehend, that your notions of honour and mine are very different....If you have any proposals to make me, that are consistent with your honourable professions, in my humble sense of the word, a few lines will communicate them to

me, and I will return such an answer as befits me. (I, 183-84)

In person, Pamela finds that Mr. B still does not understand the difference between their differing definitions of honor: "He held me fast notwithstanding, professing honour all the time with his mouth, though his actions did not correspond" (I, 281). For Mr. B, honor is a question of maintaining a verbal stance, but Pamela refuses to admit a difference between the verbal and the physical. After their embrace, Pamela writes "he then walked out with me, still bragging of his honour, and his love. 'Yes, yes, sir,' said I, 'your honour is to destroy mine, and your love is to ruin me, I see it too plainly" (I, 281).

Flynn argues that to "transform B.'s way of thinking, Pamela must redefine two words central to his understanding: love and honor" (161), and she suggests that Pamela's own notion of honor consists of "marriage, not keeping. When B. complies, she accepts him gratefully" (162). Certainly, Mr. B's offer of marriage resolves the conflict over the question of honor for Pamela, but what should not be overlooked is the centrality of the issue of honor to the novel as a whole and what honor means for a man and woman. Pamela's honor is defined throughout the novel as virtue; yes, she can do fancywork and occasionally scrub dishes or even read, write, and dance, but her defining characteristic is her virginity. Mr. B, in contrast, can be honorable, if only in a titular way, by birth. Pamela's insistence that their relationship be honorable clearly indicates that Richardson privileges her view of honor, but such a prolonged insistence on honor as chastity results in an extremely restrictive moral paradigm for women novelists writing after Richardson.

The conflict that drives the first two-thirds of the novel is resolved when Pamela and Mr. B marry, as Flynn suggests above. One of the few parts of the wedding ceremony that Pamela highlights is that she "answered to every article of obey, serve, love, and honour" (II, 130). Although love is certainly one aspect of her vow, the concept of honor is directly related also to obedience and service. In this way, the conflict over the question of honor is resolved by her promising to honor her husband or master, as she continues to call

him.

Although Pamela's voice has clearly been invested with moral authority from the beginning of the novel, a shift occurs at the time of the wedding that indicates that her moral authority is not granted equal standing with Mr. B's power and social position within their marriage, although Armstrong suggests otherwise. Pamela's virtuous resistance to Mr. B is rewarded and her chastity approved by everyone, but in the final third of the first part of the novel and in the sequel, her moral authority, while still praised, is subsumed by her obligations to obey and serve her husband.

Armstrong asserts that when

Pamela becomes mistress of the household...the servants are ruled by her moral example rather than by the sheer force of political loyalty and economic power.

Because a well-regulated household depends entirely on the moral qualities of the female in charge, it cannot succumb to the double tyranny of male desire and aristocratic whim. (125)

The suggestion that Pamela retains power because of her moral authority and derives power from her domestic responsibilities is undercut, however, in the last third of the novel and the sequel. The most conspicuous examples of her powerlessness are her charity work and her rules for domestic conduct. Although Pamela is granted free rein by Mr. B to proceed with charitable works, the money always comes from Mr. B, whether directly or through Mr. Longman. She cannot escape his financial superiority. But even more telling are the rules for conduct imposed on Pamela by Mr. B. After narrating the actual conversation with Mr. B on his expectations of her, Pamela reiterates his commands in writing for her future reference. Pamela notes his injunctions and offers her own remarks on them, sometimes agreeing, sometimes not; but unlike the proposals scene in which he saw her counter-proposals, this list is not intended for his eyes. One rule elicits a particularly tart response from Pamela: "If he be set upon a wrong thing, she must not dispute with him,

but do it, and expostulate afterwards.--I don't know what to say to this! It looks a little hard, methinks! This would bear a smart debate. I fancy, in a parliament of women (II, 254-55). In the previous rule, she asked "Who is to be the judge?" on these questions of behavior (II, 254), and this whole question of judgment and who is fit to judge and by what right is one of the predominant issues addressed in the sequel.

Closure, Authority, and Exemplarity in the Sequel to *Pamela*

That Richardson never planned on writing a sequel is a well-known fact, and one that seems to account for the lack of a "dramatic situation" and the exhaustion of the "original inspiration" (Kinkead-Weekes, Samuel Richardson 72). Mark Kinkead-Weekes notes that it "cannot be emphasised too much that Pamela was complete in its original form, with no thought of going on" and that this lack of inspiration makes it "the least effective of his novels" (72). If one judges effectiveness by entertainment value, then the sequel is certainly less effective. However, Richardson devoted most of volume three of the sequel "to answering criticisms of the first two volumes" as Eaves and Kimpel note (Samuel Richardson 151) and tried to reimpress upon his readers his moral purpose without the titillations present in the first two volumes. The connections to the first part, however, are more evident than would at first appear. Armstrong argues that in the later part of original Pamela, "the female voice flattens into that of pure ideology" (125), thus resembling the conduct books of the period, and readers of the sequel to Pamela might feel that this "flat voice" continues, emphasizing instruction over entertainment. While Kinkead-Weekes indicates that the sequel was not a part of Richardson's original plan, the sequel forces us to reevaluate the last third of the first part and take it seriously as part of Richardson's didactic and moral purpose, instead of dismissing it as poorly executed entertainment.

In the sequel, Richardson introduces more letter writers, but as in the original, Pamela's voice predominates, both in the letters or in the diary entries. Pamela remarks

candidly in the sequel:

is it not a sad thing, that people, if they must take upon them to approve of one's behaviour in general, should have the worst instead of the best thoughts upon it? If I were as good as I ought to be, and as some think me, must they wish to make me bad for that reason? and so to destroy the cause of that pleasure, which they pretend to take in seeing a person set a good example? (III, 199)

The public's reaction to an exemplary character clearly troubled Richardson: why, when he sought to make a character who is at once exemplary and more realistic than previous virtuous heroines, should people think the worst of that character? Because of the criticisms levelled by a skeptical public, Richardson was forced to spend much of the sequel in rehashing and retelling the events of the original in order to make it clear that Pamela had behaved suitably. The presence of other letter writers, too, makes it possible for Pamela's actions to be validated by external sources and made more credible by supposedly objective witnesses.

In addition to trying to achieve some definitive closure on the issue of Pamela's behavior and virtue, Richardson addresses the related issues of authority and exemplarity in the sequel. By the final third of the original novel, it is clear that Pamela has been rewarded in marriage but that in her married life her previously privileged moral authority must now take second place to her husband's temporal authority. In the sequel, the same prioritizing occurs. Pamela continues to be a paragon of moral virtue, and her advice is sought on matters ranging from whether or not Mr. B should seek a title to whether or not clergy should hold two livings and employ a curate to manage one of them. These debates involve the entire company gathered at Mr. B's estate, but after everyone has had their turn at speaking, they appeal to Pamela. On the question of the title, Lady Davers asks her brother if he will be determined by Pamela's opinion, and "be it so, reply'd he, I will be determined by your opinion, my dear: give it freely" (III, 146). When Pamela votes against

the title, Mr. B congratulates her, "just as I wish'd, have you answer'd, my Pamela" (III, 147). Once more, Pamela appears to be the arbiter of questions of right and wrong.

Pamela's ability to make definitive decisions, however, ultimately rests upon the goodwill of her husband. Pamela acknowledges that Mr. B "seldom gives his opinion upon subjects that he kindly imagines within my capacity, till he has heard mine" (III, 346), which at once suggests that he will be guided by her opinion but that he selects the subjects over which she may arbitrate. The illusion that her moral authority grants her any lasting power over Mr. B is perhaps best illustrated by comparing the two trials in the fourth volume. In the more famous scene, when Pamela confronts Mr. B about his possible adultery and curiously presents herself as the guilty party and forces him to pass judgment on her, he reaffirms her goodness and virtue: "Exalted goodness!...noble minded Pamela!...I will (for it is yet, I bless God, in my power) restore to your virtue a husband all your own" (IV, 168). Presumably Pamela's virtues triumph over her husband's wavering constancy and thus her moral rectitude is once more affirmed and applauded.

In contrast to the more sentimentalized trial scene with Pamela's air of slightly suppressed hysteria, a more interesting conflict and real debate involves Pamela's desire to breastfeed her children. The conflict is first alluded to briefly at the end of volume three, and it appears that Pamela has given in to Mr. B's wishes: "Upon the whole of this question then [a mother's duty to nurse her own child], I have really had no will of my own to contend for, so generous is Mr. B, and so observant, and so grateful, have I thought it my duty to be" (III, 348). But the issue is reintroduced at the beginning of volume four and is debated hotly between Pamela and Mr. B in what appears to be a return to the more spirited and morally superior Pamela of the original novel. Among the arguments that Mr. B uses against Pamela include the fact that he dislikes "the carelessness of person into which I have seen very nice women sink, when they became nurses," and he does not want to be disturbed: "nor will I have my rest broken in upon, by your servants bringing to you,

as you once propos'd, your little-one, at times, perhaps, as unsuitable to my repose, and your own, as to the child's necessities" (IV, 10-11).

Pamela attacks Mr. B's position by arguing that "the milk of the mother must be most natural to the child" and, moreover, as a natural duty,

it is a divine obligation; and how can a husband have power to dispense with such a duty? As great as a wife's obligation is to obey her husband, which is, I own, an indispensable of the marriage contract, it ought not to interfere with what we take to be a superior duty: and must not we be our own judge of actions, by which we must stand or fall? (IV, 6-7)

After her invocation of nature and God's law, the reader expects that Mr. B will, as usual, crumble before her superior moral judgment, beg her forgiveness, and proclaim her perfections once again.

Such is not the case, however. Indeed, Mr. B asserts the rights of a husband over Pamela's obligation to God:

'What I have mentioned, therefore, shews how much the daughter is under the absolute controul of her father, and the wife of her husband: so that, you see, my dear, even in such a strong point as a solemn vow to the Lord, the wife may be absolv'd by the husband, from the performance of it. (IV, 13)

Still Pamela does not acquiesce immediately to Mr. B's reasoning. She writes to her parents and solicits their response, which is that she should obey Mr. B, because "God Almighty, if it should be your duty, will not be less merciful than men; who, as his honour says, by the laws of the realm, excuse a wife when she is faulty by the command of her husband" (IV, 16-17). And so Pamela, after appealing to an outside jury, relinquishes her case and agrees to abide by Mr. B's decision.

The breastfeeding debate raises the issue of a woman's free will in the context of what might normally be considered a woman's realm of experience. In Pamela, child-

rearing is generally seen as the domain of women with this one exception. Pamela herself schools her children and spends such copious amounts of time in the nursery that Mr. B complains about her frequent absences and partially blames his dalliance with Lady S on Pamela's preoccupation with her children. Once again, although Pamela appears to be in control over domestic issues, she is subject to Mr. B's authority, and her moral authority is privileged only so long as it coincides with Mr. B's own wishes. Pamela acknowledges her inferior position and remarks to Miss Goodwin: "In your marry'd state, which is a kind of state of humiliation for a woman, you must think of yourself subordinate to your husband; for so it has pleased God to make the wife. You must have no will of your own, in petty things..." (IV, 392-393). Of course, the issue of breastfeeding was not a petty one for Pamela, but she learned to dismiss it as such once Mr. B decreed that his will took precedence over hers.

As a moral exemplar, Pamela's submission to Mr. B is not a sign of her moral inferiority; rather, her acquiescence reemphasizes her perfection because, in Richardson's paradigm, compliance with the patriarchy is required of morally exemplary women. Despite his constantly affirming Pamela's moral superiority, however, Richardson appears to undercut the effectiveness of her example to other women. Flynn remarks that Pamela is so perfect that no one can imitate her; Richardson proposes her as an example, but a paradox results in which "there can be no other creature" (19) like Pamela. In the episode of Polly and Mr. H, a situation that purposely parallels Pamela's plight, Pamela's servant Polly Barlow is almost seduced by a houseguest, who is of aristocratic birth. When Pamela discovers their secret, she chastises Polly by recalling her own story: "You have heard my story, no doubt: all the world has. And do you think, if I had [encouraged Mr. B] that I should have been mistress of this house?" (III, 307). Unlike Pamela, Polly has exhibited distinct signs of interest in Mr. H's propositions to the extent that she has agreed to live with him, although she is still virtuous. Doody sees this episode as "slight and

uninteresting, and the intentions (in contrast to Pamela's former conduct) too obtrusive" (80), but the scenario raises the questions of how effective Pamela can be as an exemplar if even her own servant is not affected by her story. Richardson clearly designed the episode to illustrate Pamela's uniqueness and, thus, to allay the fears of his audience that the country would soon be overrun by masters marrying their serving maids. But the paradox that Flynn mentions still arises. In his subsequent novels, Richardson tries to resolve the paradox of perfection by overlaying the specifics of his plots with a more directive and generalized framework.

In *Pamela*, however, Richardson solves the paradox of perfection by ignoring the problems posed by the distance between an ideal fictional heroine and her human counterparts. The stories that end the sequel represent the way in which Richardson viewed women's choices, and these stories certainly preclude the complexities of real life. The story of Coquetilla, Prudiana, Profusiana, and Prudentia, for example, allows for no indeterminate shades of morality. Miss Goodwin, Pamela's auditor, may view the unfortunate characters sympathetically as victims, but she clearly wants to emulate Prudentia, "the happy, and the happy-making Prudentia!" (IV, 397). She recognizes the similarities between Pamela and Prudentia and begs to be taught "to follow your example, and I shall be a Second Prudentia!" (IV, 398). As stories, the entertainment value may be deemed lacking by twentieth-century audiences, but they indicate Richardson's continuing belief in the ability of didactic tales with clear moral purposes to affect the behavior of their audience. In both the moral tale that ends the sequel and in the larger tale of *Pamela*, Richardson demonstrates the correct behavior of women and assumes that the reader, like Miss Goodwin, will naturally try to emulate her fictional example.

The Increased Focus on Framing in *Clarissa* and *Sir Charles Grandison*

What Richardson learned from *Pamela* and its sequel is that the reader cannot

always be trusted to recognize exemplarity and to emulate fictional characters. In Clarissa and Sir Charles Grandison, the two novels that followed Pamela, Richardson's efforts to direct the reader's attention rely far more heavily on a framework external but related to the content of the novels themselves. While the epistolary format of both novels includes more voices than are present in either part of Pamela, thus continuing the appearance of a free and unconstrained dialogue, the framework of prefaces, indexes, and footnotes, among other features, acts as a control over the reading process. In comparison to Pamela, which is less encumbered by external apparatus, form in Clarissa and Sir Charles Grandison acquires a much more significant role in relation to content. Therefore, my discussion of Clarissa and Sir Charles Grandison will focus primarily on the printerly framework that Richardson incorporated into his texts.

Jocelyn Harris notes that in Sir Charles Grandison Richardson tries to fuse "the general and the particular (the instructive and the entertaining, the ideal and the actual)" (xxiii). I would suggest that Richardson tries to combine these elements in Clarissa, too. The frameworks in both Clarissa and Grandison work to fuse these aspects in a way that the content alone cannot achieve. The frameworks in these novels make it possible for Richardson to create a text that is at once entertaining and didactic. The general, the instructive, and the ideal exist in the encompassing framework and allow Richardson's fiction to assume a broader meaning and significance. Richardson's contemporaries may have disputed the value of particular incidents or characters in the novels, but the framework makes larger claims or pronouncements appear separate from the fiction as if they have the force of moral law or fact behind them. These broader, sweeping moral generalizations assume a fixity that the fiction by itself cannot duplicate. For women, the effect of this blending of the general with the particular results in as static a message as is found in Pamela, despite the changes in class and gender of the eponymous protagonists of Clarissa and Grandison. While the particulars of the story may appear to undercut the

didactic purpose of the fiction, the general claims appearing in the external framework reinforce the notion that the ideal for women is the domestic sphere and that that ideal is achievable by not just exemplary fictional characters but also by real women.

With Clarissa, critics agree that Richardson approached his subject with more seriousness and from a more complex angle than in his previous novel. As Florian Stuber makes clear in his introduction to the facsimile of the third edition of Clarissa, the novel is a text in flux, "open always to reshaping, refining, rewriting. Such instability is an essential feature of the text in process, and readers are partners in the shaping of the text" (11). He writes that Richardson "believed in no simple theory of didacticism" but rather "valued discussion" (38). Unlike Pamela, which was written quickly and revised many times after it appeared in print, before Clarissa was in print, it had already undergone extensive revisions (Stuber 9). Four editions were printed during Richardson's lifetime, with the third edition encompassing the most changes. Stuber argues persuasively for the critical importance of the third edition as making the writer's intentions manifest (24), and it is thus a text "informed by authorial intention and made significant by reader reaction" (42). Shirley Van Marter acknowledges that the third edition may be "too didactic for a popular version" but argues that "scholars should never be satisfied with anything less than a complete record of Richardson's art" (152). The third edition allows the reader full access to the framework that Richardson added to his novel so that Castle's claim that "the epistolary novelist must forfeit the storyteller persona, and abdicate overt responsibility for the fiction" (167) becomes manifestly absurd.

Stuber highlights Richardson's framework in the third edition by pointing to the new preface, the new expanded postscript, several editorial footnotes, and the "passages of added material marked by dots or bullets" (25).⁸ For the purposes of my argument, I want to look briefly at the framing devices present not only in the third edition but also in previous ones, such as the footnotes, the tables of contents, the collection of sentiments,

and some of the added or bulleted material to emphasize first the way in which Richardson directs his reader's attention from the particular to the general and, second, what he wants the reader to learn.

As with Pamela, Richardson received criticism on certain aspects of Clarissa's behavior throughout his novel. Indeed, her exemplarity becomes almost as problematic as that of Pamela. Unlike Pamela, whose virtue women are supposed to emulate, Clarissa's position is less straightforward. During the course of her story, her actions function as more of a warning than as a positive example. In the framework to the novel, Richardson defends Clarissa and her actions, thus investing her voice with the moral authority that may have been undermined in the course of the novel itself. The footnotes and the tables of contents generally act as reaffirmations of Clarissa's exemplarity and moral authority, while the collection of sentiments and the bulleted material in Anna Howe's last letter lift the text from a specific examination of one individual's life to show how the general relates to the particular, the ideal to the actual, and the instructive to the entertaining. These framing devices reflect not only Richardson's concern with the reader's careless readings but also reinforce the presence of the "editor" in the text who illuminates the didactic purpose of the work as a whole.

Van Marter cautions against overestimating the relative importance of the footnotes as "they constitute only a fraction of [Richardson's] extensive attempts to reshape Clarissa" (xxviii, 150), but she illustrates their function: "28 footnotes enter the second edition, 18 of which specifically evaluate Lovelace's evil and Clarissa's delicacy. They stand as vigorous warnings by an 'editor' unwilling to let the narrative framework speak for itself" (146-47). While many of the footnotes throughout the novel are merely references to other volumes and specific pages and letters, other footnotes remind the reader of the "facts" or divulge information not otherwise available. In volume four, a particularly long note begins "we cannot forbear observing in this place, that the Lady has been particularly censured..." (106)

for eloping with Lovelace. The reader is charged with a "want of attention" and is warned that "the reader perhaps is too apt to form a judgment of Clarissa's conduct in critical cases by Lovelace's complaints of her coldness..." (IV, 107). In his brief discussion of the function of the footnotes, Stuber suggests that the "editorial footnote offers an editorial reading, but it also tells the reader about other possible readings" (32). But this long footnote does not indicate a range of possibilities; rather, the reader is addressed directly by the editor and politely but firmly reprimanded for straying from the correct reading. Instead of opening up meaning, as Stuber suggests, this kind of note insistently directs the reader's attention.

Stuber's comment may apply more to the occasional footnote in which the editor refers to material to which the reader does not have access. At several points in the narrative, footnotes refer to Clarissa's "Minutes," (VI, 32,35), her "memorandum-book," (VI, 37) or her "Common-place-book" (VIII, 214). While these notes shed light on her activities and motivations--"The Lady mentions, in her memorandum-book, that she had no other way, as she apprehended, to save herself from instant dishonour, but by making this concession" (VI, 37)--the references to sources of Clarissa's writing outside of the novel at once boost Clarissa's credibility as a moral authority and suggest the editor's omniscience. These few references, too, may cause the reader to wonder, "what else could Clarissa write?," but their primary function is to justify her actions and focus on her exemplarity. The net effect of the footnotes is to direct the reader's attention to the correct way to read the text. More so than the other elements of the framework, their immediacy on the page as the reader proceeds with the novel allows for a specific defense of Clarissa's actions and for a prompt directing or redirecting of the reader's attention.

Less immediate than the footnotes but still providing evidence of a directive outside influence are the tables of contents provided at the end of each volume. These lists of contents made their first appearance in the second edition and were collected all at once in

the first volume (Stuber 12-13). In the third edition, Richardson divided them up and placed them at the end of each volume to keep from revealing too much of the plot beforehand (Kinkead-Weekes, "Clarissa Restored?" 163) and to serve as a recapitulation of events (Stuber 13). As Stuber points out, the italicized sections of the contents present "a reading of the novel Richardson himself wished readers to recognize" (13). Italicization always functions for Richardson as a form of emphasis and does so here, too. Even in a broader context, however, the contents refer specifically to the novel, as opposed to the collection of sentiments which take on much more general and idealized tone. Although the bulk of the contents notes merely recapitulate the events of the novel, these contents function as a step toward a more directed reading of the novel, because the focus begins to shift away from the plot and highlight more what should be learned. Examples of the intermixing of the particular and the general occur throughout the contents. In volume three, letter 19, Lovelace's letter to Belford is summarized as follows: "Rejoices in the stupidity of the Harlowes. Exults in his capacity for mischief. The condescensions to which he intends to bring the Lady. Libertine observations to the disadvantage of women; which may serve as Cautions to the Sex" (III, 348). The movement from the particulars of plot to the more general and didactic plane throughout the entry is underscored literally with Richardson's use of the italics.

The editor's presence in the summaries of each letter is nowhere more evident than in two instances in volume four. The description of letter 21 in the contents section is lengthy and contains a number of italicized phrases or sentences. By the end of Clarissa's letter to Anna Howe, the summary reads: "Her melancholy reflections on her future prospects with such a man. The moral she deduces from her story. [A Note, defending her conduct from the censure which some have passed upon her as over-nice.]" (IV, 378). This is the only instance of Richardson's highlighting one of his own footnotes to the text and illustrates his defensiveness in the face of misreading. The summary of letter 51 ends

similarly, with the editorializing voice appearing between brackets: "Gives a character of Lovelace [Which is necessary to be attended to; especially by those who have thought favourably of him for some of his liberal actions, and hardly of her for the distance she at first kept him at]" (IV, 382). The italicization by itself would add emphasis, as it does elsewhere, but the addition of the brackets and the text within those brackets directly addresses issues of key concern to Richardson. The hasty reader who skims only the tables of contents cannot escape Richardson's controlling editorial voice. For the reader refreshing his or her memory before going on to the next volume, Richardson makes certain that he or she knows that Clarissa is not to be blamed for her actions.

In volume eight, one particular note serves to link the function of the tables of contents and the ensuing, more general collection of sentiments. The summary of letter 27 reads

The lady's Last Will. In the preamble to which, as well as in the body of it, she gives several instructive hints; and displays, in an exemplary manner, her forgiving spirit, her piety, her charity, her gratitude, and other Christian and heroic virtues, p. 96. (VIII, 305-306)

Instead of giving a more specific detailing of what is actually in the will, the summary directs the readers to notice her exemplarity, and those specific characteristics such as piety, which make her so exemplary. The reader is essentially told how to read the character of the will writer, Clarissa. The reference to a page number, one of only a few in the tables of contents, permits the reader to look up the specific place in the novel and to see how the particulars of Clarissa's will relate to a more general picture of her positive characteristics.

A more explicit leap from the particulars of Clarissa's story to a general guide for behavior is made in the collection of sentiments, which appears at the end of volume eight. The links to the novel are still in evidence, but Richardson's moral emphasis becomes much

more global in these sentiments, which were not added until the third edition (Stuber 39).

The full title to the collection of sentiments is

A Collection of such of the Moral and Instructive Sentiments, contained in the Preceding History, As are presumed to be of General Use and Service. Digested under Proper Heads. With References to the Volume, and Page, where each Sentiment, Caution, Aphorism, Reflection, or Observation, is to be found. (VIII, 309)

The sentiments comprise 88 pages and are followed by a two-page table to those sentiments. The listing is alphabetical and includes such diverse topics as "Adversity. Affliction. Calamity. Misfortune" (one heading), "Blushes. Blushing," "Death. Dying," "Learning," "Political Precepts," and ends with "Youth." Clearly, the range of moral behavior addressed in this novel is quite large according to Richardson. The sentiments are far more generalized than those in the contents sections, but the presence of specific volume and page numbers permits the reader to go back into the novel and examine the particular incident that the more abstract sentiment is based upon.

In the collection of sentiments, there are 133 different headings present, covering a wide range of morals to be learned from the novel, but not all of them are weighted equally. More so than the summaries in the tables of contents, in which each letter is described, the frame of these sentiments reduces the chance of misreading by providing catchy morals in short pithy sentences while highlighting the significant content of the novel as well. At the same time, the importance of the novel transcends its fictionality in that many of the sentiments are only linked to the novel by a page reference and not by reference to a specific character or action. The liberal use of generalities such as "people," "no one," "women," and "a man" ensures that the reader focuses on the moral rather than on the plot of the novel. There are specific references to the characters throughout the sentiments, but these are outnumbered by the abstract sentiments. The preponderance of

the verbs "should" and "ought" make it clear that these sentiments are designed to function as a moral guide for conduct. As another layer of framework, however, the sentiments clearly serve Richardson's didactic purpose and elevate the content of his novel to a higher level than mere fiction.

As a part of reinforcing lessons to be learned from the novel, the sentiments highlight what is important for the reader of this novel. A section on "Political Precepts" is included in the sentiments but is very short and contains only six entries. The longest section is "Advice and Cautions to Women," which comprises roughly five pages of the sentiments. "Parents. Children" and "Reflections on Women" are the next longest at about 2-1/2 to 2-3/4 pages long; from 1-1/2 pages to 2 pages long are "Consolation," "Courtship," "Friendship," "Husband and Wife," "Love," "Marriage," and "General Observations and Reflections." All of the other entries are generally much shorter. The length of these entries indicates Richardson's emphasis on these primarily domestic subjects and relationships. "Consolation" may seem a bit out of place in this line up, until one remembers that one of the main purposes of *Clarissa* is to point to rewards for virtue that will come in a world after this one.

The three longest categories of sentiments represent Richardson's primary points of emphasis in his fiction and highlight the lessons that he expects his readers to follow in their daily lives. Couched in general terms, these sentiments reveal Richardson's concern with the way in which women relate to the twin poles of authority in their lives, that of their parents and of men. In the section "Parents. Children," Richardson pointedly uses "her" or "she" when referring to children in the singular. A comment that at first appears to be applicable to all children suddenly becomes gender specific by the end of the sentiment: "It is better for a good child to be able to say, her Parents were unkind to her, than that she was undutiful to them" (VIII, 366). The female specific pronoun could merely be a reference to Clarissa herself, but the different roles that the genders play in relation to

their parents is more likely to account for the feminine referent. The lack of duty in a son is obviously not as important as that of a daughter, because as a male he naturally assumes authority as he grows up and thus is entitled to challenge his parents' authority.

Richardson seems surprisingly vague about the role of parental authority. The first two entries highlight the conflicting role of the parent toward the child. The first entry establishes the parents' rights: "Severity in some cases is clemency" (VIII, 365). The second entry, however, appears to undermine those rights: "Needless watchfulness, and undue restraint, often produce artifice and contrivance" (VIII, 365). In the one case, severity is condoned, and, in the next, its usefulness is questioned. A later entry sums up the problem directly in one sentence: "Tho' the parental authority should be deemed sacred, yet Parents should have reason in what they do" (VIII, 365). Richardson does not advocate that parental authority should be ignored, as Anna Howe tends to do, but he submits that, as heads of families, parents need to govern wisely in order not to create conflict.

Richardson is much more specific about the duties of children, especially daughters, to their parents. For the daughter who marries unhappily: "How great must be the comfort of that young Lady in an unhappy marriage, who can reflect, that she followed the advice of her Friends, and owes not her unhappiness to her own headstrong will!" (VIII, 365). If a woman is unhappy due to her own choice of mate, then she deserves what she gets; if her unhappy marriage is the result of her family's wishes, then she can blame them!

Throughout his novel, Richardson carefully shows the undesirable nature of Solmes and the abuse of authority by Clarissa's parents and so indicates that in her case, Clarissa's actions were justified. In general, however, a daughter's "headstrong will" is cause for alarm, and she should rely on her family and friends for direction. Rather than advising daughters to rise up against parental tyranny, this section of sentiments cautions parents against abusing their natural authority.

Since daughters should invariably become wives, in Richardson's scenarios, women must learn how to conduct themselves properly with men. Such lessons are detailed in "Reflections on Women." Right after this section heading, Richardson inserts the caveat "designed principally to incite Caution, and inspire Prudence, &c. by letting them know what Libertines and free Speakers say and think of the Sex" (VIII, 379). The overall tone of this section is one of a frank reviling of women with many of the entries cast in Lovelace's voice: "Women love Rakes, says Lovelace, because Rakes know how to direct their uncertain wills, and to manage them" (VIII, 380). By using Lovelace as a representative libertine, Richardson allows the reader to discount what he says; however, there are also unassigned sentiments that are negative: "The usefulness and expensiveness of modern women multiply Bachelors" (VIII, 379) and "women, where they favour, will make the slightest, and even but a fansy'd merit, excuse the most glaring vice" (VIII, 379). Even if women are not as vile as they are represented here by purported libertines and free speakers, they are cautioned because they must learn that this is a prevailing view of them, and, therefore, they must learn to conduct themselves carefully.

In apparent contrast to this overtly negative view of women, the longest section of sentiments, "Advice and Cautions to Women," continues the cautionary tales but paints a different picture of women and women's place in society. In this section, women are represented as essentially good creatures surrounded by temptation in the form of evil men: "A woman who lends an ear to a Seducer, may, by gentle words, be insensibly drawn in to the perpetration of the most violent acts" (VIII, 310) and "a man who insults the modesty of a woman, as good as tells her, that he has seen something in her conduct, that warranted his presumption" (VIII, 313). Although these women are granted an initial instinct for modesty, even for these most passive of women, one who listens and the other who may have done nothing more heinous than walk into a room, the risks of any action are clearly fraught with danger.

The generally more positive view of women in this section, in contrast to men, is undermined by the assumption that women "deserve" whatever happens to them, if they act contrary to society's dictates. For the woman who acts, her downfall is assured: "She who puts herself out of a natural protection, is not to expect miracles in her favour" (VIII, 314) and "a good women who vows duty to a wicked man, knowing him to be such, puts to hazard her eternal happiness" (VIII, 314). The sentiments further warn that "a fallen woman is the more inexcuseable, as, from the cradle, the Sex is warned against the delusions of men" (VIII, 313). Richardson offers a multitude of cautionary sentiments designed to ensure women's passivity: "Women of penetration, falling accidentally into company with a Libertine and his associates, will make them reflecting glasses to one another for her own service" (VIII, 312). As opposed to women who seek out libertines for company, the good woman will somehow or other turn a negative situation into a positive one by the use of mirrors. Once a bad man sees evil in his compatriot, presumably through the good woman's words or actions, then he will become virtuous. The applicability and tenuousness of this advice is evident. Perhaps the woman acts as a mirror herself and reflects her good behavior onto the others? The means by which the woman achieves her success may be murky, but the moral clearly suggests that women should never purposely seek the company of libertines.

What then can a woman do, in Richardson's scenario, to assert her goodness? The last few entries under "Advice and Cautions to Women" offer concrete examples of positive action a woman can take to ensure that her character is not mistaken, and they require her active participation in the domestic realm: "The practical knowledge of the domestic duties is the principal glory of woman" (VIII, 315). As in his own correspondence, he applauds women's learning as long as they do not neglect their primary duties: "The woman who neglects the useful and the elegant, which distinguishes her own Sex, for the sake of obtaining the learning which is supposed peculiar to men, incurs more contempt by what

she foregoes, than she gains credit by what she acquires" (VIII, 315). Within the closely circumscribed circle of domesticity, a woman can act without fear of falling prey to misinterpretation by rakes. If she steps beyond those boundaries and encroaches upon male preserves such as learning, then she is liable to be viewed as contemptible. The result of the cautions and advice to women can be summed up succinctly: stray from the proper domestic world of a passive woman and be damned. An accidental straying such as Clarissa's results in danger, of course, but she is redeemed, after her death, because she did not actively seek to leave her father's house but rather was coerced into the action. Clarissa may be an explicitly good individual woman in Richardson's paradigm, but women in general seem to prone to make mistakes because of their tendency to reach beyond their prescribed boundaries, according to the sentiments present at the end of the novel.

Given Richardson's insistence on the importance of the domestic world for women in Pamela, the domestic theme seems curiously lacking in Clarissa. Although the theme is less insistently present than in Pamela, the issue of domesticity and the correct sphere of women's dominion does arise at a critical point in the novel. Much like the last third of Pamela, in which the fast-moving plot gives way to a more sedate conduct book, Anna Howe's last letter in the novel functions as a summing up of Clarissa's exemplary life. As one of the longest letters in the novel, not just for Anna but for anyone, letter 49 runs for about 27 pages. Sixteen or 17 of those pages comprise bulleted material, material that Richardson added in the later edition and that he wanted the reader to know was added. That so much new material is added to this last letter in the third edition attests to the importance it had for Richardson and his moral purpose. The bullets emphasize what has been added, and, thus, the reader should pay special attention to those sections.

In letter 49, Anna answers John Belford's request that she provide him with information on Clarissa's life, and she writes "I suppose you intend to give a character of her at those years when she was qualified to be an example to other young Ladies, rather

than a history of her life" (VIII, 196). What follows seems to act almost as a prequel to the novel; although some points are reiterated from the action of the novel, for the most part Anna provides instances of Clarissa's exemplarity that date from before her trials with her family and Lovelace. This long letter serves not only to remind the reader one last time of Clarissa's perfection, but also, and perhaps more importantly, allows the author to address the question of what a young lady should do on a daily basis or in her daily life. Clarissa's trials, by and large, are not what every young lady will expect to undergo; therefore, it seems necessary to add a section on what a typical young lady should do in unexceptional circumstances. The look at Clarissa's life before her troubles began suggests that all of the moral theory that she lives by was indeed put into practice. Anna's letter shows how Clarissa practices what she preaches and how she regulates her life in an approved conduct-book fashion.

Anna mentions briefly that Clarissa had indeed "begun to apply herself to Latin" (VIII, 203), but the bulk of the letter focuses on her domestic accomplishments and social graces. Anna outlines the "sentiments by which this admirable young Lady endeavoured to conduct herself, and to regulate her conduct to others" (VIII, 198) and gives specific examples of the way in which Clarissa behaved in several particular circumstances. Issues discussed briefly include Clarissa's penetration; her graces; her being mistaken; her ability to sing, read, play music; her artistic ability, which showed more judgment than expert skill; her needlework; her lack of fondness for cards or high play; her charity; her health and eating habits; her reluctance to speak too long in public; her modesty, among others. In greater detail, we learn how she allotted the hours of each day and her theory that "no one could spend their time properly, who did not live by some Rule" (VIII, 217). The reader learns that the rules that governed her day did not necessarily keep her from visiting others, rather she bent her own schedule to fit with her hosts and made up for lost time at a later date.

Many of Clarissa's accomplishments listed above reveal her essentially feminine, private, and domestic nature. She is praised at particular length for being an "excellent Oeconomist and Housewife" (VIII, 203). Although her dairy house had been mentioned earlier in the novel, here we receive an expanded view of her activities there and how they contribute to the image of her as a competent domestic woman. Her domesticity is also praised in contrast to her sister, Bella, and to other "modern Ladies, who have not any one of her excellent qualities" (VIII, 210) and whose priorities are so deranged that they spend their time dressing, visiting, and attending the opera, plays, or other musical entertainments. Clarissa, in contrast, is able not only to perform her own duties but also to inspire others to emulate her: Anna confesses that Clarissa "cured me of [the fault of those who want to be asked to sing], the first of our happy intimacy, by her own example; and by the following correctives, occasionally, yet privately enforced" (VIII, 207). A list of Clarissa's edifying comments and questions then follows so that the reader can see exactly how Clarissa managed to effect a change in Anna.

In the letter, Anna notes that "we form the truest judgment of persons, by their behavior on the most familiar occasions" (VIII, 207) and that Clarissa was an "absolute mistress of the should-be" (VIII, 209). Anna's letter, more so than the early sections of plot, is designed to show Clarissa in her more standard role of domestic woman and delineates her perfections without the apparatus of plot to interfere with the absorption of the lesson. Her letter also affords Richardson the opportunity to remind the reader once more of his overall goal. Anna reflects on Clarissa's taste in reading, and she notes that Clarissa lamented

that certain writers of the first class, who were capable of exalting virtue, and of putting vice out of countenance, too generally employed themselves in works of imagination only, upon subjects merely speculative, disinteresting, and unedifying; from which no useful moral or example could be drawn. (VIII, 214)

Even if the reader has managed to mistake Richardson's meaning during the novel, despite the footnotes and other apparatus designed to reinforce his moral purpose, the purpose and content of Anna's last letter cannot be mistaken. Instead of letting his women readers guess how Clarissa lived before her troubles began, Richardson provides a clear look at how she behaved then. Her particular case can then be translated into a more general code for conduct by adopting her "Rule" for living as presented in Anna's last letter and by following the moral advice in the collection of sentiments. The many levels of framework in *Clarissa* ensure that the reader acknowledges Clarissa's exemplarity and her essentially domestic nature and that entertainment does not supersede instruction.

Preemptive Framing in *Sir Charles Grandison*

Like *Clarissa*, *Sir Charles Grandison* boasts what Janine Barchas calls a "printerly frame to guide his reader's interpretation of the novel" (4). This framework includes

assorted title pages, a "Preface," a sonnet by T[homas] E[dwards], and a list of "Names of the Principal Persons." At the end of the final volume: "A Concluding Note by the Editor," an elaborate "Historical and Characteristical Index," a four-page compilation of the book's "Similes and Illusions," and "An Address to the Public." (Barchas 3-4)

Like *Clarissa*, the text also includes footnotes, though far fewer than in Richardson's previous novel. Barchas effectively argues that by using these devices, Richardson "craftily and ostentatiously uses the printed features of his text to hide and/or highlight information....Richardson aims to 'write' not just the text, but also the interpretation of that text" (2). As with *Clarissa*, Richardson seeks to control his reader's relationship with his text to ensure that his particular message is interpreted correctly. In *Grandison*, Richardson contains the debates literally within the plot, as much of the action of

Grandison takes place in living rooms, with topics of discussion introduced and then argued in a logical and definitely prescriptive manner. Harris traces the similarities between Grandison and conduct books, and, indeed, at times Grandison reads much less like a novel than collection of dissertations on the topics of the day.

Harris claims that Grandison was "the book that Richardson had no desire to write" (vii), and perhaps this is why "no edition of Grandison varies much from any other edition" (Pierson 180), although there were four editions published during Richardson's lifetime. Compared to Pamela and Clarissa, which underwent dramatic revisions between editions, the changes in Grandison occur on a much smaller scale. Robert Craig Pierson summarizes Richardson's improvements as being designed to "remove inconsistencies and improbabilities; ...remove some (though not enough) of the affected and excessive behavior; still others tend to elevate the language and remove improprieties" (189). Pierson correctly notes that alterations in "italics, brackets, and parentheses should be considered as substantive changes, since there is reason to think that Richardson intentionally revised in these respects" (189). As always with Richardson, even changes in accidentals assume importance, but in terms of larger-scale revisions, Richardson did not change Grandison nearly as much as his previous two novels. Even a quick look at the collations of each volume in the first four editions indicates that the pagination changed only slightly, suggesting that the kinds of additional material found in later editions of Pamela and Clarissa simply did not occur in Grandison. Richardson's previous experiences with audience's misreading his purpose allowed him to anticipate problems and establish a framework for directing the reader, even before publication of the first edition of Grandison.

In terms of content, both Cynthia Griffin Wolff and Flynn relate Grandison to Richardson's earlier novels. Wolff claims that as part of a "completed cycle," Grandison portrays "a new social order and a new kind of man and woman" (13). Flynn makes a

similar connection by suggesting that in Grandison, Richardson "attempts to socialize Clarissa's virtue. Although Clarissa, the private saint, cannot exist in the real world, Sir Charles, the public saint must" (48). Flynn further shows that while Clarissa can "escape into heaven...he forces the characters in Sir Charles's world to remain in the public arena" (48). Flynn uses the example of Clementina to show that she cannot escape into a nunnery and cannot remain "isolated and protected in her madness" (48). Both of these readings of the novel and its relationship to Richardson's earlier work suggest that Richardson's vision of the world has changed or evolved. What strikes me in Grandison, however, is how much his vision of women has not evolved since Pamela. He certainly spends more time discussing his "good man" and his attributes; however, in terms of Richardson's women, their value is still based on their domestic skills and their relationships to the men in their lives. Unlike in Clarissa, in Grandison these links tend to form a more continuous and obvious chain from the specific actions of the characters through to the general moral.

Richardson achieves his didactic aims on two levels: the overt and the less obvious. In his preface to the novel, he not only explains his purpose in Grandison, which contains conversations designed to "enliven as well as instruct" (4), but he also refreshes the reader's memory as to the purposes of his other two novels by devoting a paragraph summary to each. In contrast to this outright effort to direct the reader to the main purpose of each novel, the index to Grandison suggests a scientific or objectively compiled addition to the novel that counters the subjectivity of the first-person narration (Barchas 9). In fact, Richardson himself prepared the index; Sale suggests that he did so at the request of Samuel Johnson (78). The four-page table of sentiments and allusions, in contrast, was compiled by one of Richardson's workmen (Sale 78). Of the various framing strategies in the novel, I will focus on the index, which occupies 112 pages of the final volume.⁹ As Barchas again correctly notes, in an age when paper costs were not inconsiderable, "the bulk of the Index alone should signal how much importance Richardson attached to it" (7).

As a frame, the index at once is similar to yet different from the collection of sentiments found in Clarissa. Both affect the reader's interpretation of the texts, and both propound similar philosophies. What makes the two different is that the index in Grandison appeared even in the first edition (as opposed to the addition of the collection in the third edition of Clarissa) and in appearance. While all of the sentiments in Clarissa are grouped under descriptive headings and are then followed by the general sentiment and a page reference to the novel, there is no such order in the Grandison index. The index boasts far more entries than the collection of sentiments in Clarissa, which range from personal names ("Grandison, Sir Charles") to more general issues such as "Advice or Cautions to Women" (VII, 305), a heading also found in Clarissa's collection of sentiments. Under the entries, sometimes there are direct recountings of action from the novel with page numbers; sometimes there are definitions with page references to the novel; sometimes there are just a list of page references. Overall, the references to specific parts of the novel are far more frequent than in the collection of sentiments in Clarissa. Harris argues that the characters "are simplified in didactic summary [in the Index], and in short the compiling moralist of the Index goes far to repudiate the flexible creations of the novelist" (xxxvii). In comparison to Clarissa, however, the fact that the novel itself is referred to with greater frequency, thus standing in a less mediated way in relation to the reader, suggests that Richardson's experiences with reader reaction to Pamela and Clarissa enabled him to anticipate and prepare for potential misreadings and thus contain the debate before the novel was even printed.

To highlight the didactic function of the index, I will focus on the four following areas: first, the entries for some specific characters; second, the general lessons imparted; third, the dichotomization of men's and women's spheres of activity; and, finally, the way in which women and domesticity are linked in the index. The index, the ostensibly objective apparatus to the novel, makes the distinctions between men's and women's roles explicit,

both in terms of the specific character and of the more generalized level.

The longest entries under specific names are those of the main characters in the novel: Sir Charles occupies the most space with about 15 pages devoted to his actions, Harriet Byron comes next with 12 pages, then curiously Charlotte Grandison occupies 8 pages, and Clementina takes up 6 pages. As the designated hero and heroine of the text, Sir Charles and Harriet naturally have the longest entries; as Harriet's rival, Clementina takes up a position of lesser importance; as Harriet's foil, Charlotte assumes an even greater importance than Clementina. The entries under a character's name appear for the most part to be a linear recounting of the main events in that character's story. When compared to other entries that seem more didactic--duelling is pronounced to be "barbarous" (VII, 337) and gaming "pernicious" (VII, 343)--the entries for the characters appear to be less judgmental at first glance. In each case, however, a pattern emerges and thus the reader is taught to interpret that character according to Richardson's view.

Grandison himself has always been a problematic character, because he is decidedly a creation designed to instruct. Compared to Clarissa, who manages to appear human in spite of her exemplarity, Grandison comes across as a leaden and unreal character. The entry under his name in the index reflects how much he functions as a conduct-book figure. His entry is essentially a list of his good qualities and his sage pronouncements, and the area covered is vast. Unlike Clarissa, whose exemplarity is limited to a few telling characteristics, Grandison seems to embody every good quality found in humans, ranging from business acumen, filial piety, generosity to his sisters, to his moderation and charity in speaking of bad people, among countless others. His conversation, too, appears to consist of dicta rather than dialogue. His pearls of wisdom address love and courtship, libertines, retribution, as well as other topics. In an attempt to make it look as if he is actually engaged in discussion, his words are often directed to specific audiences:

Conference between him and Lord W. on the management of Servants, 137, 138.--
 With Lady G. on prudery, 139.--With Lord L. on the manners of the fine Ladies of
 the age, *ibid.*--With Lord G. on the proper age for marriage, with regard to women,
 140.--With Mrs. Reeves, on the helpless state of Single women, *ibid.* (VII, 355)

In the space of three pages of the novel, Grandison addresses a wide range of topics, and it becomes evident that his function is to voice conduct-book sentiments rather than act as a realistic character.

In case the reader is oblivious to the obvious good in Grandison, Richardson provides the occasional editorial gloss. His meeting with Harriet in the library is one of the moments when he is assimilated into the plot in a more active manner, and so Richardson makes sure that the reader does not miss why the scene is important. Grandison's words to Harriet are key because they show "his bravery in delivering Signor Jeronymo from assassins; his steadfastness in his religion; and his patriotism" (VII, 352). As one of the key moments in his and Harriet's romantic attachment, this scene still provides the reader with clues about Grandison's moral makeup. In fact, Grandison's part in the romantic plot is underplayed in index. He may be one half of the romantic pair at the center of the novel, but as an editorial note points out, "For other parts of his conduct and behavior in the matrimonial and domestic life, See the article Miss Byron, Vol. VII. from p. 17 to p. 42" (VII, 362). What makes Sir Charles a good man is everything but his domestic qualities; those are issues pointedly left to be discussed under his future wife's entries.

Whereas entries for benevolence, charity, filial piety, humanity, and magnanimity refer the reader to "See Sir Charles Grandison," the only entry that similarly refers the reader to the heroine, Harriet, is for "Frankness of heart" (VII, 341), which indicates the limited scope for female virtues in Richardson's world. As a character, Harriet Byron is more interesting than Sir Charles in that she actually develops during the course of the novel. Although she is a "good woman" at the beginning of the novel, her "goodness" is less

static than Sir Charles's. In reading her entry, you see the outline of her basic story, in which she goes from a young woman with a number of suitors and wider range of emotions (all still socially sanctioned) to a controlled matron. One highlight of her entry is "her defence of occasional self-praise" (VII, 314); Harriet, much like Pamela and Clarissa, is blamed for recounting the praises of herself too frequently. The progress of her love for Sir Charles is detailed, including her disinclination to believe that her gratitude is turning to love. We learn that "she likes not that Sir Charles should stile himself her Brother" (VII, 316). By and large, however, she is an exemplary character and increasingly her entry shows her to be a worthy creature. She exhibits "extreme humility" (VII, 317), "excellent Oeconomy," (VII, 319), and she increasingly reproves Lady G. "for her levity" (VII, 319) and her "behavior to her Lord" (VII, 318). As a sign of her moral exemplarity, she is allowed to reprove an older married woman on the subject of that woman's domestic relations. Once married to Grandison, we see her "methods of family devotion" and "method of dispensing physic to the poor" (VII, 322), domestic rituals reminiscent of Pamela's. Her response to Clementina is one of "affectionate goodness" (VII, 323), not one of indecent jealousy. All in all, she progresses from a fine young woman, whose one failing is to fall in love before the man confesses his love for her, to a fine married woman. In contrast to Sir Charles, her achievements are all directly related to the domestic realm and confined to the romance plot.

With his exemplary hero and heroine, Richardson generally follows the story line in his recounting of events. Once beyond them, however, he exerts more of an editorial presence as can be seen in the cases of Clementina and Charlotte Grandison. Clementina may not win the hand of the hero, but the reader is left with no doubts about the way in which to read her character. She is "outwardly an heroine, but inwardly a sufferer" (VII, 332), whose defining description is her "great behavior" (VII, 327, 331) or her "noble behavior" (VII, 329). When she explains to the Count de Belvedere why she cannot admit

of his addresses, "every body next-to adores her for her great behavior on this occasion" (VII, 331).

In contrast to the "noble" or "great" Clementina, Charlotte Grandison and her actions are most often described with the adjective "ludicrous." For example, on page 367, in one half of a page, "ludicrous" is used three times. In addition to the problem of her levity, which we learned under Harriet's entry, Charlotte's "liveliness" (VII, 364) is also problematic. Other words used frequently throughout her entry are "raily," "debate," and "quarrel." The novel reader who mistakenly enjoys her character too much is clearly chastened in the index. Like Harriet, Charlotte's entry details her development and, in Charlotte's case, reformation. Although her entry is dominated by her fractious spirit, we see her "greatly amended in her behavior to her husband" (VII, 371) and, indeed, the last line of her entry shows that she "becomes an excellent mother, nurse, and wife" (VII, 372). Like Harriet, Charlotte too becomes a solid matron, center of her domestic world and worthy partner of her husband.

Although each of these characters clearly represents a certain kind of laudable behavior (even Charlotte becomes a worthy mother), many of the entries in the index perform a more general, normative function not related to a specific character. Like many of the sentiments from Clarissa, these entries are not character specific and tend to function as a didactic catch-all for Richardson. There are the indirect lessons that require one to look back into the novel, such as "Christmas, how to be kept by people of condition" (VII, 326), and the more direct, such as "Hoops, the indecency of wearing large ones" (VII, 375); "Princess of Cleves, a dangerous novel" (VII, 402); "Agreeableness preferable to mere beauty" (VII, 306); and "Masquerades, the most foolish of all diversions" (VII, 391). Richardson's opinion manifests itself elsewhere as when he notes that "English readers [are] fond of story, whether probable or improbable" (VII, 338) as opposed to the French who are "fond of sentiment" (VII, 341).

Among the seemingly random nature of these reflections and moral pronouncements, gender emerges as a critical factor in determining what constitutes socially acceptable behavior. Although Richardson makes some blanket statements about marriage, such as "Fondness of a married pair in public, a degree of immodesty" (VII, 341), many of his dicta are divided into categories of male and female, either under the same entry or under separate entries. For example, an entry that might be straight from a zoological text reads "Hyaena, male and female; which is the most dangerous" (VII, 376). The entry does not tell the reader which is the most dangerous; rather, what is important and why this entry does not ultimately seem as out of place as it might otherwise, is that it sets up a dichotomy between the male and female of a species.

The entries under "Intellects of men and women" and "Sexes" remain apparently neutral as in the case of the hyaena, merely noting that they will discuss in the first case the "difference between them" (VII, 381) and in the second, whether the sexes are "equal or not by nature" (VII, 408). If one reads the other entries carefully, however, one can guess what the answers to these entries might be. For example, if you look at the entry for "Modesty," the reader learns that modesty is a quality that both men and women can share, a "modest man must have merit" whereas "modesty and meekness [are] characteristic qualities in women" (VII, 394). In terms of "Love at first sight," in men it is "an indelicate paroxysm; but in a woman, who expects protection and instruction from an husband, much more so" (VII, 387). Under "Honest man" the reader is referred to "See Sir Charles Grandison" (VII, 374). Under the next entry for "Honest woman," however, the reader is referred to "the peculiar sense of that word in Lancashire" (VII, 375). Harriet Byron is obviously not Sir Charles' equal in this virtue. In general, it appears that the experiences and attributes of men and women are not equally distributed.

The differences between men and women are even more clearly delineated under the subsequent categories of "Good man," "Good wife," and "Good women." Under the

good man category, there are numerous page references, followed by a number of sentiments about what a good man is like or does, followed by a reference for the reader to see the entry under Sir Charles Grandison's name. Under the broader category of good women (versus the singular good man), there are two sentiments and several page numbers listed. The good women "reflect honour on all those who had any hand in their education, and on the company they keep" (VII, 346), and thus the qualities of being a good woman do not necessarily benefit her, but rather the company she keeps. Whereas the good man "is a prince of the Almighty's creation," the good woman "is one of the greatest glories of creation" (VII, 346-47). The good woman ranks as "one" of the glories of creation, but the good man ranks higher as a "prince" of creation with a direct link to the "Almighty." Whereas the good man can be directly linked to Sir Charles, the category of good women is not directly related to any of the novel's characters, even Harriet.

Harriet is mentioned directly, however, under another category, that of "Good wife." Although the good man and good women can be viewed in direct contrast to each other, the category of good wife is not paralleled by a similar category of good husband. Under the entry for "Good wife," the reader is referred to the entries on Lady Grandison (Sir Charles' mother), Harriet Byron, and also Mrs. Selby and Mrs. Shirley. Charlotte Grandison may have reformed during the course of the novel; however, her early shortcomings obviously disqualify her as a good wife. That a good wife is clearly an important category for Richardson can be seen in the separation of entries for "Duties" versus "Duties of a good wife." Neither of those categories lists any specific sentiments; here again, the fact that they are divided into two separate categories suggests that while there are certain duties to be performed by people in general, wives undertake a special kind of duty that needs distinguishing and emphasizing.

The reason for this special emphasis on duty can be seen if one reads the entry "Luxury of the age, and women undomesticating themselves, increase the number of

bachelors....See Modern taste; Public places" (VII, 388). Women, who do not know their proper place, seem to be the cause for the rise in the number of bachelors (as was also noted in Clarissa's collection of sentiments). In his crusade to return so-called modern women to the home, Richardson continues to expound upon the same themes present in his earlier novels and in his correspondence: that modern women frequent public places too often, that learning in women is only acceptable if subordinant to their domestic skills, and that the woman's proper place is at home. Harriet Byron is clearly not a modern woman in that she is praised for her "excellent Oeconomy" (vii, 319), but also in her desire to emulate Sir Charles' mother, who exemplifies selflessness and endeavors "by her oeconomy, to enable her husband to support his extravagance, without injury to his family" (VII, 348). Lady Grandison manages her household without infringing upon her husband's rights, even though Lord Grandison clearly impoverishes his family while acting out his own selfish desires. Even characters not as prominent as Harriet Byron exemplify the virtues of the domestic hearth. An otherwise minor and forgettable character, Miss Pulcheria Clements, warrants notice in the index as a "worthy character," who is a "well-read Lady," yet who has "not suffered her reading to run away with her housewifery" (VII, 332).

In case these references to specific characters do not serve to illuminate women on their proper roles, the three categories "Education, female," "Matronly State," and "Women, English" will certainly spell it out, without the distractions of characterization or plot. Female education apparently warrants special notice, as there is no corresponding entry for male education. A religious education is deemed "the best security for performance of the matrimonial obligations," and the value of that education is to "improve the morals of men, and to make them wise and good" (VII, 338). As a woman, the importance of matrimony cannot be overlooked as can be seen under the entry for "Matronly State," which reads "When the happiest in female life" (VII, 392). In the longer entry under "Women, English," there are specific references to the novel, but the entry also indicates that the women's

"sphere is the house, and their shining place the sick chamber" (VII, 417) just in case the reader still has not made that connection in her mind.

In Grandison, as elsewhere in his novels and correspondence, Richardson always seeks to limit possible misinterpretations of his views. As much as he seems to relish the lively exchange of ideas, especially in his letters, he actually seeks to contain such debates about meaning and interpretation. Whether or not one believes he succeeds is not the question here. Rather, his relentless attempts to revise and frame his works suggest his continuing belief that novels can instruct, if the stories are presented within a proper framework. Charlotte Grandison may be a more entertaining character than Harriet Byron, but the young woman reader should recognize Harriet as an exemplary character and try to emulate her as much as possible. The reader may have doubts regarding Clarissa's behavior in relation to Lovelace and her family, but the frame ensures that she is viewed as exemplary at least in her domestic accomplishments. Without such an elaborate framework, Pamela must rely on the defenses of her made by Richardson in his sequel. Richardson establishes the domestic and moral exemplarity of his heroines in different ways, but in terms of each novel, he feels women should be able to emulate the exemplary heroine, if not based on her actual actions within the novel itself, at least then on the general precepts that are woven around those specific actions.

Notes to Chapter 1

¹ The lack of a comprehensive scholarly edition of Richardson's letters means that I had to rely on the two primary published sources of his letters, John Carroll's 1964 edition and Anna Laetitia Barbauld's six volume edition from 1804. Carroll's edition is more scholarly but is brief, limited in scope, and includes only Richardson's part of the correspondence. Barbauld's more comprehensive edition contains letters both to and from Richardson, but by twentieth-century standards, her editorial judgment was at best irresponsible. Peter Sabor suggests that "no letter printed by Barbauld should be assumed to be reliably presented" ("Publishing Richardson's" 241). Sabor alludes principally to Barbauld's inaccuracies in dating but notes that she also rewrote sections of Richardson's letters when necessary to make sense of sections that she had shortened. While obviously neither of these editions is perfect, together they provide a foundation for examining Richardson's tone in his correspondence and at least some of subjects that engaged him and his correspondents.

The brackets (which I have rendered as | |) and daggers in quotes from Carroll's edition indicate examples of Richardson's alterations in his letters, either at the time they were written or when he looked at the correspondence in 1757-58 as he prepared it for possible publication. The brackets surround material that was deleted, and the "words and phrases that Richardson added to a sentence are placed between daggers" (Carroll 10).

² This is obviously an extremely brief overview of these critics' works, specifically Castle's Clarissa's Ciphers, Eagleton's The Rape of Clarissa, Flynn's Samuel Richardson: A Man of Letters, and Warner's Reading Clarissa. Of these critics, Flynn and Eagleton most readily recognize the presence of didacticism in Richardson's work. Flynn, however, argues that Richardson's moral purpose is in direct conflict with his aesthetic purpose and that "self-discovery [in Richardson's characters] can painfully contradict the moral absolutes

Richardson intended to promote in his novels (236). Eagleton credits Richardson with being "a courageous spokesman for middle-class ideology, a properly didactic, propagandist writer. The historic interests he espoused were too urgent to be traded for the thrills of aesthetic ambivalence" (24). Unfortunately, in Eagleton's view, what makes Richardson's writing, specifically in Pamela, "boring and repugnant is Richardson's ideological views, not his forms" (35). For Eagleton, didacticism is acceptable as long as it propounds the correct ideological view.

³ Flynn suggests that "all the while Richardson worked in his fiction to restore order to a fragmented world, he was in truth creating a fictional world of ambiguous and relative values. The moralist ends up creating a world in which moral maxims no longer apply" (236). While indicating that Richardson failed in his moral endeavor, she also implies that didacticism was merely a cloak: "disguised as a didactic moralist, he managed to 'steal in' ambiguous, complex characters of his own making, designed not only to perfect his readers but to complete himself" (288).

Castle evinces the typical twentieth-century view of didacticism in which it becomes distinct somehow from morality and dismisses its presence summarily: "Clarissa has implications finally, I would claim, which are nothing other than moral--but not in any vulgar didactic sense" (28-29).

⁴ Castle sees Richardson's efforts to control his text through editorial emendations as "the intrusion of the notorious 'Richardsonian' editor," as "pernicious," and, again, as "intrusive" (158, 175). By calling Richardson's manifest attempts to control his readers' views of his novel "intrusive," Castle seems to be suggesting that these emendations do not really form part of the artistic whole, which is in essence to deny once again Richardson's didactic purpose.

⁵ Examples of Richardson's references to his characters as real people, in fact, often as his own children, abound: In one such instance, he is discussing Sir Charles

Grandison with Lady Bradshaigh and comments, "For is not Clementina my child as well as Harriet? A child endeared to me by her calamity--But how shall I say it?--She was ever, ever, unpersuadable" (Carroll 288).

In a less common but still not isolated incident, Richardson even refers to his characters as independent authorities. Richardson writes to Lady Bradshaigh about Lovelace's character and in response to a challenge that there could not really be such a bad man as Lovelace in real life, counters: "But Lovelace asserts, and I think I could support him with Instances to prove it, that there are still worse Men. See *Clarissa*, Vol. IV, Letter *xlvi*iii" (Carroll 245).

Warner suggests that in Clarissa Richardson "pretends to stand outside [the text], surveying its elements and motions with calm interest, so as to see it whole. He even poses as a judge who can stand back, appraise character, award crowns, and deliver stern sentences" (178). Yet this "judicial pose" tends to slip because Richardson "can never really stand outside--he is always right in the middle--of the struggle between *Clarissa* and Lovelace which 'is' this text" (178). In both of the situations mentioned above, Richardson's makes his characters appear to have life independent of their author, but as Warner suggests, Richardson frequently enters into his own fiction, his "judicial pose" seems to slip, and his lack of objectivity is revealed. The lack of objectivity, however, is entirely consistent with Richardson's didactic purpose.

⁶ Pamela in its entirety comprises four volumes: the first two volumes are the ones routinely taught, and the last two volumes (of the 1801 edition) are available in print only through the Garland reprint series. When I refer to part one, I mean the first two volumes, and part two, volumes three and four. My page numbers will refer to the exact volumes; for example, (II, 132) will indicate the second volume of the four-volume series.

⁷ In my own study of a twenty-five page section of Pamela (roughly the famous proposals scene through the end of volume one) through the first three editions over which

Richardson exercised control as the printer, I found roughly 210 accidentals and only 23 substantives changed.

⁸ For a more detailed explanations of the emendations made, see Mark Kinkead-Weekes, "Clarissa Restored?"; Shirley Van Marter, "Richardson's Revisions of Clarissa in the Second Edition" and "Richardson's Revisions of Clarissa in the Third and Fourth Editions"; and Florian Stuber, Introduction.

⁹ All quotes from the index are from the third edition of Sir Charles Grandison. Quotes from the text are from the Oxford edition.

Chapter 2

Teaching Men to Read:

Didactic and Moral Imperatives in Sarah Fielding's Fiction

Samuel Richardson may have taken pride in having recruited the sister of his so-called arch-rival into his circle of honorary daughters, but for Sarah Fielding at least, the relationship was a productive one. Fielding responded to Richardson's *Clarissa* with an effusive vindication of the work, which became the foundation for their personal correspondence and relationship and reveals the strength of her literary loyalties to Richardson. In turn, Richardson acted as her printer, her money lender, her literary advisor and encourager, and a subscriber to her fiction. Like Richardson, Fielding manifests an intense interest in women and issues of morality in her fiction. In terms of didactic technique, like Richardson, Fielding uses prefaces and introductions to frame her works. She, too, strongly believes in the didactic capacity of fiction. Her methods and goals differ from Richardson's, however, in substantive ways. Unlike Richardson, Fielding is much more interested in showing the reader how to make judgments in general, rather than telling them specifically what they should think. This does not mean that Fielding lacks a specific moral goal for her fiction, however. While Richardson focuses on the issue of correct moral behavior specifically for women, Fielding champions the idea of one moral code, applicable to both men and women. Eschewing the appearance of a free exchange of ideas in debate that Richardson employs, Fielding's didacticism is more insistent than Richardson's as she teaches her audience to interpret nuances of moral behavior through rigorous, lengthy, and explicit lessons in how to read properly.

Tributes to Richardson: The Correspondence and her Remarks on *Clarissa*

Despite differences in the didactic techniques and moral content of much of their fiction, the warm tone of Fielding's correspondence with Richardson attests to her strong

belief in Richardson's literary and personal excellence. Her first extant letter to him, presumably mailed with a presentation copy of her Remarks on Clarissa (1749),¹ evinces her passionate response to Clarissa. She writes, "when I read of her, I am all sensation; my heart blows, I am overwhelmed; my only vent is tears; and unless tears could mark my thoughts as legibly as ink, I cannot speak half I feel" (Battestin and Probyn 123). Her interest in Richardson extends to his family life as well and the belief that his domestic situation is enviable: "To live in a family where there is but one heart, and as many good strong heads as persons, as to have a place in that enlarged single heart, is such a state of happiness as I cannot hear of without feeling the utmost pleasure" (Battestin and Probyn 130).

In turn, Richardson encourages Fielding, lends her money, and frequently acts as her printer. Richardson's antipathy for Henry Fielding permits him, perhaps, to relish privileging her works over those of her brother:

I amuse myself as well as I can with reading. I have just gone through your two vols. of Letters. Have re-perused them with great pleasure, and found many new beauties in them. What a knowledge of the human heart! Well might a critical judge of writing say, as he did to me, that your late brother's knowledge of it was not (fine writer as he was) comparable to your's. His was but as the knowledge of the outside of a clock-work machine, while your's was that of all the finer springs and movements of the inside. (Battestin and Probyn 132)²

But his regard for Sarah Fielding as a writer is nowhere more evident than when Richardson praises The Cry (1754), an experimental work that must have appeared inordinately strange to him and as unlike his own works as could be. He asks her, "should not our friend Mr. Dodsley advertise the cry, on the filling of the town?...I cannot bear that a piece which has so much merit and novelty of design in it, should slide into oblivion" (Battestin and Probyn 135). While Fielding apparently never became as close to him as his

other honorary daughters, their relationship was respectful and warm, particularly on her side.³

The keen interest she takes in Richardson as the head of his own harmonious domestic world, as well as their business relationship and his occasional financial assistance to her, are evident in her correspondence. Her perspective on his novels is less well known, especially when compared to many of Richardson's other honorary daughters or female friends, such as Lady Bradshaigh, who corresponded endlessly with him about his characters. Fielding's defense of Clarissa is her best known response to Richardson's fiction, but other than that, we see only a glimpse of her views on Sir Charles Grandison and nothing on Pamela. She writes that Richardson's Sir Charles Grandison has found favor among her friends and acquaintances, but she is curiously silent about her own reaction. Her one criticism is of a young lady who

likes lady G-- [Charlotte Grandison] too well: why should her wit and liveliness excuse her insolence? Even Lovelace had wit and liveliness remember! You could make him agreeable whenever we were not reading his heart. It is true there is a sort of reformation in lady G--; but I am afraid her husband will never be convinced that she don't despise him. (Battestin and Probyn 129)

Even in this brief reference, Fielding manifests a concern about the possibilities of fiction being misinterpreted that echoes Richardson's own fears.

Fielding's letters to Richardson reveal slightly more about her own fiction than they do about Richardson's, but the implications are that she thinks highly of him as a writer. In one letter, she mentions money that she has borrowed from him previously and says she wishes

to have been able to have repayed you the Ten Guineas you so very kindly let me have before I left London, and so very seasonably too; but Millar's Bill is so high that I cannot contrive it unless it comes to a second Edition, and then tho I hope to

pay the Money the sence of your kind Behaviour will always remain fixed. (Battestin and Probyn 149)

In the same letter, when discussing The History of the Countess of Dellwyn (1759), she asks Richardson, her printer for that novel,

to cast an Eye on the printing of it if your Health will permit without injury and pray be not scrupulous to alter any Expressions you dislike, but if this will do you any hurt and you are overloaded with other business I will trust it to your Nephew, and the proof sheets not being sent about will prevent the Stoppage of the printing....I am very apt when I write to be too careless about great and small Letters and Stops, but I suppose that will naturally be set right in the printing.
(Battestin and Probyn 149)

Fielding does not grant Richardson power over her text because she is financially indebted to him, but because she, unlike Richardson, treats punctuation and capitalization as relatively unimportant matters.⁴

Even on an issue of potentially more importance to her, Fielding grants Richardson authority over her text, through the mediation of Jane Collier. Richardson printed the second edition of The Governess and queried the author about a reference to corporeal severities, believing that Fielding should make explicit what she had in mind.⁵ Collier responded to Richardson's query by arguing that the ambiguity should be left in the text, so that Fielding can satisfy both those who believe in them and those who don't, although she herself "is against corporeal severities" (Barbauld II, 63). But Fielding, through Collier, desires that Richardson emend it if he feels it worthwhile:

for Mrs. Fielding desired you would determine upon it; and if you would still have it altered, then be so kind as to put in what you have, and Miss Fielding will be perfectly satisfied with it, and I am sure I can answer for myself, that I shall know that you must be in the right. (Barbauld II, 64)

Fielding's willingness to defer to Richardson over this substantive change to her work reveals her personal and professional respect for Richardson. A measure of his respect for her is that the phrasing was untouched.

While her letters to Richardson reveal Fielding to be preoccupied mainly with the business aspect of writing, her Remarks on Clarissa and the prefaces to her novels offer more insight into her perceptions of what constitutes literary art. Her Remarks functions not only as a compliment to Richardson but also as an indication of Fielding's own stylistic and thematic concerns. Peter Sabor notes that "Sarah Fielding was not an experienced literary critic...and Remarks on Clarissa is not a conventional critical work" (Introduction v). Certainly, the narrator of the Remarks avows herself to be "the sincere Admirer of Clarissa" (56), but also hopes that the reader will find the work to be "a fair and impartial Examination" (56) of Richardson's novel. The bulk of Fielding's Remarks focuses on raising, then refuting contemporary objections to Richardson's novel, including the length of the novel, Clarissa's religious conviction, the deaths of Clarissa and Lovelace, Lovelace's attractions versus Hickman's, among many others. The format that Fielding chose appears to be a tribute to Richardson's novel, not only in content but also in style. Fielding's Remarks may not seem a sophisticated form of criticism because of her enthusiasm for the novel; however, the criticism is well considered and, if viewed as more than just a panegyric from an ardent admirer, these remarks enable the reader of her fiction to gain a deeper insight into Fielding's own goals and methods. Like Richardson, Fielding believes that fiction not only can but also must teach moral lessons.

In her Remarks, Fielding relies on a group of characters, each with their distinctive voices and opinions, to discuss Clarissa. Although not strictly epistolary, Fielding's use of a variety of speakers echoes Richardson's use of multiple letter writers in both Clarissa and the later Sir Charles Grandison. The preeminent issues are again addressed in the two letters that conclude the work. These two letters not only reflect Richardson's epistolary

style, but they also ensure that the reader has not lost the purport of the work in the complexity of the conversational style: they function as a frame much like Richardson's indexes to his novels. Although very much a stylistic element present in Richardson's work, repetition designed to reinforce moral content is also a key element of Fielding's own fiction, as can be seen here and in the prefaces to her novels.

In imitation of the Clarissa and Belford relationship, one of the characters in Fielding's work, Bellario, is reformed by learning to read the novel correctly with the help of the exemplary Miss Gibson, much as Richardson's Belford is reformed by Clarissa. Bellario writes to Miss Gibson and in effect summarizes all of the previous discussion as he shows how he has come to admire Richardson's work. His comments are wide ranging, moving from a defense of Clarissa's length to distinctions between true and false honor, true and false friendship, and the true difference between virtue and vice (35, 45, 46, 49). He reminds the reader that, indeed, Richardson anticipated criticism of Clarissa within the text itself: "I verily think I have not heard Clarissa condemned for any one Fault, but the Author has made some of the Harlowes, or some of Mrs. Sinclair's Family accuse her of it before" (41). This particular defense of the novel implies that the reader who mentions a fault already suggested by the Harlowes or someone from Mrs. Sinclair's house shows a lack of judgment for agreeing with an obviously flawed character's assessment of Clarissa. In Miss Gibson's reply to Bellario, she begins by looking at the broader designs of the text as she concurs with Bellario, a reiteration that shows he has indeed learned how to interpret correctly.

After approving of Bellario's defense, Miss Gibson then addresses the specifically feminine aspects of the novel in the character of Clarissa, the question of marriage, and the suitability of Lovelace as a husband. Her focus on these issues is justified by her assertion that

as the Laws of God and Man have placed a Woman totally in the Power of her

Husband, I believe it is utterly impossible for any young Woman, who has any Reflection, not to form in her Mind some kind of Picture of the Sort of Man in whose Power she would chuse to place herself. (51)

The man Clarissa would have chosen for herself, according to Miss Gibson, is an entirely conventional creature, "one from whom she might have gained Instruction, and from whose Superiority of Understanding she would have been pleased to have taken the Rules of her own Actions" (52).

Miss Gibson focuses on the marriage between Clarissa's mother and father as the primary cause for Clarissa's desire to live a single life. The "example daily before her of her Mother's being tyrannized over, notwithstanding her great Humility and Meekness, perhaps tyrannized over for that very Humility and Meekness. She thought a single Life, in all Probability, would be for her the happiest..." (52). Clarissa's desire to remain single does not signal a desire to act contrary to the other women of her age; rather, Clarissa values conformity and cherishes "that Characteristic of a noble Mind, especially in a Woman, of wishing, as Miss Howe says she did, to pass through Life unnoted" (52).

Although Miss Gibson specifically draws attention to Clarissa's subordinate role as both a daughter and potential wife, the strength of the novel derives, in Fielding's opinion, from Clarissa's moral superiority. Fielding reiterates Lovelace's unsuitability and then concludes Miss Gibson's relatively short letter (compared to Bellario's) with a reexamination of the moral of Clarissa's life and death, arguing that

in her Character, the Author has thrown into Action (if I may be allowed the Expression) the true Christian Philosophy, shewn its Force to ennoble the human Mind, till it can look with Serenity on all human Misfortunes, and take from Death itself its gloomy Horrors. (55)

Miss Gibson's ardent admiration of Clarissa derives not from Clarissa as feminist forerunner but from her moral strength and Christian resignation.

Stylistically and thematically, Fielding's Remarks on *Clarissa* appears merely imitative of Richardson; however, distinctions arise in the rest of her fiction that demonstrate the differences between the two writers, despite their shared beliefs in the didactic purpose of fiction and the importance of moral lessons within that fiction. While Richardson defines moral behavior for women separately from that of men, Fielding argues in support of a single moral code, applicable to both men and women. Her didacticism is more pervasive than Richardson's, yet her ultimate goal is to teach the reader the interpretative skills to make moral judgments independently of the author.

Morality, Didacticism, and Feminism

The idea that fiction must serve a didactic purpose is central to Fielding's literary efforts, and she is even more emphatic about the didactic nature of her fiction than Richardson, whose habit of "writing to the moment" can detract from his ability to deliver his message. Fielding's fiction appears less realistic, but then didacticism, not realism, is her goal. Janet Todd argues that Fielding's fiction "delivers moral generalisation and it tries in sentimental fashion to teach assent to its morality through an emotional appeal to the reader. The aim is social and psychological analysis, not verisimilitude and the catching of individual personality" (Sign 165). The prefatory material to her fiction highlights Fielding's continual emphasis on moral generalizations and a blunt insistence on her work's instructional value rather than its realism.

The overt didacticism in Fielding's own fiction and her admiration of Richardson appear to make her an unlikely candidate to espouse women's rights. Feminist critics agree that Fielding's primary focus is on women's issues, whether she is arguing for equality in marriage and education or critiquing what we would call gender ideology and women's lack of subjectivity in fiction.⁶ Many of these critics, however, are unable to reconcile Fielding's overt didacticism with her femino-centric subject matter. In her discussion of Fielding's

later novel, The Countess of Dellwyn, Jane Spencer suggests that Fielding's "tradition of women's protest runs through this work, but is compromised by the moralism of the author's outlook" (119). Deborah Downs-Miers sees Fielding's moralism as a ploy that allows her "to present acceptable, marketable fiction while also addressing issues which are, at best, unpopular" ("Springing" 309). In such views, Fielding's didacticism is seen as an unfortunate element in an otherwise brilliant example of nascent feminism in the eighteenth century. Yet Fielding's didacticism in no way conflicts with her desire to better women's position in society; rather, she expresses the larger view that society as a whole must change in order for women's lives to be improved. The way to achieve such a change would be to have one moral code for everyone, male or female, not to do away with moral strictures. For this to occur, both men and women must work from the same set of assumptions and interpretations, and it is the author's moral imperative to teach them both how to read. Fielding's narratives are feminocentric, but her target audience includes both men and women.

Fielding certainly addresses women's issues, specifically arguing for equality, but even more central to her fiction is an idea that she borrows from La Bruyere and repeats in her preface to The Countess of Dellwyn: "many Persons have endeavoured to teach Men to write; but none have taught them to read; as if Reading consisted only in distinguishing the Letters and Words from each other" (xxxiv). Fielding's didacticism centers on this notion: that people must be taught to read with greater discernment before they can address subjects such as morality and women's position in society. Interpreting moral nuances requires more than just seeing individual words and letters; it requires being told what to look for, shown how to apply what has been learned, given the opportunity to exercise those skills, and, finally, not only allowed to but also required to make independent judgments about morally fine distinctions.

In her Remarks on Clarissa and the prefaces to The Cry and The Countess of

Dellwyn, Fielding reveals her didactic methods and emphasizes her indebtedness to historical literary forms, her support for codes of moral behavior, and her interest in the relationship between instruction and entertainment, apparently to the exclusion of her interest in women. In the prefaces to both The Governess and The Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia, Fielding defines female virtue in fairly conventional terms. Her specific goal, however, is not to sanction conventional assessments of female morality; rather, she wishes to establish the fact that codes of moral behavior are necessary and that fiction must teach the reader to make correct moral judgments.

There is no formal preface to The Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia (1757) but instead a dedication to the Countess of Pomfret, which acts as a simple "preface" to a work with an unambiguously didactic message. The dedication draws the moral of her ensuing story clearly as she explains that the "Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia form, perhaps, the strongest Contrast of any Ladies celebrated in History." The simple division between the two women suggests that Fielding judges female morality based solely on the question of chaste or unchaste behavior. As her other prefaces and her novels indicate, however, she has a much broader conception of morality that requires complex interpretative skills on the part of the reader.

The Governess (1749) contains a dedication and a preface, both of which emphasize the didactic nature of the work and ask that the audience connect the act of reading directly with improving one's moral character. Fielding declares that in her work she will use both fables and morals "which have been recommended by the wisest Writers, as the most effectual means of conveying useful Instruction" (iv). She highlights the physical act of reading by instructing her young readers to

stop a Moment at this Preface, to consider with me, what is the true Use of Reading; and if you can once fix this Truth in your Minds, namely, that the true Use of Books is to make you wiser and better, you will then have both Profit and

Pleasure from what you read. (vii)

By foregrounding the construction of her tale, with its fables and morals, and specifically asking the reader to reflect on the purpose of reading, she asks her readers to recognize the didactic nature of reading. She candidly admits the work's message in her dedication:

The Design of the following Sheets is to endeavour to cultivate an early Inclination to Benevolence, and a Love of Virtue, in the Minds of young Women, by trying to shew them, that their True Interest is concerned in cherishing and improving those amiable Dispositions into Habits.... (iii)

She directs her readers still further that the "Design of the following Sheets is to prove to you, that Pride, Stubbornness, Malice, Envy, and, in short, all manner of Wickedness, is the greatest Folly we can be possessed of..." (xiii). The emphasis on morality and the didactic intention of the work do not appear inappropriate in a work designed to instruct children; however, this same emphasis appears even in the prefaces to her other fiction.

In the prefaces to The Cry and to The Countess of Dellwyn, Fielding eliminates the gender-specific moral reflections found in the framework to Cleopatra and Octavia and The Governess and concentrates on highlighting her didactic methods and her views on morality in general. These two prefaces are Fielding's longest ones, arguably because these are her two most complex works, requiring the most discerning attention of the reader. The novelty of The Cry alone warrants such a full preface, but The Countess of Dellwyn, like The History of Ophelia (1760), appears to be a fairly typical domestic novel with an erring heroine that any reader of the period would recognize. The elaborate preface, however, alerts the reader to the difficulties of interpretation to be found in the novel.

In the introduction to The Cry, coauthors Jane Collier and Fielding not only tell the reader what their goal is but also how they propose to achieve it. The authors write: "in plain prose, we beg to inform our readers, that our intention in the following pages, is not to amuse them with a number of surprising incidents and adventures, but rather to paint the

inward mind" (11). Their task is to throw their heroine into "puzzling mazes," which are "the perverse interpretations made upon her words" (13). They acknowledge that their job, which is "thoroughly to unfold the labyrinths of the human mind, is an arduous task" (14). Like the writer of the epic, who "generally informs you of the poet's intention in his work" (9), Collier and Fielding bluntly tell the reader their goal so that their intentions will not be mistaken.

Their goal being made clear, the authors explain how they hope to achieve that exploration of the human mind. To do something so new, the authors propose to use a pastiche of established styles, including allegory, drama, essay writing, stories and novels, and the epic. They provide examples of each kind of writing to illustrate their point but ultimately reject using just one of these styles because each of the styles alone seems incapable of providing the balance between instruction and entertainment that they seek: thus, they alert the reader to the fact that they will use allegory, borrow from drama, offer themselves as their own chorus, "in order not only to point out the behaviour of our actors, which for want of a real stage representation could sometimes not otherwise be understood" (16). They dismiss the format of stories or novels, because both forms "have flowed in such abundance for these last ten years, that we would wish, if possible, to strike a little out of a road already so much beaten" (8). Seeking to achieve a new form yet one that is comprehensible to their reader, they find it "necessary to assume a certain freedom in writing, not strictly perhaps within the limits prescribed by rules. Yet we desire only to be free, and not licentious" (14).

While deliberately choosing a new way of telling their story, they at once emphasize that their decision is not based on whim; indeed, their forms are historically grounded, and they further pay homage to writers from the past--Ariosto, Spenser, and Milton, among others--by offering mottos from "the most approved authors" to give "a sanction to our own sentiments" (18). Thus, the stage is very carefully set as to what will follow; it looks new

but there is a reason for it and history behind it. Their didactic method requires that the reader be told which literary forms will be used, how those forms have been used in the past, and the strengths and weaknesses of such forms. It is not enough for them to tell their readers what are their goals but also that they see how those goals are to be achieved. The seriousness of their endeavor is manifestly visible to the reader as are the blocks used to construct the whole; this is, indeed, their purpose, that their didactic goals and methods be clear and taken seriously. They particularly chastise the preface writer who condemns his or her own work by saying the work is "the fruits of a few idle hours, written merely for private amusement" (9). Why then, they argue, should anyone bother to read it? After having set the scene for the seriousness of their purpose, the authors of The Cry acknowledge at the end of the introduction that, finally, the "judicious reader" must "decide" (18) whether or not their work succeeds. Having instructed the reader carefully, the authors then ask the reader to form his or her own judgment. This deliberate handing over of interpretative responsibility to the reader contrasts sharply with Richardson's desire to tell his audience exactly what to think.

In the very long preface to The Countess of Dellwyn, the writer's seriousness of purpose is once again evident, but here the interaction between writer and reader is emphasized much more, and the emphasis on formal elements in The Cry gives way to a much greater examination of moral content. Given the conventional novelistic format of The Countess of Dellwyn, however, such a long preface seems unnecessary as there are no unusual formal elements present as in The Cry. The length of the preface is even harder to explain when, in a letter to Richardson, Fielding discusses her difficulties in writing: "if it is necessary I must write a small Preface but I had rather not for I am quite weary" (Battestin and Probyn 149). For someone who professes herself to be too weary to write a long preface, the 43 prefatory pages to The Countess of Dellwyn come as a bit of a surprise, to say the very least! Yet once her ambitious agenda is considered--examining the

interaction between the writer and reader, expounding the necessary moral content of fiction, and teaching the novel's audience how to read--43 pages seem quite short.

While again using examples to add authority to her own words from an array of established writers, including Plutarch, Bossu, Aristotle, and Montaigne, among others, Fielding still manages to foreground an intricate appreciation of the writer and reader interaction, an interest also present, to a lesser degree, in the prefaces to The Governess and The Cry. As in her preface to The Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia, in that of The Countess of Dellwyn Fielding insists upon the need for fiction to contain moral teachings. Echoing the fairly simple distinction between virtue and vice outlined in the preface to The Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia, Fielding remarks that the "natural Tendency of Virtue [is] towards the Attainment of Happiness; and, on the contrary, that Misery is the unavoidable Consequence of vicious Life" (iv). Virtue will be rewarded and vice punished with misery, according to her. Yet in the preface to The Countess of Dellwyn, Fielding complicates this simple literary dichotomy by insisting that moral distinctions must extend beyond fictional boundaries into the lives of both the writer and reader.

She begins by reflecting on the relationship between the reader and writer: "Every Vice, by which a bad Man is actuated, as well as every Virtue which animates the Bosom of a good Character, tends, if properly managed, to produce the Moral, which is essentially necessary to render any Writing useful to the Reader" (xvii). The writer's task requires that particular care be taken regarding

the Purity of Language; I do not here mean any thing which is called Elegance or Beauty of Style; but only that the Terms, which are ever applied to whatsoever is deservedly laudable, should on no account be used so equivocally, as to be made applicable indifferently to what is either vicious or virtuous. (xx)

The writer must make sure, even perhaps at the cost of elegance, that the reader not misread the moral of the story. She insists, too, that "the Perspicuity and Propriety of the

Moral is allowed to be another Ingredient absolutely necessary to this, and indeed to all kinds of Writings of Invention" (xv).

Fielding acknowledges that there will always be readers who read only with a particular goal in mind and will only be satisfied if the work lends itself to their purpose.

The writer who seeks only to please such a reader

ought to content himself without such Applause as is only to be obtained by the Forfeiture of his own moral Character; and would make a very injudicious Bargain, if he so far adapted his Practice to their Taste, that he must necessarily be conscious of being a bad Man, in order to be accounted by such Readers a pleasing Writer. (xix)

Thus, she neatly links the moral content of the text with the moral imperatives of writing.

A successful reading, however, ultimately requires skill from both the author and the reader: while the writer must do a thorough job of representing the "Dispositions of the Miser, the Lover, the Friend, and the Parent," the reader must "also have some Degree of Knowledge of them before he can judge truly whether they are represented right or wrong, or distinguish what is natural from the wild Fancies of the Poet's Brain" (xiii).

According to Fielding, the reader needs to be alert enough to the character's treatment to be able to appreciate and understand these small incidents. As in the preface to The Cry, and in contrast to Richardson, Fielding insists on the active participation of the reader in the interpretative process.

Teaching the reader to decipher these nuances and to be capable of interpretative independence is an author's responsibility, according to Fielding, and constitutes her final goal in the preface to The Countess of Dellwyn. While acknowledging that her "fictional mode is embedded in a tradition of types, myth, allegory, and romance stretching back to Homer," Battestin and Probyn suggest that Fielding "sometimes pads out her books with lengthy quotations" (xli). For example, she concludes her preface to The Countess of

Dellwyn by quoting at length, about nine pages, from a "manuscript Essay on this Subject [teaching men to read], which was found in the Study of an old Gentleman" (xxxiv).

Fielding herself admitted, in a letter to Richardson, that she needed to lengthen the novel: "I have added above a hundred Pages since he [Andrew Millar, her publisher] was here, and I hope the Great Mouth of the Press will be satisfied pray let it be contrived to do if it can, I am almost sure I never wrote so much for two Vollumes before" (Battestin and Probyn 149). Fielding possibly quotes extensively from other works in order to lengthen her own works, but, even more likely, she uses extensive quotations and repetition as powerful pedagogical tools.

As elsewhere in her fiction, Fielding relies heavily on quotes from other writers and examples from a variety of literary styles to illustrate her points. She attempts to remedy the habits of superficial reading by providing examples from other authors and then offering explications of those examples. In one long section, she illustrates the unleashed passions of the mind by quoting from a story from Virgil. She resumes her own voice and instructs the reader,

there is no Person, who reads this Story with any Attention, but what must conclude the Sufferings of Amata...were very trifling, in comparison of what she endured when her whole Soul was inflamed with Fury, and she was raging through the Streets: Yet Virgil does not stop even there; but completes the whole.... (xxxi-xxxii)

She finishes this discussion by asserting that

to the judicious Reader the Moral of this Story is very conspicuous; tho' the Manner of Virgil's Writing, and the Dignity of Epic Poetry, might require Allegories, and that his Stories should be surrounded with such Incidents as were necessary to his whole Purpose. But when we stop at those outward Circumstances, and perceive not the farther Intention, we read as Children see Tragedies, who place their chief Delight in the Noise of the Kettle-drums and Trumpets.... (xxxiii)

Again, she emphasizes for the reader that stopping merely with the "outward Circumstance" will never permit him or her to ascertain the author's point. She believes that the "smallest Incidents most clearly unravel the intricate Labyrinths of the human mind" (xv).

Considering the novel that follows, too, such a reading of only the outward circumstances could lead to a misinformed judgment about the moral of the subsequent story.

Sheer repetition constitutes another of Fielding's primary methods of teaching. In the preface to *The Countess of Dellwyn*, one key point is made at several points and elaborated upon, in case the reader has lost sight of it:

The Moral should most clearly manifest what seems to be evidently the Fact, That the Mind, under the Influence of any indulged vicious Passion, is of itself and essentially unhappy, even without the Consideration of any Consequences, as truly as the Body is unhealthy whilst it labours under any Distemper whatsoever; for Virtue is as certainly the Strength of the Mind, as Health is visibly the Cause of the Vigour of the Body; and the Soul is as much diseased by Vice, as the Body is by a Fever. (xxv)

Her desire to remind the reader of this point is not gratuitous, given the importance of this idea to her ensuing novel. The repetition of such generalized moral claims appears to suggest that for Fielding behavior is easily divided into categories of virtue and vice. As abstract concepts, the division seems clear.

Interpreting Moral Nuances in *The Countess of Dellwyn*

When applied to specific human actions, however, distinctions between virtue and vice become harder to discern. The novel that follows this lengthy preface is at once conventional and unconventional, and in it, Fielding allows the reader the opportunity to exercise his or her own moral judgment, with an occasional direction from the author. There are chaste women who stand as exemplars, and then there is the novel's protagonist,

whose personal weakness, vanity, is exploited by those around her. But, unlike countless other heroines with foibles, the Countess of Dellwyn does not become a conventionally reformed heroine. In fact, the adulterous protagonist illustrates completely Fielding's general moral theories that "an evil mind leads to unhappiness." But Fielding also asks the reader to consider how the Countess comes to possess "an evil mind" in the first place. With the careful coaching on how to read in the preface, the reader is expected to look beyond "outward circumstances" and interpret moral nuances based on his or her judicious assessment of the facts. Fielding does not completely abandon the reader, however, even once within the novel itself. She continues to teach the reader, sometimes overtly, and constantly offers the reader hints that are not definitive but certainly indicative of the direction they should follow.

In The Countess of Dellwyn, Fielding uses a third-person narrator who objectively outlines the Countess's personal flaws. Spencer notes that the narrator's "cool tone suits the didactic purpose of analysing the errors which lead the Countess to fall a prey to the world's snares. Her moral scheme is evident at all times--perhaps excessively so" (121). As a teacher of morality, the narrator seems extremely conventional, especially when assessing a woman's unhappy marriage:

Lady Dellwyn was a memorable Instance of the great Imprudence a Woman is guilty of when she fails in due Respect to her Husband. If he deserves such a Treatment, the Contempt justly returns redoubled on her own Head for consenting to be the Wife of a Man she despises. In this Sense the Folly of the Husband reflects as much Dishonour on the Wife, as her erroneous Conduct can possibly do on him; with this additional Aggravation, that the Scorn which falls on her on that Account is always deservedly; and she may, as Mrs. Western says, Comfort herself that it is her own Fault. (II, 162)

This harsh assessment of the Countess reflects the narrator's desire to show the Countess's

foibles unambiguously.

Nor does the narrator show that the Countess's failings ever change or improve throughout the novel: she is always proud, vain, and self-deceiving. After falling in love with her putative friend Lady Fanny Fashion's diamond earrings, the then Miss Lucum wants nothing else in the world. The one way to attain such jewels for herself is to marry Lord Dellwyn, whom she had earlier vehemently opposed on the basis of his advanced age and revolting physical appearance. She had taken pride in her refusal, but when it is rumored that she had been refused by him, her pride is once more assaulted and weakens her resolve further. After boldly inviting Lord Dellwyn to renew his proposals to her, "Is it customary, my Lord, amongst Men educated in the fashionable World, to take the bashful Reserve of a Country Girl for an absolute Refusal?" (I, 71), she triumphs in being able to at once confute rumors that she had been unable to attract Lord Dellwyn and to gain ascendancy over her friend Lady Fanny:

She requested but one Favour of his Lordship; namely, that he would be an humble Instrument, in the Hand of Fortune, to gratify her Ambition, and serve her present desireable Purpose of heaping up for herself future Misery. (I, 76)

The narrator's view of Charlotte Lucum's actions is clear: Miss Lucum's reason for marrying will only serve to make her unhappy, as indeed it does.

An unhappy marriage, an adulterous affair (though not one of her seeking), a divorce, and a flight to France, however, do not cure her of any of her previous faults, as might be expected. Instead, the Countess returns to London, where at least her crimes were not a novelty. Even there, however, she is still tormented by her personal failings:

She constantly wished to unravel what she had done last; and yet, as if she was infatuated, was as constant in persisting to act on in a Manner that only gave her fresh Cause to wish she had the Power To call back Yesterday; which her Ignorance of herself alone made her imagine she could employ to any better Purpose. (II, 275-

76)

The finality of the narrator's assessment of the Countess here seems unavoidable: even if she had the opportunity, the Countess would have made the same mistakes all over again because she does not learn from her errors. The condemnation in this assessment is explicit. As an illustration of Fielding's moral theories, the Countess's vices do, indeed, render her completely miserable. The Countess ends her days by remaining on the fringes of society and gaming, but she "often found herself weary of this Life, and yet anxiously avoided every Thought of Death" (II, 281). A more complete opposite of Richardson's heroines cannot be imagined.

Although the Countess of Dellwyn is explicitly a fallen heroine due to her adulterous affair and her own vanity, the narrator simultaneously reveals the Countess's weaknesses while trying to mediate them. Spencer argues that "unlike Manley and Haywood, Sarah Fielding does not extend sympathy to her seduced heroine. Her cool, detached, ironical narrative allows none of the sympathetic identification with the victim found when the heroine tells her own tale" (121). Despite Spencer's assertion, the narrator's assessment, though honest, is not without sympathy. Having established an objective position, the narrator can then discuss the mitigating factors present in the Countess's life without actually condoning the immoral behavior.

The immoral behavior, in Fielding's view, is not the Countess's adultery but rather her initial flaws of vanity, pride, and self-deception, which should excite pity rather than lend themselves to exploitation, as occurs in the Countess's case. While Fielding paints the Countess as miserable, she insists that the Countess is not intrinsically vicious and that the unfortunate course of her life is determined by outside pressures as the men around her make use of her initial character flaws. This distinction does not, of course, keep the Countess from living and presumably dying in misery, but it does require a more complex response from the reader than a simpler picture of evil would have done.

Although always possessed of vanity and other personal flaws, the young Miss Lucum's peaceful life minimizes the danger and impact of those faults: "from her Infancy, [she] was so accustomed to early Hours, constant Employment, and a regular Manner of Life" (I, 36). After her ambitious and cunning father takes her to London, Miss Lucum found that

by almost imperceptible Degrees, the Force of Custom rendered that Manner of Life tolerable, to which at first she had been so averse; then, the first Step being surmounted, she advanced another, and it became pleasing: And from thence, it was not long before she was totally wrapped up in it. (I, 39-40)

Once introduced to society, Miss Lucum's flaws become intensified by her surroundings and even more liable to exploitation by her father and Lord Dellwyn. Tricked into marrying Lord Dellwyn, the Countess eventually learns from him that her going to London, his pretence of marrying Lady Fanny Fashion, and "every Transaction from the Time of her Arrival in London, were nothing more than the Effects of a Stratagem, concerted between himself and Mr. Lucum, to prevail with her to consent to be his Countess" (I, 105). Thus, the narrator reveals that the men and their stratagems against her are at least as responsible for her downfall as her own vanity.

The Countess's adultery, which causes her to forfeit society's respect, ironically does not derive from an inclination to unchaste behavior, but rather from vanity, the Countess's real problem according to Fielding. Because the Countess has once more been the dupe of men, the narrator views her adultery not as a crime but as yet another error in judgment. Although she is married to a far older man, who does not reflect on "the Impropriety of his own Age for carrying into Practice the Wisdom of his late Discovery [the desire to marry a young wife]" (I, 17), the Countess does not indulge in an affair because of an understandable, if not socially sanctioned, desire for another man. Instead, she becomes involved with a man without being in love with him:

Lord Clermont's Experience, in his Commerce with Women, gave him many Advantages; nor did he cease his Pursuit of Lady Dellwyn, till he had, by her Apprehension of losing his Admiration, prevailed upon her to pay his own Price for her temporary Triumph, playing his Part so artfully, as to keep her Passions in a continual Tumult, and gave her no Time for Reflexion, till it was too late to preserve her from his Snares. (II, 50)

Certainly the Countess's vanity allows her to fall victim to Clermont, and, therefore, she is guilty of weakness, but she cannot be accused of deliberately setting out to acquire a lover. Having an adulterous affair results in her becoming physically unchaste but does not make her less chaste in her thoughts and subsequent actions, only in other people's eyes.

Technically unchaste in society's opinion and therefore worthy of scorn, the Countess is unable to regain her reputation. The narrator's sympathy for her position is manifested as the Countess is compared explicitly and implicitly to both the other women and men in the novel.

Fielding expects her reader to rely on both the narrator's subtle guidance and on concrete comparisons of situations and characters in order to distinguish nuances in moral behavior. To make sure that the reader recognizes the importance of such comparisons, Fielding interrupts the flow of her novel with two overtly didactic chapters, about half way through the two volumes. In these two successive chapters, "A Character" and "Another Character" (I, 261-92), Fielding explores in detail the characters of Sir Harry Cleveland and Captain Drummond to illustrate for her readers the essential differences between the two men.

The two men are shown to be adept at manipulating their way through society, and yet Captain Drummond's deliberate preying upon others contrasts sharply with Sir Harry's relatively innocent desire to belong to and enjoy society. On the one hand, Sir Harry is a young, wealthy, well-educated man who is sent to Bristol on account of his health and is

told "to avoid Study, and lead a Life of Dissipation" (I, 263). Like Miss Lucum, once in society, Sir Harry is "obliged to forget, or at least to lay perfectly aside, all the Ideas which he had been imbibing from his Infancy" (I, 264). Sir Harry achieves this goal so well that despite having come "into the World with a Mind healthy, and full of Vigour...when he began to be infected with the Foolishness of vain Customs, he ran greater Lengths than such Persons as had never known what a sound Mind was" (I, 269). Sir Harry's foolishness results only in minor incidents, such as women quarrelling over his attentions.

On the other hand, Fielding paints a much darker picture of Captain Drummond's presence in society and delineates his character at length "to shew by what Wretches Men (of otherwise good Understandings) are to be imposed on, when they think it necessary to be flattered for any favourite Folly" (I, 288). Captain Drummond takes "Advantage of every Weakness he observed in another" (I, 281), and his goal concerns "pecuniary Advantages only, the principal End of his Consideration" (I, 282). Drummond's wickedness far outreaches Sir Harry's mild idiocy, as Drummond persuades Lord Dellwyn to divorce Lady Dellwyn, both to satisfy his revenge against her for refusing to be seduced by him and to gain greater access to Lord Dellwyn's wealth. Both Drummond and Sir Harry appear as typical members of their society, yet Fielding draws a vivid distinction between them and the effects of their actions. The placement of the two chapters together requires the reader to make such immediate comparisons, and the placement of the two chapters before the Countess and Lady Fanny are reunited in Bristol alerts the reader to the necessity for careful distinctions between those two women as well.

Having broken the flow of her narrative to compare explicitly the two characters, Fielding then expects the reader to continue to make such judgments based on other comparisons, specifically of the Countess and the other characters in the novel. Fielding asks the reader to compare the Countess's character and situation to those of other men and women in the novel, not just to those of more perfect women. What she hopes to teach

the reader is that, before the Countess is condemned as an adulteress and dismissed as fundamentally vicious, mitigating factors, such as gender inequalities and an inadequate upbringing, must be taken into account and that virtue in a woman should be redefined to include more than just chastity.

As Sir Harry and Captain Drummond have been compared, so must the reader compare the Countess and Lady Fanny, not only to each other but also to these men as well, although to a lesser degree. When Lady Fanny Fashion arrives in Bristol, the narrator compares the two women, claiming that Lady Dellwyn exceeds Lady Fanny in both real beauty and true wit. Lady Fanny is "in Possession of the whole Art of displaying every Charm in its fullest Lustre" (II, 16), and, indeed, Fielding often describes Lady Fanny in terms of art whereas the Countess is unable to, unused to, and, at times, unwilling to deploy art. Mary Anne Schofield suggests that the Countess becomes the "arch dissembler" and her life "one continual masquerade" (121), but in comparison to Lady Fanny, the Countess is revealed to be adept only at self-deception.

Like Sir Harry, the Countess desires only to play a part in society and often acts without reflection; like Captain Drummond, Lady Fanny artfully manages to present an image of herself that bears little or no relation to the truth. Lady Fanny engages in affairs but baffles "all Whispers, Sneers, and Rumours, by stretching her Head the higher, and treating them with absolute Contempt" (II, 47). The Countess cannot sustain such deception. Recognizing her stupidity in having been duped by Lord Clermont, the Countess

hung her Head, and drooped like a half-withered Flower. The whole Dignity of her Person was lost, and she would then gladly have exchanged her present Situation to have returned to her former Retirement, and with joy have quitted all the Pomp of her State and Quality, to have re-assumed the innocent Amusements of Miss Lucum. (II, 54)

Although an expert at self-deception, the Countess of Dellwyn is repeatedly acquitted of

desiring to speak or act falsely. She is uncomfortable with deception, and "if Lady Dellwyn had been possessed of the whole World, she could gladly have resigned it all, in Exchange for the Power of boldly, and without conscious Shame, speaking freely, and throwing off the Practice of every Degree of Deceit" (II, 142). Both Lady Fanny and the Countess engage in unchaste behavior, but Lady Fanny consciously manages her own actions whereas Lord Clermont takes advantage of the Countess's weaknesses. Lady Fanny can live with the knowledge of her actions and duplicity, while the Countess cannot.

The differences between Lady Fanny and the Countess are further highlighted by their different responses to an affecting story told by Miss Cummys, the Countess's former friend. Lady Fanny responds with mirth and indignation, while the Countess weeps. The Countess may not be chaste but is clearly not completely evil. Even her adultery, when compared to Lady Fanny's affairs, becomes less criminal by the Countess's obvious lack of intentionality. Her evident distress at being forced into deception and her obviously sympathetic nature provide the reader with an alternate means of judging her.

As a woman unable to hide her guilt, the Countess is judged by her peers as unchaste and, therefore, condemned as despicable. Despite her more explicitly unchaste nature, Lady Fanny is treated far more humanely by her husband than the Countess is by her husband. While Lady Fanny is more artful at keeping her guilt hidden, still her husband "resolved to separate himself from her. He could not make any public Noise; but took an easy and obvious Method of enjoying her Absence, which was no other than remaining at his own home, which he found was the last Place to which she would chuse to resort" (II, 285). Unlike Lady Fanny's husband, Lord Dellwyn opts for a public divorce, which guarantees the Countess's public humiliation. Although more guilty of unchaste behavior than the Countess, Fanny's ability to hide her errors behind a mask of moral rectitude, and the blessing of a nonconfrontational husband allow her to live in relative peace. As women subject to their husband's wishes, Lady Fanny and the Countess depend

on their spouses's individual humors to determine their fates.

In a broader context, the Countess's adultery and foolishness are viewed with an inflexibility similar to that of her husband by a society accustomed to judging the sexes based on different moral standards. For example, Mr. Bilson strays from his wife, has an illegitimate child from an obviously adulterous relationship, and runs into debt. He reforms, however, and is allowed to reform by a forgiving wife and a society accustomed to ignoring male sexual indiscretions, even when presented with physical proof in the shape of Mr. Bilson's daughter. Distinctions based on outward behavior alone need to be made carefully, Fielding suggests, because they need to be made regardless of the individual's gender. Never transgressing as far as Mr. Bilson, the Countess is not permitted to reform, however, either by her husband or by her peers. She is unable to overcome society's prejudice against her so that reform becomes possible. Surrounded and encouraged by self-interested men and judged by the double standard of a patriarchal society, the Countess's actions can never be completely under her control. Thus, the Countess is more worthy of sympathy than scorn.

According to Fielding, morality needs to be upheld but based on a broader conception of virtue and vice. In her presentation of Lady Fanny's fate, Fielding questions whether unchaste behavior, even in women, constitutes a grave moral sin. Lady Fanny's life ends as it begins, and the narrator comments that she fluttered much and there was "much ado about nothing" (II, 285). If Fielding believes that a vicious life leads to misery, as she writes elsewhere, then even Lady Fanny's relatively promiscuous life cannot really be judged as vicious. The flaw of sexual promiscuity cannot be measured on the same scale as actively harming someone or preying on them for their money, such as Captain Drummond does. Society only believes unchaste behaviour in women to be harmful based on an outdated sense of convention and a sense of gender bias that Fielding believes deserves to be abolished. By arguing that moral codes need to apply equally to all people regardless of

gender and by suggesting that sins beyond one's control should render one pitiable, not repulsive, Fielding teaches that conventional morality needs to be redefined as it applies to women.

The result of all this weighing and balancing and comparing is that there are degrees of guilt and that some obviously guilty people like the Countess should be treated with compassion rather than rejection, according to Fielding. Mitigating factors can and do apply. Fielding's narrator remarks that usually only guilty people condemn others, whereas people without faults are much more inclined to pity than censure:

A few Individuals, it is true, who were acquainted with her Story, and knew in what Manner she was betrayed to marry Lord Dellwyn, could not forbear looking on her with some degree of Compassion: But it was observable, that this Lenity was exerted only by those Persons whose own Conduct had ever been the most unblemished, and who, by their exemplary Lives alone, had proved their Abhorrence of every vicious Practice. (II, 278)

Those who are themselves not without fault should take special care when making moral judgments about others.

Although not a fully developed character, Miss Cummyns, Lady Dellwyn's childhood friend, is just such an exemplary figure who views the Countess with compassion and tries to offer her guidance during her troubles. The Countess rejects Miss Cummyns' offers of help, partly because she is unable and unwilling to give up her vanity. Carolyn Woodward argues that it is the Countess's "unwillingness to accept responsibility for her past that keeps her caught in partial, false reflections. This unwillingness stems from her vanity, that is, from her extreme self-centeredness" (121). Miss Cummyns, though well intentioned, simply offers too little, too late. For Miss Cummyns to have been of use, the Countess needed sounder foundational principles, thus avoiding or at least minimizing the extent of her original character defects.

Whereas Miss Cummys acts as an advocate for the Countess and exemplifies the way in which to assess the Countess correctly based on the facts, not on appearances, the exemplary Bilson women appear in stark contrast to the Countess. Downs-Miers argues that Fielding includes exemplary characters such as the Bilson mother and daughter to engage the "unsympathetic and nonsympathetic readers," who "will be...charmed and gratified by these models of virtue" ("Springing" 313), but more is at stake here than simply trying to enlarge the audience for her book. The Countess of Dellwyn is clearly morally inferior to Mrs. Bilson and Miss Bilson. The domestic moral of the novel is clear, and the female Bilsos exemplify it: Miss Bilson, "as well as her Mother, thought that a Woman's Happiness consisted chiefly in domestic Pleasures" (II, 100).

The narrator draws attention to the contrast between the ways in which the Countess and Mrs. Bilson respond to the problems in their marriages. While the Countess's foolish behavior within her marriage results in its end and her disgrace, Mrs. Bilson handles matters more adroitly. The narrator praises Mrs. Bilson at the expense of the Countess:

Mrs. Bilson's uncommon Merits rendered me unwilling to pass her on in Silence, and especially as her History gives so strong a Proof of the Efficacy of religious Principles towards extracting the sharpest Sting from the highest Adversity, in as great Proportion as Lady Dellwyn's Story illustrates the Power of Vanity to bring to nothing every real Advantage. (I, 215)

Mrs. Bilson spends her married life "in the continual Exercise of every domestic Virtue" (I, 165) and is generally an exemplary wife, much as Richardson's Pamela is to Mr. B even to the detail of adopting her husband's bastard daughter.⁶ Mrs. Bilson's ability to weather her husband's folly provides rewards for her and her family, whereas, through her own foolishness, the Countess loses all the benefits gained through her marriage.

Although the reader is clearly asked to contrast the lives of the Bilsos, old and young, with the lives of the Dellwyns, the other comparisons drawn in the novel explicitly

and implicitly complicate the matter. Downs-Miers correctly argues,

that the proper moral model is relegated to the subplot indicates two things:

Fielding does insist that virtue is its own reward and vice its own punishment, but also, it is clear she wishes her readers to be aware that women are routinely victimized by circumstances over which they have no control and should be shown compassion. ("Springing" 316)

Fielding clearly manifests an interest in and approval of exemplary women, and yet asks for sympathy for those who are unable to behave in a so-called conventional manner by arguing that "convention" is not equally applied across gender lines. She presents the Countess of Dellwyn as a far more complex character than the Bilson women, because, although the Countess is unarguably flawed by vanity, her flaws are not those of a vicious person, even though she lacks Mrs. Bilson's sound religious principles.

Once again, while acknowledging the Countess's very real character flaws, the narrator mediates Lady Dellwyn's guilt: the Countess's faults arise because "true, sound, and religious Principles her Father had never instilled into her youthful Mind. It was indeed a Task impossible for him to execute, as he had never thought of them himself" (II, 279). The Countess's incomplete idea of virtue can be traced directly back to her faulty upbringing. Subsequent missteps can also be traced to the lack of a firm guide in her life.

Like Sir Harry Cleveland, Miss Lucum succumbs to society's allures, but no one rescues her by providing her with an incentive to desist that she understands or can follow. When Sir Harry falls in love with Miss Bilson, her parents require him to reform and return to his original, less worldly nature and spend a long time away from Miss Bilson to test his resolve. Miss Bilson accepts her parents' judgment because, like her mother, she was raised with sound religious principles, and, thus, the Bilsons prevent their daughter from making an unfortunate marriage. The Countess had neither parents interested in her welfare nor anyone to provide her with a reason to reform later in life. While Sir Harry is encouraged

to regain his sense, the Countess is deliberately encouraged to behave against her best interests by the men in her life, her father, her future husband, and her lover. Their ends are gratified while her interests are left unprotected. Gender inequalities clearly permit both Mr. Bilson and Sir Harry to reform in ways not available to the Countess, because she is expected to be exemplary like Miss Bilson and Mrs. Bilson, whether or not she was provided with an adequate family background or support.

In the preface to The Countess of Dellwyn, Fielding tells the reader that fiction must teach and that virtue is the key to a happy life. She shows the reader how to analyze characters' actions in the passages she quotes in the preface and in the text of the novel itself. Although she constantly seeks to guide the reader, she does not offer an easy answer to the moral questions raised by the Countess's complicated character. With the evidence provided, both overt and subtle, the reader must decide how to reconcile the complexities of human action with the abstract moral principles of virtue and vice.

Limiting Overt Didacticism in *The History of Ophelia*

Fielding's last two works of fiction, The Countess of Dellwyn and The History of Ophelia, provide a vivid contrast to each other in terms of form and content, and yet both works demonstrate Fielding's interest in the didactic capacity of fiction and in interpreting nuances in moral behavior. Published only a year after The Countess of Dellwyn, Ophelia offers a distinctly different approach to didactic form, although not necessarily to moral content. Whereas The Countess of Dellwyn manifests more authorial intervention both in its preface and the novel itself, in Ophelia, Fielding limits overt didacticism in favor of an increased emphasis on entertainment. The two novels appear at first glance to be quite different on several other levels, too: one is epistolary, one is not; the point of view of one is first person, the other is third person; Ophelia speaks freely whereas the Countess dissembles, however unwillingly; the protagonist of one is virtuous and ultimately happy,

the other is seen as immoral and is clearly miserable throughout. Ophelia's simple virtue contrasts vividly with the complexity of the Countess of Dellwyn and her faults. Despite the differences in form and content, Fielding still asks the same kinds of questions as she did in The Countess of Dellwyn, such as what constitutes the best method of instructing the reader, who is fit to make moral judgments, and what defines moral worth in women and men.

Downs-Miers argues that "Ophelia is Fielding's attempt at a truly 'popular' novel, after all her overt experimentation" and that

Ophelia only appears to be a typical popular novel, in part because of the very conventions Fielding seems content to perpetuate; in reality, however, it is the same as all her works, an experiment in the art of fiction which allows her to assert her belief in the necessary equality for women in education and marriage. The effort to create a popular novel was in itself perhaps one of her most subversive acts.

("Springing" 318-19)

Downs-Miers is correct to argue that Ophelia is still an experimental novel for Fielding, ironically because of how much less overtly experimental it is than many of her previous works. The experimental angle that I want to focus on is Fielding's apparently diminished emphasis on instruction.

One of the most unusual aspects of Ophelia is its distinct lack of framing, such as can be found in the prefatory material to Fielding's other works. Instead of a preface similar to that of The Countess of Dellwyn, Ophelia boasts only an "Advertisement" that claims the novel was found in an old "buroe." Although the advertisement boasts that the reflections in the book are "as well calculated for instruction as for amusement," this preface seems quite whimsical in contrast to the serious discussion of reading and morality found in The Countess of Dellwyn, for example. In response to Fielding's conceit of having found the manuscript in a bureau, a critic for the Monthly Review argues that "for any

great instruction or amusement a Reader of taste and discernment will meet with in the perusal, the manuscript might as well have still remained in the buroe" (22 [1760]: 328). Another contemporary review disparages Fielding's experiment but for an entirely different reason. The critic credits Fielding with following in Charlotte Lennox's footsteps: "The author of this performance would seem to have the Female Quixote in view; but the character of Ophelia is supported with less humour" (Critical Review 9 [1760]: 318).

As Fielding's least overtly didactic novel, Ophelia appears to the reviewer as a weak sister to Lennox's novel, whereas, in fact, a more illuminating connection can be made between Ophelia and Richardson's Pamela in terms of both form and content.⁷ An admirer of Richardson's, Fielding would have been familiar with Pamela, even if she had not read it herself. What seems unusual is that Fielding chose to imitate, however loosely, Richardson's first novel in her own last work of fiction. Surely she would have been aware of the controversy surrounding the work and the misinterpretations of Richardson's intentions. Yet she chose not to follow Richardson's path of increasing the frameworks of her own novels with each successive novel. Rather, she deliberately blurs the distinction between fiction and nonfiction in her "Advertisement" to Ophelia and reduces the framing to a bare minimum. With her own keen interest in the developing the interpretative skills of her reader, the choice seems unusual unless one considers the work as an experiment in teaching the reader from within the text itself, rather than relying on an extensive framework to provide such instruction. To say that Fielding merely abandoned her interest in the didactic capacity of fiction in favor of "pure" entertainment in her last novel would be to consider only the outward appearance of the work, something Fielding would immediately challenge.

Despite the apparently light-hearted approach, Fielding still examines the issue of instruction within the novel itself. In her letters, Ophelia had been overtly moralizing but promises to stop her minute observances of her reactions to life in London, "for as it

afforded little beside Matter for Reflection on Customs to which I was a Stranger, I may be apt again to turn Moralizer" (II, 108). She knows that to entertain her reader, she should collect "Exoticks," recognizing the dangers of relying too heavily on her own words: indeed, she mocks

lively Remarks that would prove better Soporificks than all the Opium in Turkey; Dissertations moral, religious, and entertaining, from which, after much Yawning, you may learn, that it is right to do Right, and wrong to do Wrong, that Friendship is better than Enmity, and that it is wiser to please than offend. (II, 108)

Such overt moralizing and "great Truths I shall leave to be taught by Persons, who love sporting on an old Sentiment in thread-bare Words" (II, 108). Despite having previously censured novels and plays for their vitiating effect, here Ophelia articulates a novelist's defense of entertaining the reader with more than thread-bare words. Ophelia understands that thread-bare words, or overt didactic treatises, cannot alone convey instruction adequately because they do not engage the reader's attention. Therefore, she acknowledges that "I must depend on the Actions of others for making my Narration more agreeable to you" (II, 108). Ophelia does not reject the instructive nature of stories; rather, she recognizes the limits of telling people what to do or think versus amusing or entertaining them with episodes that perform a similar, though less directive, function. The least overtly didactic of all her works, Ophelia still affirms Fielding's insistence on the instructional element of fiction.

As the critic for the Monthly Review makes clear, there are dangers involved in a less overt approach; namely, that the work will not succeed as either entertainment or instruction. Fielding must have been acutely aware of this problem and, in this experimental novel, tries to answer the following question: If one cannot simply tell the reader the moral, or what is Right and Wrong, at the risk of boring him or her, then how can one teach the reader to make moral distinctions?

In The Countess of Dellwyn and her Remarks on Clarissa, Fielding answers the question of who is fit to make moral judgments by providing exemplary characters such as Miss Cummyns and Miss Gibson, who are themselves without discernable faults. Here, the most flawless character, Ophelia, narrates events. Orphaned by her parents while young, Ophelia is raised by her aunt, who after an unintentionally bigamous marriage, flees from her so-called husband and removes to the remoteness of Wales, where she and Ophelia live alone until Ophelia becomes a young woman. Ophelia is raised with no knowledge of evil, as typified in the aunt's mind by the "Manners and Customs of a People with whom she hoped I should never have any Intercourse" (I, 12), that is, the elite population of high society. With fewer opportunities in a first-person narrative for authorial intervention, Fielding must establish Ophelia's moral worthiness so that even the casual reader cannot mistake her didactic function. Pamela-like, Ophelia must sing her own praises and then defend her actions: "If I have in some Places repeated Compliments, which lay me under the Imputation of Vanity, I hope you will consider it as the unavoidable Consequence of telling one's own Story with the Sincerity you required" (II, 285). Her sincerity, or truthfulness, even in the unladylike manner of self-praise, grants her a measure of moral authority. To confirm her right to act as a moral instructor, Ophelia repeats conventional wisdom, as when she argues that novels and plays "vitiates the Taste: I allow many of them to be extremely diverting, some very fine; but by the Multiplicity of events, mixed with a good deal of the Marvellous; they learn the Mind a Dissipation even in Reading" (I, 159). Although she elsewhere recognizes that such "dissertations" are likely to leave the reader yawning, she occasionally indulges in such overt lessons, if only to remind the reader that she can teach in the traditional way but usually chooses a mode more likely to entertain.

Fielding continues to juxtapose Ophelia's obvious innocence with both her inherent and acquired wisdom throughout the novel. Unlike Pamela or Clarissa, who "write to the moment," Ophelia composes her letters from her position as Lord Dorchester's wife, which

the reader learns only at the novel's end. During the course of events, Ophelia is innocent of his evil intentions but learns of them later, so that in writing, she can mention them to the reader and fulfill her function as a moral guide. Ophelia's narration of events in the past allows for the suspense of the novel, at once created and sustained by the reader's knowledge that men do not abduct women merely for platonic pleasures and by the narrator's own hints of Dorchester's evil intentions. Ophelia writes that "I could not suspect him [Lord Dorchester] of any ill Design against my Innocence; of all such Views I was totally ignorant, I knew not what they meant" (I, 78). But as a narrator of events that occurred in the past, she also comments from a position of wisdom: "Since I learnt how his Mind was corrupted by the Depravity of Custom, I have often wondered at his Command over himself" (I, 79). The disparity between appearance and reality must be augmented by Ophelia's later knowledge in order for the reader to gain the full impact of her naivete. Without the wisdom acquired in viewing the events retrospectively, however, Ophelia's very strength, her innocence, would render her less useful as an instructor.

When Ophelia indulges in self-praise in order to show her commitment to truth and sincerity and, thus, her moral superiority, Fielding appears to be reiterating a claim made by countless other narrators in the early novel, only one example of which is Pamela. But Fielding strives to do more than repeat a cliché. In Ophelia, as in The Countess of Dellwyn, she is interested in teaching the reader how to distinguish moral nuances. Fielding challenges assessments of female moral worth made by a censorious but corrupt society that values appearance over substance, and she insists that literal truth should constitute an important, if not absolute, sign of moral worth. As someone raised with no knowledge of society's warped priorities, Ophelia's virtuous ignorance allows Fielding to reveal the costs for women of speaking and acting as freely in society as men do and to argue for a moral code that is not based on double standards.

As in The Countess of Dellwyn, Fielding once again tries to teach her audience how

to read by comparing the actions of her protagonist to those around her, specifically Lord Dorchester and society in general. Throughout the novel, Fielding contrasts Ophelia's essential virtue, which is her love of truth, with society's love of dissembling. Ophelia makes mistakes by being truthful, as at the ball, where like her successor Evelina, she refuses one gentleman, then accepts another (II, 137-38). Then, she becomes enamored with gaming but loses all her money. Initially refusing to divulge her errors because of her embarrassment, when it threatens her tranquillity by causing Dorchester to be jealous, she readily admits the truth (II, 125).

While providing an entertaining focus for her novel, Ophelia's love for Dorchester and her chastity provide Fielding with the opportunity to criticize the larger issue of society's lack of moral probity and equity. Ophelia never hides her feelings and admits early on to herself that she loves Lord Dorchester. She sees no reason to dissemble when they are reunited after an absence:

We both complained of having been so long separated, and the Joy we shewed in each other's Company, proved that neither had exaggerated in the Description of what each had suffered for want of it. Conscious of no Motive that required Concealment, and ignorant of the Customs of the World; I saw no Reason for expatiating less upon my Uneasiness on that Subject than on any other. (I, 139)

Dorchester, the reader knows, conceals his motivations, if not his actions. With no knowledge of evil, however, Ophelia acts purely, both literally and figuratively.

Fielding contrasts the purity of Ophelia's intentions with the ludicrous expectations and commandments of custom. Ophelia's next remarks convey how out of alignment and proportion is society's concept of truth:

I knew not that the World would have allowed me to have grieved for the Loss of a Parrot, to have been wretched at missing a Masquerade, miserable at being deprived of the Sight of a new Opera, or distressed to the last Degree at being disappointed

of the principal Part of the Company at an approaching Drum; but would never have forgiven me for declaring my Regret for the Loss of the most agreeable Companion that Society could afford me, if that Companion happened not to be of my own Sex. (I, 139)

Artificial laws controlling the relationships between men and women distort the relationship between moral and literal truth:

I, by no means apprehended that to declare I was pleased with the Conversation, and touched with the Affection of one tenderly attached to me, was an Offense to Decency, if the Person did not wear the same sort of Dress as myself. What my Heart innocently felt, I thought my Tongue might unreproachably utter. (I, 139-40)

Ophelia's moral purity allows her to profess literal truths, in this case her feelings for Dorchester. For her, literal and moral truths are synonymous. Fielding contrasts her innocence with society's artificial constraints, very much to the detriment of those constraints.

Fielding may be dissatisfied with the way things are in society, but she recognizes the prevalence and power of custom. When confronted with the revelation that society views her relationship with Lord Dorchester as criminal, Ophelia immediately bows to society's pressures to conform. Lord Larborough informs her that although she is technically innocent in her relationship with Lord Dorchester, society does not view her as such:

"Every Thing," he continued, "has hitherto been so well ordered, that no one suspects you are not a Woman of real Fortune, otherwise Innocence could not have preserved you from Infamy; for all People would, on the Knowledge of your being thus maintained at his Expence, judge you guilty of the worst Returns. A Fate you must expect, whenever Chance shall disclose the Secret, which sooner or later will happen." (II, 162-63)

Once Ophelia understands the way in which society views her relationship with Dorchester, she knows she must leave him: "I perceived that though I should keep my Innocence, I must lose the Reputation of it, which, next to it, ought to be a Woman's first Care" (II, 166). Ophelia's decision to leave Dorchester indicates more than just a superficial care for her reputation, however; it also signals her unwillingness to act in a deceitful manner, even if society sanctions the deception. Fielding recognizes that reputation must be maintained, not because she agrees that appearances are more important than reality, but because she knows that a woman's consciousness of her own virtue will not translate into a wider acknowledgement of that virtue by society. Unless society as a whole learns to read and judge people based on more than outward appearances, its ability to recognize chastity, virtue, and innocence will remain corrupted.

Very much a believer in abstract moral principles, such as Virtue and Vice and Right and Wrong, Fielding also understands that people need to be taught how to apply those broad categories to specific human actions and behavior. Convinced that it is any author's moral imperative to teach the reader how to distinguish moral nuances, Fielding relies on both telling the reader about the general moral principles under discussion and then showing him or her how to interpret events and characters. Even in her least overtly didactic works, Fielding requires the reader to be actively involved in the interpretative process, particularly in comparing examples offered by the author to determine relative moral worth. Because this approach is less dogmatic than others, it relies on an increased willingness on the author's part to sacrifice some measure of control over her text. The rewards are, however, that the reader learns a process, which then can be applied to multiple situations, rather than memorizes a collection of moral sentiments.

Notes to Chapter Two

¹ Martin C. Battestin and Clive T. Probyn xxxi.

² The "Letters" Richardson refers to Sarah Fielding's Familiar Letters Between the Principal Characters in David Simple (1747).

³ Battestin and Probyn xxxi.

⁴ Battestin and Probyn's use of the minimum of editorial emendations on Fielding's correspondence reveals precisely how "careless" she could be about punctuation and capitalization. Fielding's extremely irregular use of accidentals makes reading her letters quite difficult at times. Her request for Richardson's help is, therefore, made from a genuine need rather than some sort of artificial deference to someone that Fielding admired.

⁵ For a discussion of Richardson's influence on The Governess, see Jill E. Grey 39-41.

⁶ For a sampling of feminist criticism on Fielding, see Deborah Downs-Miers, "Springing" 308 and Carolyn Woodward, "Sarah Fielding and Narrative Power for Women."

⁷ There is no reference to Pamela in Fielding's extant correspondence; however, it is likely that she either read the novel or was familiar with it, given her profound interest in Richardson. The similarities between the two works appear somewhat random, without a design to stress any particular relationship between the two works, but there are enough of them to ensure that the reader recalls Richardson's novel. As with Pamela, Ophelia is epistolary, although from only one person's point of view; Ophelia is innocent while her seducer is not; she is not of noble class but is abducted by someone of a higher class; he is a rake but is reformable; there is a Swiss servant whose ugliness renders his master's beauty all the more distinct; Dorchester holds marriage in contempt like Mr. B; Ophelia calls Dorchester "my lord" throughout much like Pamela calls Mr. B "my master"; and she

distributes Dorchester's alms, although she does so before their marriage whereas Pamela must wait until after her marriage. Ophelia's virtue, like Pamela's, ultimately disarms all attempts at seduction.

There is also a scene very much like ones with Mrs. Jewkes when Ophelia is accidentally abducted from Dorchester (I, chapters 14-15). Besides being physically reminiscent of Mrs. Jewkes, the unnamed landlady similarly indulges in sexually suggestive remarks about the relationship between the young woman and her pursuer and is prepared to aid in the woman's seduction.

Chapter 3

Poetic Justice and God's Providence in Frances Sheridan's Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph

While Sarah Fielding and Richardson address the importance of making morally fine distinctions or interpreting moral nuances in their fiction, Frances Sheridan views the moral universe through a macroscopic rather than microscopic lens. Like Fielding and Richardson, Sheridan offers a preface and framework for interpreting her heroine's actions, and both Richardson and Sheridan emphasize the relationship between the novel and "real life." Despite these similarities, however, Sheridan's views on poetic justice and God's providence necessarily limit her belief in the didactic capacity of the novel. What the novel can teach, according to Sheridan, is the context behind the story. In the case of Sidney Bidulph, the preface instructs the reader first about the author's views on poetic justice, in which realism, no matter how uncomfortable, drives the action of the novel. If one compares Sheridan's novels, Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph (1761) and Conclusion to the Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph (1767) with her moral tale The History of Nourjahad (1767), one can see how Sheridan's commitment to realism in the novel diminishes its ability to provide instruction for the reader. Second, the preface establishes the Christian framework behind Sidney's actions. Sidney may be an exemplary character, but her ability to influence the lives of others is defined specifically in relation to God's. According to Sheridan, temporal activities are always restricted by eternal forces.

Links to Richardson

The extant correspondence between Richardson and Sheridan resembles that of Richardson and Fielding in its general chattiness, as they discuss mutual friends and exchange compliments. Like Fielding, Sheridan admires Richardson's superior qualities as both an author and individual, and she praises him in print in Sidney Bidulph: "The Editor

of the following sheets takes this opportunity of paying the tribute due to exemplary Goodness and distinguished Genius, when found united in One Person, by inscribing these Memoirs to The Author of CLARISSA and SIR CHARLES GRANDISON." Like many others of her time, she too preferred to ignore Richardson's connection with his first novel and instead focused on his latter two!

Although Sheridan paid Richardson the compliment of naming one of her children after his daughter Anne Elizabeth,¹ he does not explicitly refer to Sheridan as one of his honorary daughters. Richardson did encourage Sheridan to write and publish, however, even if he did not print her works himself as he did, for example, some of Fielding's or Charlotte Lennox's. Convinced of his literary excellence, Sheridan does not hesitate to value his opinion over her own. In a brief and rare discussion of her own writing, she responds to Richardson's clearly favorable reading of her first attempt at a novel, Eugenia and Adelaide. She feels a bit unsure of her effort, but she allows that

vanity under the shew of modesty, is, of all the lights it can appear in, the most contemptible. How ridiculous then would it be in me to say, I don't think the novel worth printing, after it has had your approbation?...But I will not presume to make objections, and since you think it ought not to lie by as mere waste paper, I shall gladly commit it to your hand to be disposed of as you think proper. (Barbauld IV, 143-44)

Unfortunately, in the extant correspondence with Richardson, there are no further discussions either of her own fiction or that of anyone else.²

Sheridan's existing correspondence with Richardson ends in 1758, and he died in the same year that Sidney Bidulph was published, so it is unclear what he would have thought of her novel.³ Contemporary reviewers, however, eagerly pointed to similarities between their work, and Sheridan's novel was praised for its perceived affinity to Richardson's novels. One reviewer writes that

If a copy drawn with the most exquisite skill, and heightened with the nicest touches of art, can be allowed merit equal to a justly admired original, the Memoirs of Miss Bidulph may deservedly claim a place in our esteem with the histories of Clarissa and Sir Charles Grandison. They are characterised by the same elegant fluency of narrative, the same interesting minuteness, inimitable simplicity, delicacy of sentiment, propriety of conduct, and irresistible pathos, which render them indisputably the best models in this species of writing, perhaps the most engaging, persuasive, and difficult of any other....It is sufficient proof of the difficulty of this [epistolary] method of writing, that the ingenious inventive lady, to whom the Memoirs of Miss Bidulph are attributed, hath not been able to avoid imitation.

(Critical Review 11 [1761]: 186-87)

One wonders how the reviewer thinks Sheridan manages the "inimitable simplicity" in her imitation of Richardson, but he clearly sees the parallels between their works in a positive light.

Another reviewer also compares Sheridan's works to Richardson's works, praising their ability to entertain and instruct simultaneously:

nothing can be more certain, than that a nation absorbed in luxury will pay very little regard to sermons, or professed treatises of morality, and that the most probable means for a moral writer to catch the attention of those who are in most want of his instruction, is to mix up the medicine with some pleasant vehicle, so that the patient may imbibe the salutary parts without disgust, and enjoy their effect without perceiving their operation. (Monthly Review 24 [1761]: 260)

While this reviewer grants that "Mr. Richardson's works, in particular, constitute the best and most applicable system of morality, for young people that ever appeared in any language," he has some doubt about the effectiveness of the moral tendency of Sheridan's novel:

in the Romance now before us, the Author seems to have had no other design than to draw tears from the reader by distressing innocence and virtue, as much as possible. Now, tho' we are not ignorant that this may be a true picture of human life, in some instances, yet, we are of opinion, that such representations are by no means calculated to encourage and promote Virtue. (Monthly Review 24 [1761]: 260)

As is typical in reviews of women's fiction, the critic assumes that, like Richardson, Sheridan writes in order to promote virtue.

Richardson seems to share this critic's sentiments on the subject of Sheridan's tendency to paint scenes of distressed virtue. One particular exchange between Sheridan and Richardson highlights their different interpretations of a single event. While the subject of the letter is personal, the exchange reveals a glimpse of issues that will concern Sheridan in her published works, specifically, the influence of external forces on individual human actions. On February 8, 1757, Sheridan writes to Richardson about the "melancholy scene" of her friends, Archibald Fraser and his wife. A military officer, Fraser is commanded to go to America. While Sheridan rejoices over "our Mr. F. having the notice taken of him which his merit deserves" (Barbauld IV, 153), she dwells on the pain caused by this news to both himself and his wife. She details their responses as follows:

As the order was sudden, he had a severe struggle with himself before he could disclose it to his wife. She has sense and fortitude, but neither were sufficient to support her under the terrible prospect of so near a separation from him. She received the news with agonies, which were succeeded by fainting fits, that had like to have been fatal; there was nothing but tears for several days, in which all her female friends bore her company. Her husband, who adores her, durst scarce venture into the room to her. She is a fine young creature, of the sweetest disposition in the world, and is every way as amiable. She has no near connections

here (except an infant on the breast), having not long since lost a very tender mother. I am sure, Sir, you will allow me to call this a melancholy scene; I love the people, and feel for them both. (Barbauld IV, 152)

Very much the nascent sentimental novelist, Sheridan dwells on the pathetic aspects of the scene: the delicacy of Mrs. Fraser's constitution, which makes the reception of the bad news almost fatal to her; the Madonna-like image of her with her nursing baby; and her recent bereavement of her own "tender" mother.

Sheridan minutely details the scene, even while knowing the outcome is not quite so tragic as it would appear. Rather than having a separation from her husband added to the list of her woes, Mrs. Fraser will accompany him. Sheridan continues:

But my mind is now more at ease, for I find he resolves to take her with him; we shall lose a couple of dear friends, perhaps, for ever; but the man goes on a glorious errand, and the wife would not think herself unhappy with him in the regions of darkness. (Barbauld IV, 152-53)

She feels certain that Richardson will value this scene, however melancholy, given his appreciation of the heart and human emotions. Sheridan does not look forward to losing her friends, but she admits that "the man" will gain from the experience and that "the wife" cannot be unhappy as long as she is with him. In this scene, Sheridan deliberately focuses on the fact that Mrs. Fraser's fate is to be determined by someone else and that she occupies a position of relative powerlessness to control her own destiny. Mrs. Fraser is definitely relegated to a subordinate role in Sheridan's choice of language: she is not designated "the woman" in comparison to his "the man" nor is she necessarily going to be happy on her own account. While the details of the scene are explicitly feminine, thus suggesting that Sheridan is making a comment about the powerlessness of women particular, I think her design is more general. Like Mrs. Fraser, Mr. Fraser, too, is not entirely in control of his own actions. He may have chosen his career, but once in it, his

fate is determined by those who command him. Her point here, it seems, is to emphasize the uncertainties of human existence and to voice her sense that one cannot always control one's own destiny.

Richardson responds to her letter by correcting her reading of the situation. He suggests that Mrs. Fraser is neither powerless nor to be pitied and writes that he read with delight the character of your worthy pair of military friends; why should she not be classed under that word as well as her husband? Did she not know, when she made a soldier her choice, that she was liable to such sudden calls, and that his country had a title to his services, and even to his love, superior to her own? Yet there are situations that will allow of our pity. I did pity them as I read, and was glad the tender heart was to accompany the gentleman she so dearly loves....But these fine girls must run a madding after soldiers, preferably to any other class of men. And these soldierly folks have not pity enough for fine girls, to discourage the too-often romantic preferences; tho' the consequences, as we see, are so very bewailable. Excellent as this worthy couple are, I verily believe, I should not pity them, yet am of a pitiful nature, were they not your beloved friends: for are they not in their full duty? And tho' they may have been surprized at the sudden call, ought such a call, or one equally disagreeable, to have been unexpected by a military gentleman, or his lady either? (Barbauld IV, 157-58)

Despite his agreeing to pity them for Sheridan's sake, his response seems crushingly anti-sentimental and unsympathetic. In his view, the situation is not "bewailable," because the woman should have known what privations were entailed in military life. Indeed, by marriage she is as much subject to the rules of military life as her husband, according to Richardson. He clearly invests both the husband and wife with the will and ability to act and does not acknowledge that there might be circumstances beyond the control of either of them. Sheridan refuses to take up the issue in her next letter, other than to state that

Colonel Fraser has left town and that she wishes him luck. Unlike Lady Bradshaigh, who would have certainly argued with Richardson about his interpretation, Sheridan remains silent, perhaps still in awe of such a renowned figure or simply out of respect.

The Didactic Capacity of Fiction

There are no overt signs of disagreement with Richardson in Sidney Bidulph or its Conclusion either, but there are significant differences that once again suggest a variance in views between Richardson and Sheridan. In Sidney Bidulph, Sheridan pays tribute to Richardson not only in her dedication but also in the form and content of her work. In addition to the similarities mentioned by Sheridan's contemporary reviewers, there are a number of other parallels between her novel and Richardson's in terms of specific characters and situations, far more so than in either Fielding's or Lennox's works.⁴ Despite the obvious textual similarities between her work and Richardson's, these points of concurrence only serve to highlight the differences between them, especially in terms of their views on the didactic function of the novel itself and the efficacy of moral exemplars. Sheridan allows that a preface or introduction may instruct the reader on how to read a specific character and that a character may exemplify a certain kind of moral behavior. Beyond that, however, she emphasizes the limitations of the novel form and its exemplars precisely because the novel derives from real life, and she argues that in real life, the fate of the individual depends not upon his or her own temporal actions but on God's eternal plans.

Like Richardson and Fielding, Sheridan uses a frame to emphasize the didactic purpose of her novel. She prefaces her novel with "The Editor's Introduction" and a short overview of Sidney's family, both of which are narrated by the fictional recipient of Sidney's letters, Cecilia, or her acquaintances. Sheridan's frame is more closely incorporated into the fictionality of her work than Richardson's, but her purpose is still equally directive; in

fact, Margaret Anne Doody considers Sheridan's editor "a more obtrusive character than Richardson's" ("Frances Sheridan" 326).

"The Editor's Introduction" emphasizes repeatedly and the reader is overtly instructed as to the Christian intention and the eternal context behind Sidney's story. In the introduction, Cecilia reflects on her friend's life, saying "this lady...to all human appearance, ought at last to have been rewarded even here--but her portion was affliction. What then are we to conclude, but that God does not estimate things as we do? It is ignorant, as well as sinful, to arraign his providence" (7). If the reader sees Sidney as unnecessarily passive or submissive, he or she needs to remember that her behavior: "should serve to confirm that great lesson which we are all taught indeed, but which we seldom think of reducing to practice, viz. to use the good things of this life with that indifference, which things that are neither permanent in their own nature, nor of any estimation in the sight of God deserve" (6). The introduction makes it clear that Sidney is exemplary in specifically Christian terms.

While the framework echoes that found in Richardson's novels, the introduction also touches on similarities in moral content. Without mentioning Clarissa specifically, the editor reminds the reader that Sidney Bidulph is most like Clarissa in that her virtuous behavior shall be rewarded in heaven, despite her exemplary behavior on earth. Speaking generally, Cecilia asks her audience

to consider the evils which befall us, as equally temporary, and no more dispensed by the great ruler of all things for punishments, than the others are for rewards; and by thus estimating both, to look forward for an equal distribution of justice, to that place only, where (let our station be what it will) our lot is to be unchangeable. It is in this light that I was instructed in my early days to consider the various portions that fall to the share of mankind; which very often, as far as we can see, appear extremely partial; and no doubt would really be so, were there not an invisible

world where the distributions are just and equal. (6-7)

While there are obvious similarities to Clarissa in the insistence on the rewards waiting for the virtuous in heaven, Sheridan does more than merely retell the story of Clarissa. Instead, she emphasizes the contrast between the temporal and eternal worlds as a concept central to her understanding of the form of the novel. Even as Sheridan explains the context by which to evaluate Sidney's specific actions and fate, she acknowledges the didactic limitations of novels in general and, thus, her own as well. Besides offering the reader a key to understanding Sidney's character, the introduction highlights the relationship between God's providence and poetic justice: "We daily see its dispensations [God's providence] with our own eyes, in the various accidents of life. Why should we not then allow the poet to copy from life, and exhibit to our view events, the probability of which are founded on general experience?" (7). She continues,

We are indeed so much used to what they call poetical justice, that we are disappointed in the catastrophe of a fable, if every body concerned in it be not disposed of according to the sentence of that judge which we have set up in our own breasts.

The contrary we know happens in real life; let us not then condemn what is drawn from real life.--We may wish to see nature copied from her more pleasing works; but a martyr expiring in tortures is as just, though not as agreeable, a representation of her, as a hero rewarded with the brightest honours. (7)

Although Sheridan uses the terms fable and poetic justice, which are more general literary terms, her emphasis on "real life" suggests that she refers to novels specifically. According to Sheridan, if novels derive from real life, then they must necessarily mirror the uncertainties of temporal existence in a divinely ordered universe, which necessarily limits their didactic function.

Jean Coates Cleary acknowledges that "Sheridan's novel constituted a stimulating

element in the debate over 'poetic justice' which raged with particular energy in England during the third quarter of the eighteenth century," but she only briefly enlarges upon this, saying that in "the fictitious editor's Introduction to Sidney Bidulph, Sheridan nods to her mentor [Richardson] when the same position is taken by the aged Cecilia Rivers" (xii). To explore more fully Sheridan's conception of poetic justice and the way in which it effects the didactic capacity of the novel, it is necessary to contrast her two novels, Sidney Bidulph and its Conclusion, with her moral tale, Nourjahad, specifically in the presentation of time, the extent of human influence, and closure. In comparison to the explicit moral fable, the didactic capacity of the novel is quite limited.

Sheridan intended Nourjahad, published the same year as her Conclusion, to be the first of five moral tales,⁵ but she died before completing any others. Set in the Persian court, the tale details the history of Nourjahad, a favorite of the sultan Schemzeddin, and the way in which he learns wisdom. The sultan tests Nourjahad's worthiness initially by asking him to name what he desires most, and Nourjahad responds "I should desire to be possessed of inexhaustible riches, and to enable me to enjoy them to the utmost, to have my life prolonged to eternity" (8). Pressing him further, Schemzeddin asks if he would "forego thy hopes of paradise" to which Nourjahad says, "I would...make a paradise of this earthly globe whilst it lasted, and take my chance for the other afterwards" (8). Although the tale refers to Allah and an eternal world outside of the temporal one, Schemzeddin acts as Allah's right hand on earth. He arranges for Nourjahad's wishes to come true, and so it appears to Nourjahad and the reader for a time that he has unlimited wealth and eternal life. After Nourjahad has learned his lesson by actually experiencing what eternal life and unlimited wealth might mean, he becomes a reformed character, eschewing worldly pleasures for charitable acts that will recommend him to his Creator.

Although there are many obvious differences between Sheridan's novels and this tale in terms of setting and character, one of the most striking is that the sultan manages to

create such a splendid illusion, especially in terms of manipulating the appearance of time passing. Unlike Nourjahad, in which the sultan is able to exert his power over events and make it appear that time itself has changed, in Sidney Bidulph time cannot be altered and actions cannot be manipulated permanently. In comparing Nourjahad to Sidney Bidulph, Doody writes that the "true difficulty of doing right can be known only over a lifetime, just as the true difficulty of achieving pleasure can be proved to Nourjahad only after what seems a span of two generations' time. Nourjahad can have a second chance; Sidney cannot" ("Frances Sheridan" 354). Whereas the passage of time in Nourjahad is only perceived rather than real and thus can be "reversed," time or even the perception of time cannot be altered in a realistic novel. In the tale, a powerful temporal figure can control both time and events to ensure the resolution of a given problem.

Schemzeddin disavows the interference of anything "supernatural in the several events of your life" and informs Nourjahad "that you were in reality nothing more than the dupe of your own folly and avarice" (234), but throughout the tale, he not only acts as the interpreter of God's will but also assumes an omnipotent role in rearranging events and circumstances to facilitate Nourjahad's lessons. When he reveals his manipulations to Nourjahad at the end of the tale, he appears very much as the magician behind the illusion.

Both parts of Sidney Bidulph and Nourjahad place the temporal world within the greater context of an eternal one. In the tale, however, the magician can produce results, whereas those appearing as magicians in the novel, Mr. Warner and Faulkland ultimately prove to be mere mortals. The fantastic, if not supernatural, events of Nourjahad allow for the possibility of one person affecting another person's life in a such pervasive manner, but in her more realistic novels, Sheridan acknowledges that such changes are much harder, if not impossible to achieve. Despite their best intentions, neither men nor women can effect pervasive and lasting change over the lives of others, partly because, unlike Schemzeddin, they cannot shape people, places, or time to their own ends.

In Sidney Bidulph, both Mr. Warner and Faulkland appear on important occasions to be capable of producing magical results, much like Schemzeddin does. Sheridan deliberately employs the language of magic and romance in order to contrast what is real from what is contrived. A long-lost relative, Mr. Warner turns up as an apparently heavenly sent rescuer when, after Mr. Arnold's death, he finds Sidney living in poverty with her daughters and maid Patty Main. Mr. Warner appears before her as a beggar to test her charity, and Sidney offers to share her few remaining coins with him. He then reveals that he is actually extremely wealthy and will reward her for her intended sacrifice. Sidney responds joyously to his assurances that he will endow her with any and all worldly necessities: "How miraculous is all this, my dear! this messenger of good tidings, is he not sent to me by providence?" (367). Sidney writes, "I begin to doubt, my Cecilia, whether I am really awake or not! 'Tis all enchantment! I am afraid my old kinsman is a wizard....I beg my cousin's pardon for suspecting him of sorcery; I believe he deals in no charms, but that all-powerful one--money" (370). Although tempted to view him as a magician, the realist Sidney recognizes that his power derives from money, not supernatural powers.

Neither Mr. Warner's good intentions nor his riches prevent Sidney from experiencing further woes, however; in fact, they contribute to her future problems as the novel's end makes clear:

Gracious Heaven! how inscrutable are thy ways! Her affluent fortune, the very circumstance which seemed to promise her, in the eve of life, some compensation for the miseries she had endured in her early days, now proved the source of new and dreadful calamities to her, which, by involving the unhappy daughters of an unhappy mother in scenes of the most exquisite distress, cut off from her even the last resource of hope in this life, and rendered the close of her history still more..... [Sheridan's ellipses] (467)

Far from being a fairy-tale wizard, Mr. Warner cannot ensure that Sidney lives happily ever

after.

Sheridan portrays Faulkland's efforts to aid Sidney in an even more explicitly nonrealistic manner than those of Mr. Warner. When Faulkland kidnaps Mrs. Gerrarde, he chooses what seems the best method he can think of to end Mr. Arnold's adulterous connection with her. Faulkland masterminds not only her abduction but tricks her into writing a letter ending her relationship with Mr. Arnold and marrying his valet Pivet. He writes to his friend about the success of his efforts:

Congratulate me, Sir George, honour me, as the first of politicians, the greatest of negotiators! Let no hero of romance compare himself to me, for first making difficulties, and then extricating myself out of them; let no giant pretend to equal me in the management of captive beauties in enchanted castles; let no necromancer presume to vie with me in skill for metamorphosing tigresses into doves, and changing imperious princesses into plain country nymphs! All this have I brought to pass, without the assistance of enchanted sword or dwarf, in the compass of a few days.... (214-15).

Faulkland compares his exploits to those of romance heroes in a somewhat self-mocking manner, yet the underlying point of his story is that he has successfully altered events and lives to suit his own needs, which is to return Mr. Arnold to Sidney and, thus, ensure her happiness. Faulkland's achievement is supposedly all the greater, because he has no magic sword or enchanted castles but has been meddling in real human lives, which are presumably far less easy to arrange than fictional ones.

For fear that the reader might believe that Faulkland has achieved a magical victory, despite his disavowal of enchanted means, Sheridan recontextualizes his achievement in more explicitly Christian terms. When Lady Bidulph learns of Faulkland's actions and his part in Mrs. Gerrarde's letter of dismissal to Mr. Arnold, she exclaims to Sidney "yes, my dear, my innocent child...you were wronged; God knows you were wronged;

and He now proclaims your innocence even from the mouth of your most inveterate enemy" (233). Faulkland, not God, dictates the letter sent by Mrs. Gerrarde, however. Faulkland does not commit the blasphemy of proclaiming himself God-like, but he and others clearly view his actions in this providential light.

As a human, Faulkland can be neither play God nor wizard ultimately. He succeeds in his goal of severing ties between Mrs. Gerrarde and Mr. Arnold, but his efforts do not ultimately prevent Sidney from experiencing further tragedies. Patricia Meyer Spacks argues that Faulkland is able "in the freedom of a masculine imagination, to conceive and--more important--to effect desired outcomes, he feels himself master of the power of plot" (*Desire* 139). Despite his ability to effect Mrs. Gerrarde's immediate removal, Faulkland does not achieve his larger goal of permanently ensuring Sidney's happiness. He cannot, after all, keep Sidney and her husband together for all time. After their reconciliation, Mr. Arnold dies from a hunting accident, and, due to Sidney's distress, Patty Main takes over the narration of the events leading up to his fall. Before she gives the details to Cecilia, she tells of the love between the Arnolds and adds, "I have always prayed for her prosperity; but, madam, God is pleased to order things otherwise than we poor silly mortals think the best" (283). This pious observation, which immediately precedes the account of Mr. Arnold's fall, serves to remind the reader of the eternal forces at work in one's life and to contrast Faulkland's very labored efforts on Sidney's behalf to what essentially seems like God casually flicking Mr. Arnold from his horse. The implications are clear: despite man's or woman's best intentions, there are other more powerful forces at work that can serve to negate each and every human action.

Both Mr. Warner and Faulkland believe that they have solved Sidney's problems permanently, but such closure is not possible in a portrayal of events derived from real life. In *Nourjahad*, Schemzeddin can effect Nourjahad's reformation and summarize, for him and the reader, what has been taught and learned:

Let this dream of existence then be a lesson to thee for the future, never to suppose that riches can ensure happiness; that the gratification of our passions can satisfy the human heart; or that the immortal part of our nature, will suffer us to taste unmixed felicity, in a world which was never meant for our final place of abode.

(240)

Schemzeddin signals the resolution of conflict with Nourjahad in both his actions and his words: definitive closure is achieved.

In contrast, Sheridan resists such resolution in the endings of Sidney Bidulph and its Conclusion. Mirroring real life as it does, the novel simply cannot achieve the same sense of closure found in the moral tale. Sidney Bidulph closes with a series of ellipses, and Sheridan finishes the Conclusion in a similarly open-ended manner. Mrs. Askham, the former Patty Main, "concludes her history with many serious reflections, which though extremely pious and rational, the editor chuses to omit, thinking it a compliment due to the judgment of his readers to leave them to make reflections for themselves" (V, 327). The lack of direction and closure at the novels' ends not only contrasts sharply with the ending of Nourjahad but also with the guidance provided in "The Editor's Introduction" to Sidney Bidulph.

The difference in directiveness and resolution illuminates Sheridan's sense of the limited function of didacticism in the novel. The introduction instructs the reader about the context against which Sidney's character should be read. Having provided that much, however, the novelist must then allow for and represent the vagaries of human existence. Sheridan could have ended both novels with moral lessons and definite resolution as she does in Nourjahad, but she deliberately avoids doing so for the reasons given in the introduction to Sidney Bidulph: Poetic justice may make the reader happy, but it does not necessarily mirror real life. Because "real life" reflects the ambiguities of operating in a temporal world without knowing or understanding the full extent of God's providence,

novels must necessarily reflect that uncertainty instead of creating an artificial sense of closure and completion, according to Sheridan.

God's Providence and Predestination

In discussing the relationship between Sidney Bidulph and Sheridan's play The Discovery (1763), Spacks argues that "novel and play alike allow but never confirm unsettling possibilities. They raise questions about female orthodoxies; they do not provide answers....Meaning remains the province of the reader" ("Oscillations" 510). The lack of closure in the novels, too, permits the illusion that the reader can determine the meaning, but given Sheridan's interest in providence and her insistence on its relevance to Sidney's story, it becomes clear that meaning remains the province of the reader only in so far as any human can interpret God's intentions. The reader, as well as the heroine and even the author, is left wondering why God behaves as he does and what purpose he hopes to achieve.

Contemporary reviewers refused to see any deeper purpose to Sheridan's work beyond her imitating Richardson or other novelists whose young heroines entered the world stage only to make mistakes based on their charming ignorance. The reviewers of Sidney Bidulph for the London Magazine remark that "whether the too popular doctrine of predestination seems here to be encouraged, it is not our business at present to enquire," and they conclude:

since, instead of thinking her ills were allotted to her, we can see that they arose from want of knowledge of the world, from a too easy credulity, from innocence that suspecteth not--and not from the allotment of heaven. May our fair readers, however, never want the example of a Sidney Bidulph to inspire and direct them!
(London Magazine 30 [1761]: 168)

The reviewers do not allow for Sheridan's possible interest in the idea of predestination,

because it seems more palatable for a woman writing fiction to be concerned with young girls' entrances into the world.

Twentieth-century critics credit Sheridan with more purpose in her writing, but they, too, are reluctant to allow for her interest in predestination and providence. Spacks writes that

in the harrowing narrative of women's experience that constitutes Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph, Sheridan afflicts her heroine with overwhelming hardship, devising multifarious forms of misery. Sidney herself considers Providence or fate the cause of her misfortunes. Her brother, Sir George, however, thinks her afflictions Sidney's own doing, and considerable textual evidence supports his view.

("Oscillations" 509).

Gerard A. Barker also believes that "Sheridan's professed moral, like Richardson's condemnation of poetic justice in the 'Postscript' to the third edition of Clarissa, was little more than a pretext or afterthought for justifying her heroine's interminable misfortunes" (67).

Janet Todd is less dismissive of Sheridan's moral and recognizes her emphasis on "the Christian scheme" with "an afterlife as compensation for the trials and miseries of this" (Sign 183). She believes, however, that "the shadow of the afterlife--without which such pain would be impossible to enjoy in art or endure in life according to Richardson--is far more discernible than in the fiction of high sensibility, but the sense of it is less able than in Clarissa to compensate for the generalised ills of this world" (Sign 165). Finally, Todd finds that "all these hints and hopes make cold comfort" (Sign 175). Spacks echoes this belief and argues that Sidney "has her virtue to keep her warm. She has little else" (Desire 136). As critics, both Todd and Spacks frequently look beyond a text's overt meaning in order to discover the author's subversive tendencies, yet ironically here they seem unwilling to accept any view of the text beyond its visible boundaries! Providence may seem too

theoretical a concept to offer comfort to the twentieth-century critic, but Sheridan clearly views the situation from a different perspective; indeed, when Sidney lacks for material comforts, it is precisely her faith in the unseen presence of God and an afterlife that sustains her.

Doody assesses Sheridan's purpose more accurately than these others as she cogently argues the issue of time in Sheridan's novels and *Nourjahad* and suggests that "what seems to interest Frances Sheridan above all is the effect of the past on the present. Her whole novel, in both parts, is constructed (if that is the right word) around the idea that no act exists singly, in itself. The past never ceases, a past action is never cleared out of the way; the past never stops having an effect on the present" ("Frances Sheridan" 345). Unfortunately, she shies away from the term, if not the idea of predestination, too, and tries to repackage the issue under a twentieth-century label. She accepts that "there is some kind of predestination at work, though it seems less Providential than psychological, and less psychological than visionary. Actions are related to powerful 'spots of time' which are conditioning but not redemptive" ("Frances Sheridan" 351).

Rather than dismiss Sheridan's references to providence, I propose that Sidney's actions and behavior must be interpreted as Sheridan indicates in her introduction. The introduction makes it abundantly clear that Sidney is meant to be exemplary in specifically religious terms. Sidney's Christian exemplarity has significant implications for Sheridan's views of her heroine and her view of the novel as a form and, therefore, should not be ignored. Sheridan's portrayal of an exemplary heroine suggests that she believes that fiction can instruct the reader through the depiction of exemplary characters. By emphasizing Sidney's adherence to a specifically Christian mode of behavior, however, Sheridan once more highlights the disparity between temporal and eternal matters. The result of this comparison between God's plans and man's actions indicates the limits on the scope for individual action and on how much one human can affect another. Therefore,

despite having provided an exemplary heroine for her novel, Sheridan shows a strong reluctance to invest much credit in temporal exemplars.

Although Sheridan generally uses the term providence in the novel itself, both eighteenth- and twentieth-century critics refer to predestination, if only to reject it as too profound or too religious. Sidney clearly embodies the general tenets of predestination in her actions, however. Although Sheridan is not advocating specific predestinarian views in her novel,⁶ she uses the general principles of predestination to indicate what constitutes Sidney's claim to exemplarity, much of which entails a firm belief in God's presence in one's life. As the daughter of an Anglo-Irish clergyman, Sheridan would have been familiar with the specific features of predestination, even though she uses it only its most general senses. For those of us less familiar with the concept, John H. Gerstner provides the following definitions and relationships:

first of all, that the most comprehensive word in this whole area of discourse is the term "foreordination"...."Foreordination" means God's ordaining, or decreeing, or determining, or appointing, from eternity whatsoever is to come to pass....Now when we come to the doctrine of predestination, we come to consider a part, and only a part, of "foreordination"....Predestination is that part of foreordination which deals with the actions of free moral agents, be they angels, men, or devils. This doctrine teaches that God foreordains specifically the actions of free moral agents. (5-6)

Under predestination, there are two further subdivisions, election and reprobation:

"'Election' is that part of predestination which pertains to the saving acts of free moral agents. Election teaches that God from all eternity predestinated those acts of free moral agents which would lead to their eternal salvation" (Gerstner 7).⁷

Gerstner points out that one common objection to the doctrine of predestination is that "if predestination is true, man cannot be free," but he details how man is indeed free when God predestinates:

I choose, in the last analysis, what seems good to me and there is no such thing as my choosing anything other than that. Not even Almighty God, once he has given me this faculty of choice, can make me, coerce me, force me to choose. If God forced the will it would no longer be a will....Our will is determined by one thing only: what seems best to us. (29)

The final point that Gerstner makes, which is relevant here, is how one knows whether he or she is elect. The answer, he writes, "is to be found in your heart and your life. God knows from all eternity....But you cannot know directly the mind of God nor can you read, as it were, the Lamb's Book of Life. You can only know indirectly" (38). While the topic of predestination is obviously more complex than these brief descriptions suggest, Sheridan focuses on these general elements. For Sheridan's work, the important points to remember are that foreordination is God's decree from eternity that something will come to pass, that free will does exist despite predestination, and that in exercising that free will, a person can only do what seems best, because one cannot know directly the mind of God.

Does Sidney exercise her free will or is she merely a passive victim of fate? Spacks argues that "had Sidney asserted her own will and responsiveness more fully, she and others would have endured less misery" ("Oscillations" 509), but Sheridan shows that Sidney does exercise a certain amount of free will in choosing to acknowledge the role of providence in her life and deciding what seems best for herself. Sidney's apparent passivity in the face of all her troubles suggests someone weak, yet she acts based on her convictions, and part of that is recognizing that there are forces affecting her life that she cannot control or even fully understand. Spacks believes that

"Gracious Heaven" plays a problematic role in Sidney's career. Unlike Clarissa, this heroine never has intimations of bliss hereafter. Such phrases as "in this life" allude to Christian belief in the subsequent life which will bring justice, and Sidney herself never wavers in her piety, but the realm of heavenly reward remains theoretical.

(Desire 139)

However theoretical the idea of heaven and its rewards may seem to the twentieth-century critic, Sidney accepts without a doubt the existence and power of an external agent, providence, in her life. She writes that "I rely on that providence, who has hitherto protected me" (280), and, while she may sometimes doubt the benevolence of that overseeing force, she always acknowledges its existence. In reference to her troubled on-going relationship with Faulkland, she muses: "Does not all this look as if some unseen power, who guides our actions, had set a stamp of disapprobation on the union between this man and me" (309). She jests about "the doctrine that teaches us that there are little officious spirits that preside over the actions of men, I should think that our two evil geniuses laid their heads together in conjunction with Miss Burchell's active demon, to thwart and cross all our measures" (335). Yet joking aside, she does recognize an eternal force superior to that of man, even when that force manipulates her own life in undesirable ways: "I look back, and take a survey of the past, and cannot help thinking that I have had the most wayward fate allotted to me that ever woman had" (334).

Even when the appearance of Mr. Warner seems to indicate that her fate has changed for the better, she responds cautiously. She thanks God for showering "down thy blessings in abundance on my head" and asks "if, O Lord, thou hast chosen me to be the dispenser of thy fatherly kindness to the afflicted that cry unto thee, quicken in my heart such diligence, humility, and integrity, as may render me not unworthy of the important trust" (370-71). But she further petitions, "if, O my God! thou has sent riches only to be a trial of my strength, unsupported by thee; be merciful, take them from me, and restore to me that poverty, which first taught me to know myself" (371). The closest she comes to lamenting her fate is to ask Cecilia, "have I been a murmurer at the decrees of providence? have I been an impious repiner when heaven has poured down its wrath upon my head? if not, why am I marked out for divine vengeance?" (455). She may not always be particularly

grateful for her Job-like existence, but she accepts it without protesting, because she recognizes that she cannot know the mind of God.

The twentieth-century reader is most likely to criticize Sidney for her determination of what actions seem best to her, such as following her mother's dictates and privileging reason over emotion. When disallowing for the presence of providence in Sidney's life, readers tend to blame Lady Bidulph for being the agent of Sidney's misfortunes. Doody argues that the "whole of Miss Sidney Bidulph circles about and repeatedly returns to the original experience of Lady Bidulph on her abortive wedding day" ("Frances Sheridan 345), and Katharine M. Rogers argues that "Mrs. Bidulph destroys her daughter's chance for happiness and fulfillment by imposing narrow conventional morality upon her" (244). Ironically, Doody and Rogers echo the words and opinions of Sidney's brother, Sir George Bidulph, who also tries to dictate Sidney's behavior. While praising Sidney's obedient nature, Sir George blames Sidney for looking to the wrong person for advice:

I would by no means have you guilty of a breach of duty to our mother; but for heaven's sake, why don't you try your influence over her....I know you will urge your perfect submission to your mother's will; and I know too, that will is as absolute as that of an Eastern monarch. I therefore repeat it, I do not mean to reproach you with your compliance, but I am vexed to the heart, and must give it vent. (91)

Naturally, he would prefer she follow his advice exclusively and in so obedient a manner!

But Sidney is less a victim of Lady Bidulph's whims than it would appear. Her obedience to her mother is neither blind nor unquestioned. Sidney herself acknowledges her mother's shortcomings to her friend Cecilia:

You may recollect, my dear, that my mother, tho' strictly nice in every particular, has a sort of partiality to her own sex, and where there is the least room for it, throws the whole of the blame upon the man's side; who, from her own early prepossessions, she is always inclined to think are deceivers of women. I am not

surprized at this bias in her; her early disappointment, with the attending circumstances, gave her this impression. She is warm, and sometimes sudden, in her attachments; and yet it is not always difficult to turn her from them. The integrity of her own heart makes her liable to be imposed on by a plausible outside; and yet the dear good woman takes a sort of pride in her sagacity. (50)

Sidney recognizes her mother's strengths and weaknesses, and, while seeing her as capable of fault, still determines to "endeavour to imitate her" (49). She makes this determination based on "that rule of conduct which I have hitherto invariably adhered to; I mean, that of preferring to my own the happiness of those who are most dear to me" (93).

While Sidney sees that her mother's warmth occasionally leads her to sudden attachments, Sidney herself tries to avoid privileging her heart over her reason. In contrast to the fire and passion of characters like Faulkland or Miss Burchell, Sidney's rational approach to life signals her strength, and she actually comes across as more emotionally and morally stable than either Faulkland or Miss Burchell. During her own short betrothal to Faulkland, Sidney moderates her emotions, telling Cecilia that "certain as the event of our marriage appears to me at present, I still endeavour to keep a sort of guard over my wishes, and will not give my heart leave to center all its happiness in him....I think we women should not love at such a rate, till duty makes the passion a virtue" (27). In contrast to Sidney's cautious behavior, Miss Burchell's immoderate feelings for Faulkland make Sidney uncomfortable, and she writes that "I would not have my heart devoured by such a flame as her's, for the whole world" (318). Sidney may appear sexually repressed to the twentieth-century reader, but her very moderation denotes dedication to reason rather than to emotion or physical passion.

In contrast to Sidney, Faulkland is driven by passion. He admits to Miss Burchell "with what an excess of passion I have ever loved Mrs Arnold" (321), and, indeed, excess of all passions signal Faulkland's unsuitability as a mate for Sidney. Twentieth-century critics

and Sidney's brother Sir George may blame Lady Bidulph for the fact that Faulkland and Sidney never consummate their relationship, but by contrasting the principal elements of their characters, Sheridan demonstrates the strong likelihood of their incompatibility. After all, Sidney enjoys a happy marriage to Mr. Arnold, whose only slip into excess occurs as he pursues an adulterous relationship with Mrs. Gerrarde.

While Sidney occasionally wonders why providence has set her up as a mark, she does not fall prey to the kind of frenzy that ultimately destroys Faulkland. Barker believes that Faulkland's violent temper makes him a far "more believable character" than Richardson's hero Sir Charles Grandison (56), but Sheridan aims at more than realism here: she deliberately contrasts Faulkland's emotional excesses with Sidney's measured rationality. By the end of the novel, any illusion of Faulkland's reason has given way to repeated references to his wildness, frenzy, and even madness. He draws his sword and swears to Sidney "that if I did not that minute, promise to bear him company in his flight, he would plunge it into his breast, and die before my eyes" (422). He acknowledges that "my mind is disturbed--but who has driven me to despair! to madness! to death! and he cast a look at me that chilled my blood" (436). He marries Sidney, but all of his theatrical actions and threats do not result in their eventual happiness. Instead, he apparently commits suicide or "precipitated his own fate" (462) after he learns that his marriage to Sidney is bigamous.

After she discovers that Faulkland's first wife still lives, Sidney writes to him, and her inner strength contrasts vividly with his: "there were no murmurings at her fate, no womanish complainings, mixed with the tender, yet noble sentiments of her heart. She endeavoured to conceal her own anguish under the mask of contentment, that Mr Faulkland might the better support this final destruction of all his hopes" (460). Sidney is never insensitive to the possible relationship she might have had with Faulkland, but she is a realist rather than an idealist, and her rationality ultimately allows her to endure whereas

Faulkland succumbs to his emotional excesses. Sidney's choices may not seem palatable or always necessary to the modern reader, but without presuming to know God's plans for her, Sidney chooses what seems best to her as a means of negotiating through the vagaries of her temporal existence.

Foreordination and the Limits of Temporal Exemplars

Sidney exercises her free will in choosing what seems best to her, but Sheridan's reader should not forget that, despite the existence of free will, God ordains, decrees, determines, or appoints "from eternity whatsoever it to come to pass" (Gerstner 5-6). Because all events are foreordained, there are limits as to what temporal exemplars can achieve, and neither passive nor active human efforts can effect permanent change in others. Sidney may model Christian virtues, but her ability to influence the lives of others is limited to acts of Christian charity. Her general appearance of passivity, especially in relation to her husband Mr. Arnold, therefore, must be viewed not only as Sidney's determination of what seems best to her but also as her recognition of the limitations of human influence on another human. Sidney's modest acts of charity succeed, whereas more aggressive attempts by herself and others, Lady Grimston, Mr. Warner, and Faulkland, to affect the lives of others fail, because they try to change what God has foreordained. The misfortunes that result from such active endeavours suggests that they are exceeding the limits of their ability, trying to take on the roles of wizard, magician, or even God himself, which cannot be permitted.

Sidney's exemplarity manifests itself most clearly in the modest acts of charity that she indulges in when possible. Her Christian benevolence sometimes involves money but not always. She rewards Patty Main's long service and friendship by elevating her to a position as her companion, and she offers to share her few remaining coins with her seemingly impoverished relative Mr. Warner. Small acts, both of these incidents

demonstrate her humanity and benevolence with no harm done to the recipients of her actions. The longest subplot of the novel gives a more expanded version of her enacting Christian ideals of charity in the world as it details her decision to help a young girl and her father, Miss and Mr. Price. Sidney sees Miss Price on the streets selling flowers and takes her into her home. She asks for Miss Price's story, and at the end of it, offers to help the girl and her imprisoned father. Mr. Warner helps her to obtain Mr. Price's release, but the initiative is all her own. Sidney rejoices in helping them and remarks that "I never experienced such heart-felt satisfaction as I have received from restoring comfort to these truly deserving people" (415). She arranges a good marriage for the daughter and in the sequel to the novel, Mr. Price appears as young Falkland's tutor. In these fairly modest acts, Sidney succeeds in altering the lives of others for the better.

Such modesty and moderation mark most of Sidney's actions, even when a stronger response seems warranted. In her reactions first to her fiance, Faulkland, and then to her eventual husband, Mr. Arnold, Sidney behaves in an equally restrained manner and thereby hopes to influence their actions. During their short engagement, Faulkland whips his servant for almost causing an accident to Sidney. She writes that this "little incident convinces me that Mr Faulkland is of too warm a temper; yet I am not alarmed at the discovery; you know I am the very reverse; and I hope in time, by gentle methods, in some measure to subdue it in Mr Faulkland" (34). After she is widowed and urges Faulkland to marry Miss Burchell, she actually puts her approach into effect: "I must lead this violent spirit with gentleness, and endeavour to convince his reason, without wounding his tenderness" (314). As they never marry, Sidney lacks a prolonged opportunity to attempt to temper Faulkland's violence.

As the reader discovers during Sidney's marriage to Mr. Arnold, however, gentle methods do not always effect change. More or less pushed into marriage with Mr. Arnold by her mother, Sidney learns to love him, and a strong sense of a wife's duty forms a key

part of her feelings for him. At the outset of their marriage, Sidney comments several times that "I hope my own conduct will for ever ensure to me his love" (107), and she vows that "I have laid it down as a rule never to oppose so good, so indulgent a husband as Mr Arnold is, in any instance wherein I do not think a superior duty requires me to do so" (120).⁸ Sidney's obedience and conduct do not prevent Mr. Arnold's affair with Mrs. Gerrarde, but even then she remains steadfast in her sense of marital obligation. When Sir George contrasts Mr. Arnold's transgression with that of Faulkland, Sidney replies: "what duty obliges us to pass by in a husband, it is hardly moral not to discountenance in another man" (257).

Sidney is eventually reunited with her husband, but she plays no active role in working to recover his heart; rather the opposite. Sidney remarks that "I will wait patiently till the hand of time applies a remedy to my grief" (137) and acknowledges that "I was born to sacrifice my own peace to that of other people; my life is become miserable, but I have no remedy for it but patience" (139). She waits for the return of Mr. Arnold's affections without any more active attempt to re-engage them.

Spacks asserts that "Sidney's compliant silence, the conspicuous sign of her refusal of overt agency, results mainly in unhappiness" ("Oscillations" 509), and Sidney's friends, too, blame her for her silence. They tell Mr. Arnold that Sidney's "misfortune was intirely owing to her great delicacy, and the nice regard she had to your peace and honour" (264). They assume that had Sidney "reproached you with your infidelity, as some wives would have done, tho' it might have occasioned a temporary uneasiness to you both, yet would it have prevented her from falling a sacrifice to that most artful and wicked of her sex" (264). But Sidney rejects deliberately this course of action from the beginning:

I am once more composed, and determined on my behaviour. I have not a doubt remaining of Mr Arnold's infidelity; but let me not aggravate my own griefs, nor to a vicious world justify my husband's conduct, by bringing any reproach of my own.

The silent sufferings of the injured must, to a mind not ungenerous, be a sharper rebuke than it is in the power of language to inflict.

But this is not all: I must endeavour, if possible, to skreen Mr Arnold from censure. I hope his own imprudence may not render these endeavours ineffectual.

(137)

While his heart is attached to Mrs. Gerrarde, Sidney writes that she despairs "of his listening to the voice of reason or of justice. If ever his eyes are opened, his error will prove sufficient punishment to him....My conduct, in time, I hope, may justify me--Mean while I will not condescend to the weak justification of words" (151). Sidney's decisions to suffer in silence and to try to protect her husband, even while he commits adultery, do not seem particularly wise. She knows, however, that while she can control her own conduct, she has relatively little power to effect a change in his. Language or words do not have the power to ensure change, when such a change must come from within the person's own being. Silence may not be effective, but then Sidney knows that protesting is not going to change matters either. As Sidney refuses to waste her energy lamenting over her fate at providence's hand, so too she chooses silence over complaining about temporal problems: this may seem passive, but it signals what seems best to her and that is to recognize that one human cannot ultimately determine, decree, or ordain the acts of another.

Sheridan offers an even more explicit view of the limitations of temporal exemplarity in her Conclusion to the Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph. Whereas Sidney's inability to influence Faulkland or Mr. Arnold may appear simply as an unwillingness to confront the patriarchy, Sheridan questions Sidney's ability to influence her own daughters and adopted son in the Conclusion. What Sheridan emphasizes in the Conclusion is the importance of an individual's choice, either to follow an example of moral behavior or otherwise; the commitment to a certain kind of behavior cannot be inherited from nor dictated by someone else, even someone as exemplary as Sidney.

Early on in the Conclusion, Sidney asks for her friend Cecilia's opinions of her daughters and adopted son Falkland.⁹ She replies with the hope that "may your prudence, your virtue, your piety be revived and flourish, as well as your beauty does, in the persons of those two lovely girls" (IV, 16). While beauty may be passed on genetically, prudence definitely is not, as the girls' action of falling in love with their adopted brother shows. Sidney's daughter Cecilia argues that she fell in love with Falkland by example of her family: "I loved him from the example of those whom I thought it a merit to imitate" (V, 56). Obviously, her ability to imitate exactly is lacking as she goes beyond mere fraternal love. Cecilia is quite aware of her differences from her mother, as she laments to Dolly, "from whom do I inherit this stubborn spirit of mind?...Ah, Dolly, why am I not more like her [her mother]?" (IV, 311-12). Even when provided with a woman universally acclaimed for her virtue and exemplary qualities, however, her own daughter cannot simply become her mother's mirror image.

Because exemplarity is neither inherited nor easily imitated, the issue of choice becomes even more important in terms of the exercising of an individual's free will. While almost every character in the Conclusion makes a negative comment about Sidney's obedience to her mother, including Sidney herself, it becomes clear that Sidney's choice is condoned as her own daughters eventually choose to follow Sidney's advice and example. Daughter Cecilia and her friend Miss Sophy Audley discuss Sidney's story, and "Cecilia blamed her grand-mama Bidulph's scruples with regard to Mr. Falkland...and went so far as to say that she thought her mother had made too great a sacrifice to duty, in giving him up so easily" (IV, 137). Cecilia has secretly fallen in love with Falkland's son, but her mother and Sir George, not knowing this, encourage another suitor, Lord V---. When she and Falkland confess their love for one another, Cecilia rebelliously declares that she will not "sacrifice my own happiness to the vanity of my proud relations" (IV, 320). In turn, Falkland dismisses derisively her mother's defining rule of conduct, declaring that "Mrs.

Arnold lives not to herself, she has ever been a slave to the capricious will of others" (IV, 321).

Even Sidney seems to deprecate her past obedience. In responding to a letter from Sir George, in which he urges her to take a strong stand on the matter of Lord V---, she states that "the authority of a parent I never will exert; too dearly have I myself experienced the consequences of such a proceeding; but as far as remonstrance, advice, and admonition goes, I have not been sparing" (IV, 209-10). She further reflects to her daughter that

Advice from a mother was always considered by me as a command; yet I do not desire you to regard it in so severe a light. We have been educated differently....though tenderly beloved by my ever honoured mother, had, nevertheless, my neck early bowed to obedience; and this it was which constrained me to yield up my nearest wishes, and, as it were, mold my heart to the will of her to whom I thought I owed all duty. Perhaps your grand mama exacted too much of me; for at the time Mr. Arnold was proposed to me as a husband, she knew I entertained more than a bare inclination for another object; but this is not your case, Cecilia. (IV, 190-91)

Her perspective on her behavior suggests that her obedience was, if not completely misplaced, then at least somewhat overzealous.

Despite her own avowals not to force her children, as she feels she was, she still intends to urge Cecilia to accept Lord V---. She writes to Sir George that she will have Cecilia return home from his house, so that she can try to change Cecilia's mind. She believes

that it may be in my power to bow her mind more effectually by such means as I can use when she is with me, than by all the arguments to which I could have recourse by letter, and which I have already vainly applied. There are a thousand little avenues to the heart which are shut up, and almost imperceptible to every one

but those who have traced them from infancy. I think Cecilia loves me, and could not bear to be a witness to that uneasiness which she herself caused to so affectionate a mother. (IV, 288)

She means to use her knowledge of Cecilia's "wilfulness" to work on her and hopes that "perhaps, when less urged, [may] open her eyes voluntarily to her own interest and happiness, as well as that of her friends" (IV, 289). While Sidney certainly does not plan to give up her efforts to change Cecilia's mind, the key to her approach can be found in the phrase "less urged." As a daughter, Cecilia obviously evinces more independence than Sidney did, but Sidney hopes that the motivating force for Cecilia's change of heart will be her emotional attachment to her mother, as was true for her and her mother. Indeed, Cecilia acknowledges that "my mother's repose is as dear to me as my own" (IV, 323).

Sidney decision to rely less on force and more on the willingness of her daughters to exercise their own choices is rewarded at the novel's end. As their mother dies, Sidney's daughters praise their mother's exemplarity and choose to emulate her, if somewhat belatedly. Cecilia forgives Falkland, telling her mother that "were his offences against me even greater than they are, your example would teach me to blot them all from my mind" (V, 290). After her mother's death, she continues to manifest her new determination to follow her mother's advice, and she marries Lord V--- willingly.

Falkland tries to repair the damage he has done by offering to marry Dolly, but she refuses, saying that she "will not consult my heart, that has already betrayed me. I will consult my reason...I will consult my honour; those are the guides that shall henceforward direct [my] actions" (V, 320-21). She explains her refusal by arguing "I owe this sacrifice (for such I acknowledge it) to all my friends; but above all to the honoured memory of my mama. I cannot atone for my disobedience; 'tis fit I should punish myself for it" (V, 323). Based on reason rather than emotion, her refusal to marry young Falkland mirrors her mother's decision of years ago to end her betrothal to Faulkland. As their mother decided

years ago to accept her own mother's advice, so Cecilia and Dolly eventually choose to honor their mother similarly.

As an exemplary individual herself, Sidney can only hope that her daughters will choose to follow her example; she does not and cannot coerce them into doing so, because she knows that they must exercise their own free will. Like Sidney's own daughters, Falkland must choose his own path and pursue what seems best to him. One might expect that Falkland, raised by Sidney and tutored by Mr. Price, to be proof against evil influences, but such is not the case.

More correspondents appear in the Conclusion than in the original story and among them are a brother and sister, Miss Audley and Sir Edward Audley. Although the pair are nominally friends of the Arnold girls and young Falkland, they plot against them, mostly to ensure that the debt-ridden Sir Edward marries one of the girls, each of whom has been left a fortune by Mr. Warner. While Sidney privileges the issue of choice for her daughters, Miss Audley and Sir Edward emphasize the importance of example and influence. The narrator notes that the correspondence between brother and sister manifests "a surprizing deal of art...in order to pervert the minds of the two young persons on whom they had their separate influence" (IV, 143). Miss Audley believes that "there is nothing like the force of example" (IV, 66-67) and hopes that by encouraging Dolly's attraction to Falkland, that Cecilia will then find herself wanting a lover: "Cecilia has been so used to look up to her sister as a pattern, that it would be strange if she did not follow her lead in this, as well as in other things. Short as my acquaintance with the world has been, many a match have I known brought about by this very means" (IV, 67).

While Miss Audley works on Dolly and Cecilia, Sir Edward uses his position as Falkland's friend to influence him. Sir Edward has studied Falkland and finds that "he is of a very mixed character. The father and the mother [Miss Burchell] equally blended in his composition; but I hope the latter may predominate, else even under my prudent guidance

and example, he may sneak out of the world without doing any thing worthy of remembrance" (IV, 99-100). Sir Edward gambles that heredity will influence Falkland's behavior, suggesting that it accounts for the contradictions he finds in Falkland's personality. He suggests that while Falkland "likes pleasure, yet enters not into it with that juvenile ardour so natural to one of his age; he even sometimes commits excesses, but it seems as if her were led into them more from the force of example, than the strength of his passions" (IV, 100). Sir Edward tries to undo all of the training that Mr. Price, the tutor of Falkland's youth, has given him but despairs that despite his efforts, Falkland occasionally "relapses into his absurd opinions, and this he calls a return to virtue" (IV, 102).

Falkland does not resist his friend's manipulations and behaves indiscreetly, promising Dolly marriage, while being in love with Cecilia. After he and Cecilia make their feelings known to each other, he writes Dolly, begging for her to release him from his commitment to her. He asks her "not to consult on this occasion the dictates of your resentment; but let the daughter of Mrs. Arnold imitate her mother's admirable example, who more than once yielded up her own dearest interests to promote the good of others, consenting herself with the silent applause of her own noble mind" (V, 80). Like Sir Edward, Falkland seems to privilege the idea of an exemplar with more directive powers than Sheridan suggests is possible. This shows how far he is from understanding the exercise of free will.

Although Sidney curses Falkland "as the cruel destroyer of her family" (V, 88), she eventually forgives him on her deathbed. She tells him that "I would fain attribute your fault to youth, to passion; but above all, to wicked counsel and example. Do not, therefore, look upon yourself as abandoned to evil; but endeavour rather, in your future conduct, to make what atonement you can for the past" (V, 288-89). She argues that essentially Falkland still can exercise his own free will and choose to modify his behavior in the future. She acknowledges the presence of the evil counsel in his life but insists that he must choose

his future path.

As Sidney refuses to determine her daughters' actions, she risks being completely ignored or resisted by them, as she is for much of the novel. But by allowing her daughters to choose their own paths, she manages to win their respect and eventual obedience. Clearly, however, this suggests the tenuous position of the exemplar: She might be effective, but, then again, she might not.

Actively Intervening in the Lives of Others, or, Usurping the Role of God

How then is a person to proceed in the world if one's best efforts lead to no more permanent or solid improvements in the lives of those one tries to help? The answer, for Sheridan, centers on Sidney's behavior and character. As a living embodiment of the Christian tenets of meekness and forgiveness that she finds so lacking in Lady Grimston, Sidney makes every effort to follow Christian dictates in her temporal existence, while recognizing that eternal forces can negate those efforts. Sidney's moderate or passive approach to influencing the lives of others may not necessarily be effective, but Sheridan shows that even those characters who manifest their own wills more fully do not necessarily achieve any more permanent changes than Sidney does with her relatively submissive approach and that such aggressive attempts to influence the lives' of others often lead to complete disaster.

Spacks writes that the "visible function of Providence in the novel is to make good intentions turn to bad ends, to make Sidney--as both she and her brother explicitly recognize--the agent of harm to all she loves" (*Desire* 139-40), but Sidney is not the only one whose good intentions lead to problems. Whether or not a person has the best intentions, activity does not lead to permanent change any more successfully than passivity does. By contrasting Sidney's generally passive nature with those who are more aggressive in their approach to life, Sheridan is not questioning Sidney's choice; instead, she intends to

emphasize the relative ineffectiveness of temporal human action against the greater context of eternal providence. Among the characters who choose to actively influence either their own lives or the lives of others, there are those who put their own wishes first, Lady Grimston and Mr. Warner, and those who act to promote the happiness of others, Faulkland and Sidney herself: The results of such attempts at intervention range from no permanent solutions to outright calamity.

The scenes with Lady Grimston, and especially those including her daughter, draw attention to the differences between them and the Bidulph mother and daughter. Lady Grimston provides an excellent example of someone who wants to manage the behavior of others, specifically her husband and children, and Sheridan openly contrasts her behavior as a parent with that of Lady Bidulph. Sidney meets Lady Grimston's daughter, Mrs. Vere, and learns the story of her estrangement from her mother, which occurred when Mrs. Vere married against her mother's wishes. Lady Grimston had wanted her daughter to marry someone who could make her "mistress of a fine house and a fine equipage" (67), but Mrs. Vere secretly marries the man she loves instead. Mrs. Vere not only suffers financially for her disobedience but also faces her mother's rejection of her. When Sidney learns about Lady Grimston's behavior, she objects for both secular and religious reasons:

What a tyrant this lady Grimston is! I did not admire her before, but I now absolutely dislike her. What a wife and a mother has she been to a husband and a daughter, who might have constituted the happiness of a woman of a different temper! And yet she passes for a wonderful good woman, and a pattern of all those virtues of a religion which meekness and forgiveness characterise....What an angel is my good mother, when compared to this her friend, whom her humility makes her look upon as her superior in virtue. (77)

Although Coates Cleary believes that the portrayal of Lady Grimston undermines the "religious piety advocated throughout the novel" (xxxi), I think that her superficial

adherence to Christian conduct highlights the depth of Sidney's own belief and that of her mother.

Spacks believes that Sidney's unflattering response to Lady Grimston is based on her own passive inclinations and prefers a more favorable reading of Lady Grimston's aggressive character. In contrasting Sidney's lack of will with Lady Grimston, among other women in the novel, Spacks writes that the

more violent these women are in claiming authority over their own lives and those of others, the more likely they seem to get what they want. Of course the novel, narrated in Sidney's voice, does not endorse their procedures. Yet the sequence of cause and effect it depicts in relation to secondary characters raises questions about Sidney's choice of absolute submission. (*Desire* 136)

In temporal terms, however, what does Lady Grimston achieve by placing her own desires first? Her daughter does not marry the man she chooses for her, and Lady Grimston alienates herself from her husband and other daughter as well, so much so that "when she found herself dying, she sent a message to this favorite daughter, desiring to see her; her husband, whether out of disregard to the old lady, or his wife, absolutely refused to let her go" (279). The husband, at odds with both his wife and her mother, prevents them from seeing each other one last time, but Lady Grimston was responsible for the initial rift between their families. Lady Grimston's attempts to direct the members of her family against their wills result in misery, both for them and ultimately for herself as well.

When Mr. Warner enters Sidney's life, he appears as nothing less than a wizard. In exchange for his friendship and wealth, however, Mr. Warner asks for much in return from Sidney. Although Mr. Warner means well, his actions are also tainted by the desire for revenge and his own sense of authority, and, thus, they create even more problems than they solve. While alleviating Sidney's financial distress, Mr. Warner also intends to mortify Sir George, who did not respond well when his charity was tested. Mr. Warner wants

Sidney to live sumptuously "and submit a little to my management; for I will mortify your paltry brother and his wife....when I have had my revenge, you may live as you please afterwards" (366).

His management extends even further and with more serious consequences when he learns about Sidney's relationship with Faulkland. He thinks they should have married, and Mr. Warner exerts his authority over Sidney and insists that she marry him, once they believe the adulterous Mrs. Faulkland is dead. Sidney writes that he has "bound himself by a solemn oath that I should become his [Faulkland's] wife" (440), or he "will forever renounce all friendship with [me]" (444). As she has once left Faulkland with no choice, so too now she finds that "there is therefore no alternative, I must be the wife of Mr. Faulkland" (446). Todd believes that Sidney will only marry Faulkland "when he is brought down and humbled," because she fears the depth of his fiery passion (Sign 171-72); however, it is clear that even once he is humbled she would not marry him if she had a choice. Despite her benefactor's insistence that she wed and even her own desire to reward Faulkland for his assistance to her in the past, their marriage is illegal and immoral, because unbeknownst to them, Mrs. Faulkland still lives.

Even when motivations are based solely on the desire to benefit another, problems still arise. As Doody points out, "moral decisions based on high principles of honour and the nicest scruples turn out wrong. All judgments err. Impressions are unstable; judgments of prudence are, after all, founded on assumptions and impressions, and these may betray" ("Frances Sheridan" 342-43). She continues by suggesting that "all moral life is intensely fragile, that even the highest decisions are founded partly on guesswork and prejudice, and that 'worthy' acts have another side" ("Frances Sheridan" 344). Nowhere is this fragility and instability clearer than in the selfless actions of Faulkland and Sidney. They may desire to put the happiness of others before their own, but their actions are still intrusive and manipulative.

When Faulkland helps spirit Mrs. Gerrarde away so that Sidney may be reunited with her husband, he acts from a desire to help Sidney. He achieves his short-term goal of sending Mr. Arnold back to his wife's arms, but Mr. and Mrs. Arnold are not destined to live happily ever after. His attempts to ordain fate do not harm anyone, but neither do they provide long-term security for Sidney. As his apparent suicide shows, Faulkland's commitment to Christianity is shaky at best. But his lack of faith is not why he fails; rather, his success is limited because he can dictate the lives of others only so far. Others may interpret his actions as God-like, but he is, after all, a mere mortal.

As a more committed Christian than Faulkland, one would expect Sidney's actions on behalf of others to provide longer-lasting benefits and happiness. Although she achieves modest changes in the lives of the Prices and Patty Main through her Christian benevolence, her more active interference in the lives of Miss Burchell and Faulkland end disastrously. The difference between her help for the Prices and her attempts to influence Faulkland and Miss Burchell suggests that Sidney literally undertakes too much in trying to rearrange destiny. Problems arise when one tries to assume too much responsibility for or authority over another's life. As a Christian exemplar, Sidney should know that she cannot presume to question God's actions or even try to determine the course of others' lives.

Long an advocate of Miss Burchell and the need for Faulkland to marry her, if only for the sake of their illegitimate son, the widowed Sidney anticipates Faulkland's renewed interest in her and writes him that "it is impossible that I ever can be yours" (315). She once again urges Faulkland to marry Miss Burchell and assures him that "great will be your reward. In her you are sure of a tender, faithful, and charming friend...and he who is the author of justice and mercy will not fail to bless you" (317). As aware of the twists of providence as she is, one might think she would be a bit more careful about making such assurances, but she does so anyway!

Faulkland finally accedes to her wishes and offers to marry Miss Burchell. He tells

his newly betrothed that "I will confess that Mrs Arnold is arbitress of my fate; and in approving myself to her, I do so to my own conscience. I do not there, though my actions have been guided by her, yield with reluctance to her will: her virtue, her religion, and enlarged mind, have only dictated to me, what my own reason tells me I ought to do" (322). Part of the responsibility for the disastrous marriage rests with Faulkland. Sidney does not know all there is to know about Miss Burchell's character, but Faulkland, of course, has a more intimate knowledge of her and could have resisted Sidney's efforts. Yet he grants her power over him to become the arbitress of his fate and so bows to her will: he could have continued to refuse to marry Miss Burchell, as he had done for so long. Faulkland acknowledges Sidney's power over him, however, and acts according to her dictates rather than exercise his own free will.

Knowing Faulkland's passion for her and relying on the knowledge that he will submit to her will, Sidney correctly assumes much of the responsibility for what goes wrong. Although she has previously arranged a marriage for Miss Price, Sidney allowed Miss Price to choose someone else to marry if she so desired. With Faulkland, that element of choice is, if not gone, then at least severely diminished and therein lies the problem. Faulkland makes the mistake of not rejecting Miss Burchell, and Sidney tries too hard to dictate the course of Faulkland and Miss Burchell's life together.

In contrast to the happy union foretold by Sidney, Mrs. Faulkland commits adultery, which Faulkland discovers, and he shoots her lover and almost kills her as well. When she learns the truth about Mrs. Faulkland's immoral character, Sidney assumes responsibility for the problem: "what a fatal wretch I have been to Mr Faulkland! my best purposes, by some unseen power, are perverted from their ends....But I will calm my troubled mind with this reflexion, that I meant not to do evil" (391). In the face of what goes wrong, Sidney seems to be excusing her actions weakly by asserting that she "meant not to do evil" or the corollary that she did what seemed best, which is her usual manner of approaching the

world. The mistake she makes, however, is that instead of doing what seems best for herself, she presumes to do what she thinks is best for others, and that distinction forms the critical difference, determining the success of her modest actions and the failure of her more outgoing attempt to direct the lives of others.

Sheridan, Fielding, and the Feminocentric Novel

Doody sees the sense of powerlessness in Sheridan not as a general symptom of humanity but as a specific attribute of being female in a patriarchal world. She suggests that Sheridan's

grave sense of time, and the sense of helplessness in relation to time and the past, are feminine insights, or at least in the eighteenth century could have been expressed only a female writer. Such insights, that is, could have been expressed only by a sensibility with a deep knowledge of the meaning of powerlessness, and of lack of control over fate, as well as a comprehension of the hardship involved in encountering the outside world with moral ideals, or with warm desires. ("Frances Sheridan" 356)

Working within a framework of both God's laws and temporal laws that supports a patriarchal system, Sheridan's exploration of powerlessness is not confined to women, however. In her novel, men such as Mr. Warner or Faulkland may be more powerful than Sidney in temporal terms, through their wealth and fewer social restrictions on their activities,¹⁰ but they, as much as she, are ultimately still subject to God's decrees. As a woman, Sheridan may be more acutely aware of the lack of control over fate that Doody mentions, but as a novelist, she accentuates the differences between temporal and eternal actions to focus attention on humankind's relative powerlessness in relation to an all-powerful God.

Like Fielding, Sheridan explores the place of women in society and her novels

reflect her feminocentric interests,¹¹ and both writers are aware that women are held to different moral and social standards than men. Although Fielding and Sheridan view the didactic capacity of the novel from different perspectives, both women deliberately avoid dividing moral behavior into gender-specific categories as Richardson does. By trying to teach both sexes to make morally fine distinctions or by insisting that both sexes are subject to God's laws, Fielding and Sheridan not only contribute to the debate about the didactic capacity of the novel, but also they seek to emphasize what serves to make men and women equal.

Notes to Chapter 3

¹ Lefanu 88.

² Sheridan and her cousin Samuel Whyte exchanged a lively correspondence, some of which still obtainable, but references to her fiction are few, brief, and amazingly casual. In a letter dated February 26, 1761, she writes that "you will see how my solitary hours were employed last winter at Windsor, if you have time enough to bestow the reading on the Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph, which will soon be published by G. Faulkner" (Whyte 102).

As an established novelist and playwright, Sheridan responds to David Garrick's criticism of her third play, A Journey to Bath, with a defense of the play that constitutes "her fullest extant discussion of any of her works" (Hogan and Beasley 25). After portraying her relationship to her play as a maternal one, Sheridan proceeds to defend her work logically and unsentimentally.

³ Doody claims that "Richardson seems to have read part of the novel in progress as early as the autumn or winter of 1756, but its writing extended over some time" ("Frances Sheridan" 325). Doody mistakes the references in the correspondence of that period to Eugenia and Adelaide as comments on Sidney Bidulph, as does Barbauld in her edition of Richardson's letters (IV, 143).

⁴ Among the many similarities between Richardson's and Sheridan's works in terms of characterizations and situations are the following. Clarissa-like, Sidney is a virtuous woman who suffers on earth but is destined for heavenly justice. In tone, however, Sidney can be as sharp as Anna Howe or sprightly like Charlotte Grandison.

As Sheridan's contemporaries noted, "Faulkland is a composition of features borrowed from Grandison and Lovelace: possessed of a strict honour, the steadiness and integrity of the former, he sometimes delights in the stratagems of the latter" (Critical

Review 11 [1761]: 186).

Sheridan pointedly ignores Pamela in her dedication to Sidney Bidulph, but similarities between the novels exist nonetheless. In Sidney Bidulph and its Conclusion, Sheridan moves from primarily one letter writer to a more diverse range, as does Richardson in Pamela and its sequel. More significantly, Sheridan's portrayal of Sidney's marriage to Mr. Arnold recalls Pamela's marriage to Mr. B both in the original and the sequel. Both of these women refuse to reproach their mates with their real or supposed infidelities and vow to suffer in silence. Coates Cleary points out that while "Sidney Bidulph looks back to Clarissa, but in its concern with the married woman it has affinities with the second part of Richardson's Pamela (1740-1) in which the new Mrs B. deals with post-marital issues and sets out her forty-eight rules for the conduct of a good and submissive wife" (xvi).

See also note 8.

⁵ Coates Cleary xv. Lefanu writes that Nourjahad was the "first of a series of instructive moral fictions" (296).

⁶ As far as I can determine, Sheridan does not advocate a specific application or use of predestination. The question of predestination arises in the debates between John Wesley and George Whitefield and in defining the differences between Arminianism and Calvinism, but there is no reason to believe that Sheridan took part in that controversy.

⁷ What Doody neglects in her argument about time is precisely the eternal element that constitutes part of foreordination and election.

⁸ Her hierarchical sense of duty here reminds one of the second part of Pamela. One of the few times the married Pamela argues with Mr. B is over her conviction that as a mother, her duty to God requires that she breastfeed her own children. Mr. B, of course, believes that her first duty should be to his comfort. Sidney never challenges Mr. Arnold, as Pamela does, but both women believe in the primacy of their duty to God before man,

although their husbands are clearly next in line!

⁹ For some reason, the spelling of Faulkland's name changes between Sidney Bidulph and its Conclusion. To distinguish between the two men, I have followed each version's spelling: Faulkland for the father and Falkland for the son.

¹⁰ As a woman, Sidney would be ruined socially by running away with a man whereas Faulkland's elopement with Mrs. Gerrarde does not seriously affect his reputation.

¹¹ Lefanu mentions that Sheridan "frequently visited" Fielding but does not provide further insight into their relationship (95).

Chapter 4

Charlotte Lennox's Novels: Moral But Not Didactic

Although written over a spread of thirty-two years, Lennox's novels continually address, among many other issues, the questions of who teaches what and to whom? No matter how different her approach, Lennox answers her own questions in a remarkably similar way throughout her career. Unlike Richardson or even Sarah Fielding, Lennox does not emphasize the moral usefulness of her works, either in the texts themselves or in the framing. In fact, with the exception of the preface to The Female Quixote, written by Samuel Johnson, her works are remarkably free from any external apparatus proclaiming their didactic function. Lack of frame alone, of course, does not dictate the lack of didactic capacity, but for Lennox, the two are related. While her novels may contain virtuous heroines and explore moral issues, what emerges from a study of all her novels is that what Lennox "teaches" in her novels is that teaching itself is a relatively ineffective art. The didacticism of her novels, then, is ironically but essentially anti-didactic!

Behind the ambivalence toward didacticism lies Lennox's essentialist view of human nature, in which she suggests that in the human character there is a "natural propensity to virtue or vice" (Female Quixote 277) and that while change is possible, it is not inevitable or necessarily facilitated by the example or teaching of others. Like Frances Sheridan, she suggests that women can exemplify virtues and that goodness must be innate, but those characteristics do not necessarily enable exemplars to affect others in a significant manner. Whereas Sheridan's Sidney Bidulph is distinguished by her Christian exemplarity, Lennox's heroines embody a range of virtues, including religious constancy, chastity, and filial obedience. Like Fielding, Lennox is interested in abstract concepts of virtue and vice, if from a different perspective; there are some nuances within those categories, but one is essentially one or the other, according to Lennox. She creates virtuous or vicious characters in her works, who, for the most part, remain static. Any progress or change in

them occurs at a superficial, not fundamental, level of their natures. This division of character on such an essential level precludes any attempts by a virtuous character to influence someone not predisposed to virtue. In her fiction, Lennox does more than just illustrate the distinctions between virtue and vice made by Samuel Johnson in Rambler, No. 4, however; rather, she suggests the didactic limitations of such morally distinct creatures, who can only exemplify virtues and cannot possibly teach others.

Lennox's Correspondence

The extant correspondence to and from Charlotte Lennox reveals more about the relationship between Lennox and Johnson than it does about Lennox and Richardson and more about the ways and means of her getting into print than the actual content of what was printed. Richardson's letters to Lennox are kind but certainly lack the chatty, familiar nature of his correspondence with Fielding and Sheridan. Richardson is still clearly a major force in Lennox's artistic, if not personal, life: he offers suggestions on her work, acts as intermediary between her and the publishers Andrew Millar and Robert Dodsley, and prints the first edition of The Female Quixote (1752). Richardson mentions to Lady Bradshaigh that he has met Lennox and her husband, and he claims "the writer has genius" (Carroll 223). He briefly mentions that Lennox is the author of The Life of Harriot Stuart (1751) but does not comment on its quality. In fact, his only extant comments on Lennox's fiction are about The Female Quixote.

In his role as both printer and literary advisor, Richardson answers Lennox's fears about the length of The Female Quixote in two ways. First, in response to her worries about insufficient length, he suggests that she can make the work appear longer by merely inserting new paragraphs. Apart from this typographical concern, he suggests that she try to finish the work in two volumes rather than three. Lennox appears to have planned a three volume work, with the conclusion being related in some way to Clarissa.¹ Richardson

rejects this idea firmly:

It is my humble Opinion, that you should finish your Heroine's Cure in your present Vols. The method you propose, tho' it might flatter my Vanity, yet will be thought a Contrivance between the Author of Arabella, and the Writer of Clarissa, to do Credit to the latter; and especially if the Contraste <would> will take up much Room in the proposed 3d Volume. If it will not take up much, it may be done, if you will do it, that way (which I beg you to consider, and to consult Mr. Johnson before you resolve) at the latter End of the Second Volume. You are a young Lady have therefore much time before you, and I am sure, will think that a good Fame will be your Interest. Make therefore, your present work as complete as you can, in two Volumes; and it will give Consequence to your future Writings, and of course to your Name as a Writer; And without a Complement I think you have set out upon an admirable Foundation. (Isles, Lennox 340-41)

As always, Richardson demurs against being complimented, but it is ironic that the very prolific Richardson advises Lennox to finish in two volumes!

In the same letter to Lady Bradshaigh that he mentions he has met Lennox, he asks "Do not you think, however her heroine over-acts her part, that Arabella is amiable and innocent?" (Carroll 223). Given the lengthy character discussions that occur in his letters about his own works of fiction, one would expect him to elaborate to Lennox at least or even Lady Bradshaigh on the way in which he would minimize Arabella's overacting. He seems more concerned about the fact that Lennox compliments him in the novel than about any problems in the characterizations, however: "I was very desirous that the compliment to the author of Clarissa should be omitted. Those compliments are generally looked upon as marks of particular favor from one writer to another; and, like praises dedicatory, can shew only one person's, and not the world's, good opinion" (Carroll 223).

In contrast to the specific arguments he makes against complimenting him by

referring to Clarissa, his more general comments about The Female Quixote are quite brief and curiously random. He is "quite charm'd with the lovely Visionary's Absurdities" (and the Perplexity which follows it, to Sir Charles /to/ Glanville and her self) on her supposing Sir Charles in Love with her" (Isles, Lennox 338). He also says he admires the episodes concerning the highwaymen and Arabella's reaction to them and the "very pretty Scenes" at Bath and London (Isles, Lennox 338). The only real criticism he makes is a relatively detailed dissection of Sir George's false genealogy, not perhaps the most important episode in the novel. Rather than making more specific suggestions himself, Richardson refers Lennox to Johnson for further advice.

Lennox refuses to omit the complimentary reference to Richardson in her novel, but in all other respects, she promises to proceed with the alterations that he has suggested. She writes deferentially, "I am extremely happy in the approbation you have been pleas'd to express of my second Vol and am perfectly Convinced of the justice of your exceptions, I return you my thanks for them, and shall not fail to make the alterations you point out to me--" (Isles, Lennox 340). In this same letter to Richardson, one of the very few surviving by Lennox herself, she also indicates the problems she is having in getting the book published. She writes,

I have seen Mr Gray this Morning, and understand he went to Mr Millar's last Night with Mr Seymour, he told me, in regard to my interest he would not declare his true opinion of my Book but said in general, that it might be printed, that perhaps it might sell, but that he did not chuse to read any more of it, and added that there must be great alterations he insists upon being made, and his exceptions to almost all the Characters Incidents and language, make it necessary to write a new Book if I woud please him--he assures me that the History of Miss Groves / in the first Vol. / will not be printed, that Mr Millar through his perswasions is resolved against it, upon the whole I am Convinced the strongest instances have

been used to prejudice Mr Millar--but since you Sir have been so good to engage on my Side I think I may set these inhuman Criticks at defiance. (Isles, Lennox 339-40)

Her somewhat breathless recounting of events suggests her distress, but her concern seems centered on the obstacles to publication rather than on the specifics of the proposed corrections, including the elimination of Miss Groves's story.

While the letters to and from Richardson indicate her respect for Richardson and, in turn, his general approbation of her novel, they ultimately do not reveal much about the process or substance of her writing. The letter that discloses the most about Lennox as a person is, not surprisingly, one she wrote to her husband, not to any of the literary giants of her day. But, ironically, this letter also marks a different side of Lennox as a writer. Nowhere is her voice as clear or as reasoned as in this letter to her husband, whom she claims in the letter itself to have a "despotick will" (Isles, Lennox 426). The letter itself is crafted with more care than, say, her letter to Richardson about the publication problems of The Female Quixote, and it sounds very much like something Richardson might have written, down to the explicit details of a young girl's wardrobe and the references to moral exemplars.

The subject of the letter is her daughter's education, and the first part of the letter is an inventory of the young girl's clothing and what more she needs before she can leave home for school. The letter reveals a certain amount of the financial distress that Lennox lived in as she notes to her husband that "all the skirts she has had, for more than two years past, have been made out of my gowns--she has two of these now, but more than half worn out and only fit to wear in common" (Isles, Lennox 427). The family is not completely destitute obviously, but Lennox notes that much of her daughter's clothing are "rags" (Isles, Lennox 426-27).

The second part of the letter demonstrates Lennox's keen awareness of the need to reap the maximum benefit from a promising social connection. Lennox's friend Lady

Clerke has recommended a particular school, and Lennox tells her husband that Lady Clerke assures her that she "would in every respect supply the place of a mother, to her--that she would see her every week or fortnight, take her home to her Mama's house during every vacation, and write me regular accounts of her health, her improvements and her behaviour" (Isles, Lennox 427). Lennox then speculates on the future benefits of this association between Lady Clerke and Harriot and anticipates her husband's skepticism:

you may affect to treat what I am now going to tell you with ridicule--but for all that, it is a fact--Lady Clerke has already mentioned Harriet in her will--she is fond of her--and from the natural sensibility of her heart that fondness will be increased by the child's being confided to her care--without building castles in the air, many advantages for Harriet may be expected Lady Clerke's situation considered--at least she will be in fortune's way.... (Isles, Lennox 427)

Lennox's portrayal here certainly comes across to the reader, as she was aware it might, as nothing more than her building "castles in the air" and offers the picture of a woman determined to improve, if not her own, then at least her daughter's financial position in life.

Lennox then shifts from the material benefits that Lady Clerke can confer to the moral ones: "in Lady Clerke, she will have a wise, and virtuous mistress, who will not only endeavour to inspire her with the love of virtue by precepts, but shew how lovely, and desirable it is by her own example..." (Isles, Lennox 428). Lennox ends the letter by asking her husband to consider what she has said and "let me know your determination" (Isles, Lennox 428). What Lennox tries to achieve in this letter is curiously at odds with what she creates in her fiction: in fact, the letter seems more fictional than her novels. Whereas in this letter, she asks her husband to accept as real the likelihood of his daughter's financial, if not social, advancement and professes a belief in the efficacy of a moral guide, in much of her fiction, her heroines struggle repeatedly with poverty, and she explicitly details the limitations of precepts and positive moral examples.

Readers' Expectations That Novels Be Moral and Didactic

While her letter to her husband reads very much like a condensed Richardson novel, Lennox's fiction never achieves more than a slight resemblance to his work, either in terms of form or content. Lennox's last novel, Euphemia (1790), is certainly an epistolary work, with Maria even pointedly exclaiming to Euphemia, "what a feast do you prepare for me, by writing thus to the moment" (III, 93), and the friendship between Euphemia and Maria generally resembles that between Clarissa and Anna Howe. Unlike Sheridan, whose works were routinely compared to Richardson's, Lennox's contemporary readers do not link her directly with Richardson. They do emphasize the instructive and moral nature of her fiction, however. In Henry Fielding's review of The Female Quixote, he praises Lennox: "our Author hath taken such Care throughout her Work, to expose all those Vices and Follies in her Sex which are chiefly predominant in our Days, that it will afford very useful Lessons to all those young Ladies who will peruse it with proper Attention" (282). Another critic casts his praise for Sophia in similarly gendered terms:

In this little history is exemplified the triumph of wit and virtue over beauty, with that delicacy peculiar to all the novels of the ingenious Mrs. Lennox. The lesson is instructive, the story interesting, the language chaste, the reflections natural, and the general moral such as we must recommend to the attention of all our female readers. (Critical Review 13 [1762]: 434)

Even when condemning a novel by Lennox, her critics comment on the moral aspects of her fiction. A reviewer offers a mixed reaction to Harriot Stuart, arguing that while it is the best in the novel way that has been lately published....at the same time it must be owned that this work affords nothing great, or noble, or useful, or very entertaining. Here are no striking characters, no interesting events, nor in short any thing that will strongly fix the attention, or greatly improve the morals of the reader. (Monthly Review 4 [1750-51]: 160)

Whether approving or not, Lennox's contemporaries still make their judgments based on the same questions: is the novel moral? instructive? useful?

Two hundred years later, the same questions are still being asked. Most early to mid-twentieth-century critics comment on the similarities between Lennox's and Richardson's fiction, especially in terms of moral content and, curiously, choose to compare her works to Clarissa. Considering the comedic resolution of Lennox's novels, the comparisons to Clarissa derive from and reinforce, I believe, the idea of Lennox as a moralizing writer. In discussing Henrietta (1758), Miriam Small notes that

this novels shows at last where Mrs. Lennox has placed herself; like all her work from this time on it is strongly moral, and no situation is so tense as not to admit the inclusion of judicious moralizing. Although Henrietta is not so weak as to fall into a type, it foreshadows the Richardsonian convention which Mrs. Lennox, like so many women novelists of the day, is adopting, a rather colorless repetition of Clarissa and her sentiments without the remarkable analysis of feelings which was Richardson's especial gift. (24)

Joyce M. Horner, too, credits Lennox's novels as "taking their direction from those of Richardson" (43). Horner notes what Lennox, like other women novelists of the period, owed to Richardson, "whom they followed in making their heroines women of education and of opinions of their own" (133), but she also suggests that Lennox differs from Richardson in taking her heroines less seriously (132). While the details and interpretations may vary slightly, Lennox's moralizing clearly places her, in these critics' minds, firmly in the Richardsonian camp.

The mistake made about Lennox's fiction, both by her contemporaries and later critics, is to assume that her fiction is designed to improve the morals of its readership and that it has a didactic agenda similar to that of Richardson's. Because the reader expects eighteenth-century novels to be moral and useful or instructive, she or he is confused when

the reality differs from those expectations. Just as Lennox's contemporary readers expected to find moral messages geared toward instructing young women in her novels, so Deborah Ross expects to find Lennox's moral content combined with a didactic imperative. In her reading of The Female Quixote, Ross writes that

there is a didactic message in this, but hardly a 'moral': conformity is not 'right,' but prudent; rebellion is not 'wrong,' but insane, or pointlessly self-destructive.

This message is not only amoral but inconsistent with the novel's stated optimistic philosophy, and with the implications of its comic form, both of which promise that a woman with her eyes open will be not merely resigned, but happy. (Excellence 105)

Expecting to find one, Ross sees a didactic message but finds it ambiguous: "The many facets of Arabella's character gave a variety of readers something to like about this novel, but her ambiguity, like that of Betsy Thoughtless and Harriot Stuart, must have frustrated those who were trying to gain from it what it seemed to promise: advice on how to live right and be happy" (Excellence 95). Ross blames the opposing forces in the novel, such as realism and romance, for making it "not actually possible to learn good conduct from many novels that seemed to promise such instruction" (Mirror 158).

Having decided that the moral content of The Female Quixote is actually amoral, Ross argues that Lennox's didactic goals must necessarily suffer as well:

What, then, has happened to the thesis that romance does nothing for young readers but cultivate bad taste in literature, bad manners, and bad morality? The clergyman's objections are serious, yet few of those objections can stand against the impression of Arabella's martyrdom. However positively today's readers may view this ambiguity, it represents failure according to the novel's own expressed moral and critical standards. If a book cannot resolve issues, it cannot advise--and then it is not "useful." (Excellence 104)

In order to evaluate the moral and critical standards found in The Female Quixote, one must do two things: first, discard preconceived notions about the relationship between moral content and didactic function, and, second, read the novel in the context of Lennox's other novels. Ross suggests that Lennox's work seems to promise advice on how to live right and be happy, but the key phrase for reading Lennox is "seemed to promise." Lennox makes fundamental moral distinctions between virtuous and vicious characters, and, although this division may not seem optimistic in the twentieth-century terms, it is far from amoral. As Jane Spencer correctly notes, Lennox offers a "conservative moral view" (192) in her work, but it does not necessarily then follow that Lennox expects her novel to offer advice to the reader.

The Female Quixote and the Natural Propensity to Virtue or Vice

The most closely written of Lennox's novels, Harriot Stuart and The Female Quixote seem as different from each other as possible. On the one hand, Harriot Stuart is a rollicking protagonist direct from the Restoration stage and her adventure-laden story seems very much a product of the early eighteenth century. Arabella's story, on the other hand, offers a more sedate and decorous pacing and approach, and the adventures are patently manufactured by a heroine starved for excitement, trapped in a much more domestic surrounding. A fundamental difference between the two novels is that while Arabella reforms her wayward imagination, Harriot Stuart does not reform in any substantial manner.

The main similarity between Lennox's first two novels concerns the need for reform in her heroines, who are essentially virtuous but whose words and actions frequently bring them into conflict with others. Although Ross argues that "neither Haywood nor Lennox heeded Johnson's warning about 'mixed' characters, for in theory both considered realistic characterization more instructive than models of perfection" (Excellence 69), Lennox's

heroines are "mixed" only at the most superficial level. What Lennox suggests explicitly in The Female Quixote and implicitly in her other novels is that individuals are either essentially virtuous or vicious. Because of this "natural propensity to virtue or vice" (The Female Quixote 277), reform at a fundamental level is either unnecessary (for the virtuous) or impossible (for the vicious). This view of humanity requires the reader to question the usefulness of moral exemplars or moral guides and to realize that neither example nor language can bridge the moral gap between virtue and vice.

Twentieth-century critical attention focuses on Lennox's second novel, The Female Quixote, precisely because of the ambiguities present in the novel, especially those created by the tension between romance and realism. It is important to recognize, however, that The Female Quixote is quite unlike Lennox's other novels in that it focuses on a set of leisured and financially secure characters, many of whom have titles or are of exalted birth. Unlike her other heroines, Lennox's Arabella undergoes what seems to be a conversion experience: where once her life revolved around romances, at the novel's end, she rejects them as unworthy of providing the basis for her every action. Arabella's dramatic reform and the discussions of exemplary fiction by both the divine and Arabella suggest that Lennox believes in the usefulness of moral exemplars and the didactic capacity of fiction. A closer reading of the novel and Lennox's other novels, however, reveals that moral exemplars and didactic efforts are useful only in the most limited sense. Since the virtuous cannot influence or effect change in the vicious, what remains is the virtuous providing moral guidance for other virtuous characters or, in essence, preaching to the converted. The results of these exchanges between two virtuous characters may reinforce the idea of their respective virtues, but the experience does not enable them to change themselves significantly or to affect the lives of others more effectively.

Because of the dramatic outward appearance of reform in Arabella in The Female Quixote, Lennox seems to suggest that Arabella's vices have been converted to virtues by

the good offices of the divine. In fact, Arabella is an explicitly virtuous young woman whose only flaw is her overreliance on romances. For many readers, the chapter in which Arabella suddenly renounces her romances seems clumsy or disappointing.² Some try to explain away the overt moralizing by arguing that Samuel Johnson wrote the chapter, while others refute that idea.³ The divine's quick transformation of Arabella may seem sad, hasty, forced, or oppressive, but the seeds of her ability to change and the extent of the readjustments necessary are found throughout the novel. Essentially, Arabella is a virtuous young woman, both before and after her conversion. The problem is her misplaced reliance on and belief in the tenets of romance fiction, not a natural propensity to vice.

Arabella's flaws are very specifically detailed by those around her, and their responses to her make it clear to the reader, if not to Arabella, what she is expected not to do, say, or think. The Countess of --- sums up the objections to Arabella's reliance on romance literature by remonstrating with Arabella: "Custom...changes the very Nature of Things, and what was honourable a thousand Years ago, may probably be look'd upon as infamous now...." (328). She concludes her discourse by gently insisting that, "'Tis certain therefore, Madam...that what was Virtue in those Days, is Vice in ours" (329). Arabella's strong sense of virtue and vice is merely reversed but not absent. After her conversion, she is wholly absorbed for several hours "in the most disagreeable Reflections on the Absurdity of her past Behaviour, and the Contempt and Ridicule to which she now saw plainly she had exposed herself" (383). Arabella reflects on her former absurdities, but they are only that, absurdities, not pervasive character flaws that render her incapable of virtuous behavior.

Arabella's passions need redirecting, but Lennox questions the amount of change necessary in her character, even in her "flawed" state. Despite her faults, Arabella looks admirable in contrast to those whose behavior and actions are considered normal by her society. The trip to Bath and London are necessary to show that Arabella, while certainly peculiar in dress and manner, is no more offensive than any other member of society. Is

her "affectation" any different from the personality extremes of Mr. Tinsel and Mr. Selvin, one a profound gossip and the other a supposed scholar who actually has no real learning? Once others realize her rank and wealth, they suddenly recollect the foibles of other rich and titled women: "One remembered, that Lady J--- T--- always wore her Ruffles reversed; that the Countess of --- went to Court in a Farthingale; that the Duchess of --- sat astride upon a Horse" (264). In the context of these other examples of female peculiarities, Arabella seems less absurd. In contrast to Selvin, Tinsel, and even Charlotte Glanville, she appears positively wise, virtuous, and interesting, even before her conversion.

Although she is essentially virtuous, Arabella needs to learn to distinguish between good and bad fiction and to recognize the limitations of romance fiction. As part of his argument to convert Arabella, the divine argues that "truth is not always injured by Fiction" (377), and he cites the work of Richardson as an example. Whereas "senseless Fictions...at once vitiate the Mind, and pervert the Understanding" (374), he argues, "books ought to supply an Antidote to Example" (380). He further suggests that "the only Excellence of Falshood...is its Resemblance to Truth" (378).

Even before the divine discusses the proper role of fiction with Arabella, however, she understands that stories can fulfill a didactic function. In Bath, Arabella asks Mr. Tinsel to tell her the stories of those present in the Assembly Room, as a "more rational Amusement than Dancing" (274). Her cousin and suitor Mr. Glanville cautions her that she will not find this necessarily so, but she responds, "Why so, Sir...since it is not an indiscreet Curiosity which prompts me to a Desire of hearing the Histories Mr. Tinsel has promis'd to entertain me with; but rather a Hope of hearing something which may at once improve and delight me; something which may excite my Admiration, engage my Esteem, or influence my Practice" (274). Her desire to seek improvement through the example of others signals her belief in the exemplary role fiction can play. When Mr. Tinsel finishes, Arabella is disappointed in her story teller, who has not provided the desired histories but "rather

detached Pieces of Satire on particular Persons, than a serious Relation of Facts" (276).

Her request for a serious relation of facts anticipates the divine's conviction that stories are only worthwhile in their resemblance to truth.

The divine's words about the proper use of fiction and Arabella's pursuit of stories that will influence her own practice suggest the idea that fiction can and should show people what to do. But even as Arabella herself outlines the proper uses of exemplary stories, the limitations of examples becomes clear. After she protests the usefulness of Tinsel's so-called histories, Glanville suggests that, at least, "if he has not shewn us any Thing to approve, he as [sic] at least shewn us what to condemn" (276). In answer to this, Arabella argues for the need for the complete disassociation of virtue from vice:

The Ugliness of Vice...ought only to be represented to the Vicious; to whom Satire, like a magnifying Glass, may aggravate every Defect, in order to make its Deformity appear more hideous; but since its End is only to reprove and amend, it should never be address'd to any but those who come within its Correction, and may be the better for it: A virtuous Mind need not be shewn the Deformity of Vice, to make it be hated and avoided; the more pure and uncorrupted our Ideas are, the less we shall be influenc'd by Example. A natural Propensity to Virtue or Vice often determines the Choice: 'Tis sufficient therefore to shew a good Mind what it ought to pursue, though a bad one must be told what to avoid. In a word, one ought to be always incited, the other always restrain'd. (277)

Fiction can show the virtuous mind "what it ought to pursue," but the fundamental division between virtue and vice precludes any possibility that the virtuous can affect the vicious.

In contrast to the rather brief discussion of what fiction can provide for the virtuously inclined, Lennox further emphasizes the limitations of examples for those with a natural propensity to vice:

The Mind that cannot be brought to detest Vice, will never be persuaded to love

Virtue; but one who is incapable of loving or hating irreconcilably, by having, when young, his Passions directed to proper Objects, will remain fix'd in his Choice of what is good. But with him who is incapable of any violent Attraction, and whose Heart is chilled by a general Indifference, Precept or Example will have no Force-- And Philosophy itself, which boasts it hath Remedies for all Indispositions of the Soul, never had any that can cure an Indifferent Mind. (311)

Lennox may have Arabella paraphrasing Johnson's remarks in the Rambler, No. 37,⁴ but this distinction between virtue and vice plays a central role in Lennox's fiction. She believes, not without exception, but almost universally, that people tend fundamentally toward virtuous or vicious behavior and that their natural propensities keep them from ever crossing the line between them. The virtuous can be exemplary for others who are inclined to virtue, but the limited effectiveness of these exchanges becomes explicitly clear in Lennox's other novels.

In The Female Quixote, moral guides or exemplars appear to perform an important role in effecting Arabella's dramatic rejection of romances near the end of the novel. When examined more closely, however, Arabella's fundamental propensity to virtue diminishes the magnitude of her reform. Despite losing track of the "proper objects" for her passions, Arabella detests vice. Although the modern reader may mourn her conversion and find that it occurs too fast, the seeds of her cure are within her all the time and are merely cultivated by the divine. What complicates the issue of exemplars in The Female Quixote, however, is the presence of not one guide but several potential ones: Glanville, the Countess of ---, and the divine.

While it is clear what Arabella's faults are, it is less clear whose actions and conversation she should emulate. As her future husband, Glanville is deemed responsible for her behavior. His own father observes that "since she was to be his Wife, it was his Business to produce a Reformation in her" (64), and Glanville knows this to be general

consensus. At a loss to know how to effect the reformation, however, Glanville experiences palpable relief when the countess appears.

The countess seems ideally suited for influencing Arabella as she combines a logical approach to the problem with a sympathetic and informed knowledge of the romance tradition. Arabella may have trouble with others misinterpreting her words and actions, but the countess, who "herself had when very young, been deep read in Romances," (323) understands her language and responses. Leland E. Warren suggests that the countess and Glanville "fear the consequences of waking her too abruptly," and so the countess "decides to enter into Arabella's discourse in order to lead her gradually back to truth, the public discourse" (372). Even Glanville, while not going so far as to read the romances, at least accommodates himself to her ways and tries to emulate her language from time to time.⁵ Both the countess and Glanville try to reach Arabella through the medium of her own language, the language of romance. They believe that if they speak to her on her own terms that they can improve their relationship with her and perhaps their ability to change her.

Warren argues that the countess wants to achieve a gradual conversion by providing Arabella with "a new discourse before taking away the old" (373), but this attempt to combine two discourses only confuses Arabella. She listens to the countess's discussion of why she should not apply romance tenets to current life, but despite the "tumult" aroused by the countess's argument, Arabella "was surpriz'd, embarrass'd, perplex'd, but not convinc'd" (329). The countess's abrupt departure may be due to due to Lennox's attempts to shorten her novel from three volumes to two,⁶ but time is not the primary reason for the countess's lack of success. Presumably, more time with the countess would have been sufficient to convince Arabella, but the divine accomplishes his task in a relatively short time period, so time alone cannot be the deciding factor.

The divine succeeds where the other two fail, because he does not attempt to

employ the morally dubious romance tradition but rather appeals directly to those elements of Arabella's character that define her as essentially virtuous: her piety and her ability to reason logically. The divine accomplishes what the countess and Glanville cannot because of his combination of Christian piety, especially relevant as Arabella had been preparing for death, and logical reasoning, with no quarter given to the romance tradition. Laurie Langbauer argues that "at the end of the book, Arabella is inaugurated into man's realm and becomes indistinguishable from the men in it. She leaves romance by participating in the patriarchal discourse of moral law and in that discussion loses her voice; her words become literally undistinguishable from those of the Doctor" (42). Yet Arabella does not wait until the end of the novel to emulate the divine's voice. Much of what the divine says about fiction and correct moral behavior are already known to Arabella as can be seen in her discussions of virtue and vice and the role of fiction. Arabella has already proven herself adept at public discourse, when not focusing on romances.

Although occasional references to fiction appear in Lennox's other novels, nowhere else does she insist on its didactic function as she appears to do in The Female Quixote. Characters can exemplify abstract moral principles such as virtue and vice and more specific moral behaviors such as filial duty or chastity, but that is the extent of their exemplarity. What varies from novel to novel is whether or not the heroine seems to need reform herself or is deemed to be capable of reforming others; whether she chooses an active or passive approach to effecting the lives of others; and the way in which the heroine's essentially virtuous nature manifests itself. In each of her novels, however, Lennox pairs a virtuous or even exemplary heroine with a moral guide. Both heroine and guide exemplify moral virtues or try to instill proper moral behavior, but neither is successful. Although it appears that the moral guide usually offers more pragmatic assistance to the heroine than the heroine is able to offer to others, Lennox juxtaposes the two only to re-emphasize the limitations of instruction, whether involving specific moral

behaviors or more abstract ideas of virtue.

Moral Tales and Moral Guides in *Harriot Stuart*

In her first novel, Harriot Stuart, Lennox creates a heroine who, like Arabella, appears in need of reform. Both Arabella and Harriot Stuart are readers of romances and fancy themselves as heroines, with Harriot seeing herself as "nothing less than a Clelia or Statira" (I, 8). Like Arabella, Harriot is essentially a virtuous young woman, marred only by one particular flaw. Despite their similarities, Harriot's character never undergoes such a dramatic change as does Arabella. Stories that seem patently designed to instruct only serve to highlight the heroine's essential virtues, chastity and filial duty, rather than fulfill a didactic function. Whereas Fielding inserts clearly didactic subplots within The Countess of Dellwyn in order to complement the story of her protagonist and to help her readers learn how to make moral distinctions, two inserted tales in Lennox's novel seem curiously distanced from Harriot Stuart's own story and circumstances.

As in The Female Quixote, Lennox makes a clear division between those with propensities to virtue and vice. In Harriot Stuart, however, Lennox explores the impossibilities of effecting radical change in a character who does not tend naturally to virtuous behavior in more detail than in The Female Quixote, but not in the main story itself. In the longest subplot of the novel, Harriot's friend Miss Belville tells her the story of her sister Maria and herself and their relative encounters with the male sex.⁷ On the one hand, Miss Belville is so virtuous that even after being imprisoned for debt, she will not take money from any of the men pursuing her, because she does not want to expose herself by being "obliged to any man, who has a dishonourable design upon me" (II, 137). On the other hand, her sister Maria acts very much like Miss Groves from The Female Quixote, who is seduced easily and bears several children by her lover.

Miss Belville protests the immoral behavior of her sister, but Maria refuses to listen

to her, and Maria has no other relatives to "assume a right of censuring her conduct" (II, 118). Besides her own virtuous example, Miss Belville tries several methods of swaying her wayward sister, including tears and arguments filled with reason and conviction. In so doing, she shows her desire to save not only her sister but also her own reputation, from the "fatal contagion of her almost ruined character" (II, 124). When Maria becomes pregnant, Miss Belville takes advantage of Maria's fear of death in labor to convince her to sever her connection with her lover, who seems to be growing indifferent anyway. Out of fear and resentment toward her lover, Maria agrees to write a letter, dictated by Miss Belville, dismissing her lover, but her repentance is temporary. Miss Belville had hoped that "a returning sense of virtue, and remorse for her past guilt, aided my remonstrances" (II, 123) but recognizes that "resentment and despair" (II, 123) were the true motivations. Repentance and reform cannot be instilled from the outside but rather must come from within and derive from proper motives. Miss Belville tells Harriot that "as I could never discover in the unhappy Maria any sentiments of piety, or dependence on providence...I despaired of ever reclaiming her from motives of religion" (II, 124). When Maria returns to her lover and becomes pregnant yet again, Miss Belville admits defeat. In answer to her sister's logic, tears, or religious teachings, Maria "had a way of silencing reason and conviction by the thunder of her voice" (II, 129). The implication behind this story is that virtue cannot teach vice or lead vice away from bad behavior because virtue and vice do not speak the same language, as Miss Belville uses reason and Maria relies on rages to communicate. The natural propensity to virtue and vice are illustrated in these two sisters, and Lennox suggests that, because of the differences in their use of reason and language itself, virtue can never influence vice.

Although Harriot hears this story in a convent where she is being held prisoner, the story bears little relation to her own history. Harriot is clearly virtuous and chaste despite being a coquette. Throughout the novel, Harriot admits to being a coquet and delights in

receiving the admiration of men, even when her heart already is pledged to one admirer in particular, Dumont, from an early age. She acknowledges that "I was born a coquet, and what would have been art in others, in me was pure nature" (I, 8). Being coquettish does not mean that she is unchaste, however. She censures the overt liberties of society: "Tho' it is possible I had as much the principle of coquetry in me as any of them, I could not approve the gay liberties they indulged themselves in. While I aimed at inspiring a delicate and respectful passion, they gloried in giving birth to the most boundless wishes" (I, 138).

The story of Maria and her sister may illustrate Lennox's moral theories about virtue and vice, but there is no practical application to be made to Harriot Stuart's situation. In fact, unlike Maria who refuses to heed her sister's advice, Harriot has benefited from that of her own sibling. As her primary preceptor during her youth, Harriot's brother plays an active role in her education, taking "incessant pains in the improvement of my mind" (I, 3), and Harriot says that he

lost no opportunity of improving my morals, as well as my understanding: he instilled an early love for virtue into my soul; and, as I grew older, the strength and beauty of his arguments, fixed that principle so deeply in my heart, that no trials, no distresses, nor all the softening power of love, were ever able to erase it. (I, 9)

His efforts while Harriot is still young suggests that early instruction in correct moral behavior may result in a life-long love of virtue, but this idea of influence is undercut in two ways. First, Maria and Miss Belville were presumably taught by the same person during their youths, yet one sister became virtuous and the other vicious, which suggests their fundamental natures were more likely to indicate their future paths than any influence during their youths. Second, the scene between brother and sister only serves to highlight Harriot's fundamental propensity to virtue that allows her to benefit from his teaching. Unlike Miss Belville and her sister, Harriot and her brother clearly speak the same language of virtue. Thus, the story of Miss Belville and Maria serves only to illustrate

Harriot's normal tendency to virtue, rather than offer her advice on how to conduct herself.

Harriot manifests her natural propensity to virtuous behavior not only in her chastity but also in her sense of filial duty. While Harriot and her mother have no fondness for each other, Harriot respects her mother and tries to obey her when possible. But Harriot's primary filial duty is directed toward her father. Although her father dies during the course of the novel, Harriot remains steadfast in her devotion to him. Her duty to her father is tested when her preferred lover, Dumont, offers her a clandestine marriage. Her father has adamantly refused to allow her to marry a papist: "nothing but misery can attend the union of two persons, whose principles are so different; and the fatal consequences of such a marriage already in my family, has confirm'd me in my abhorrence of it" (I, 39). After her father dies, Dumont reappears, declares his love for Harriot, and asks her to marry him. She refuses to break her vow to her father not to marry Dumont and says that she will not allow them to indulge in an unhappy passion at the expense of both of their well beings by marrying without the consents of their families. She confesses that she does love him but then enumerates the barriers that prevent their marriage, including his religion, his previous engagement, and his and her lack of money. She then adds the final reason for her declining the private marriage by stating that "I never disobeyed my father while he lived: dying, he left me an absolute command never to marry any one of your religion, however advantageous it might be to my interests. Alas!...I would suffer a thousand deaths rather than break the solemn vow I made, never to disobey him in so important a point" (I, 159). Although her father is no longer around to praise her, she still acts in accordance to his wishes and knows that by doing so, she will spare herself and her lover pain and unhappiness.

Her refusal to marry Dumont occurs in the first volume of the novel, but oddly enough, the cautionary tale of a woman who married without her family's consent appears in volume two. Harriot arrives in London to live with her aunt, Lady L---, but learns that

her aunt has been declared insane and confined. In the absence of her aunt, she is befriended by Mrs. Dormer, her aunt's friend, who happens to live in the same lodgings as Harriot. In one of the longer subplots in the novel, Mrs. Dormer relates the story of her own ill-fated marriage, which occurs without the permission of her family, to Harriot. She falls in love with "the only man in the world whom my father would have forbidden me to think of" (II, 56), and they marry privately. When her husband deserts her, she has no recourse and no claim against him because of the private nature of their marriage. When an eligible suitor, Mr. Clayton, wants to marry her, she cannot, and she confesses the truth of the matter to him. Her father overhears the confession and disowns her. Clayton kills her errant husband, but she refuses to reward him by marrying him because such an action would not be consistent with religion or virtue (II, 75). Even though she hated her husband, she cannot marry his murderer, and by what her father calls her "uncommon greatness of my mind" (II, 78), she earns her father's respect, and he pardons her. At the end of Mrs. Dormer's tale, Harriot applauds her behavior as virtuous, but Mrs. Dormer cautions her that "my misfortunes had their rise from disobedience first" (II, 79-80).

Despite Mrs. Dormer's insistence that Harriot not view her as especially virtuous for her behavior, once again Harriot has nothing to learn from her friend's tale. By the time she hears Mrs. Dormer's story, Harriot has not only decided not to go through with an elopement with Captain Belmein but also already turned down her preferred lover, Dumont, and his offer of a clandestine marriage. Mrs. Dormer emphasizes the fact that Harriot has nothing to learn from her own story by noting "how differently, in that respect, have I behaved from you, who, at the most tender age, was capable of sacrificing your passion to duty" (II, 80). Harriot has occasionally disobeyed her family's wishes, but in the matter of private marriages, she behaved as she should, even paying heed to her dead father's wishes. The story, occurring as it does so late in the novel, seems designed to show that even long before hearing such a cautionary tale, Harriot has made the correct choice to

eschew a clandestine marriage. That she makes such a decision in the absence of her father and without any other guidance emphasizes her filial obedience and innate strength of character. Like the story of Maria and Miss Belville, Mrs. Dormer's tale serves to illustrate Harriot's essentially virtuous nature rather than instruct.

Although these stories do not fulfill a didactic function for Harriot, she does receive instruction from her governess and constant companion, Mrs. Bandon. Like Arabella, Harriot does need to reform in one area of her life, despite her normal propensity to virtue. Unlike Arabella, who reforms so dramatically, however, Harriot does not reform at all despite the fact that she recognizes the flaw in her character. Whereas Arabella is guided by the words of the divine, Harriot does not heed the advice of her own moral guide.

In the absence of her family, either through their deaths or her own travels, Harriot is accompanied by Mrs. Bandon. Although not as fully a developed character in the novel as, say, Harriot's friend Mrs. Dormer, Mrs. Bandon still plays an important role in Harriot's life. At the death of her governess, Harriot laments the loss of "her who had loved me with a parent's fondness, and who had taken such unwearied pains to form my mind to piety and virtue" (I, 243). As part of her attempts to form Harriot's moral character, Mrs. Bandon continuously admonishes Harriot for her desire for admiration. She tells Harriot that she should not practice her vanity at the expense of others, especially with an unwanted suitor like Mr. Maynard, and she chastises her, "I have often condemned that inordinate desire of admiration which I have discovered in you. You see the consequences of indulging in that folly" (I, 28). The admonishments do not fall on deaf ears but still no changes result.

Harriot recognizes the dangers of her incessant desire for admiration and the power that her beauty gives her over men: "Has not my fatal fondness for admiration...betrayed my virtue into numberless dangers! Shall I never grow weary of this folly, till it has undone me!" (II, 163). She resolves to change, but acknowledges that "alas! my repentance was far

from being sincere, and I relaps'd into all my former indiscretions, the moment I had it in my power to indulge them" (I, 38). The lack of change in Harriot is further emphasized by the amount of change that her favored suitor, Dumont, undergoes before he and she are able to wed: he changes his religion, becomes a wealthy man, and remains faithful to her despite appearances to the contrary. His numerous changes only serve to indicate how little Harriot has changed. But, as is true with Arabella, the extent of change needed in Harriot is really quite small considering her natural propensity to virtue. Her vanity and flirtatiousness have serious consequences, as her near rape indicates, but that situation occurred when her fundamentally virtuous character was misread.

Despite Harriot's respect and love for Mrs. Bandon and her own recognition of her character flaw, she still does not change her behavior. Mrs. Bandon's failure to effect a change in her charge derives not from any innate problems with her teaching methods but rather from the limited ability of even the most moral of characters affecting the lives of other moral characters. The two virtuous characters can agree on moral issues, but the heroine's essentially virtuous nature limits the need for profound changes in her behavior. Harriot's brother, for example, can be effective in the vague manner in which he "improves her morals," but as to specific improvements, the moral guide can only suggest slight modifications instead of wholesale changes.

Despite the appearance of failure by Mrs. Bandon, the role of moral guide is significant both in Harriot Stuart and in Lennox's other novels. Lennox examines the ability of stories to instruct in both The Female Quixote and Harriot Stuart, but in all of her novels she explores the limitations of instruction between two characters, specifically the heroine and her moral guide. Whether or not Lennox's heroines follow the moral precepts offered by their guides, the results are always the same: the guide usually offers moral advice but usually ends up only being able to help the heroine on a much more pragmatic basis. The moral guides appear as the divine in The Female Quixote, Mrs. Willis

in Henrietta, Mr. Herbert in Sophia, and Mrs. Benson in Euphemia. There are variations among the portrayals, such as the countess occupying less time in Arabella's life and Mr. Herbert occupying more in Sophia's, and both the countess and Mr. Herbert being more equal in rank to their respective charges. Despite the variations, however, each of these characters acts or tries to act in the capacity of moral guide for the heroine, whether or not she is herself exemplary, and the heroines acknowledge the importance of these people in their lives. While the subtleties among each of these will be discussed in more detail as each novel is examined, the fact remains that while guides can try to promote moral behavior, their influence is ultimately fairly limited. These guides can provide comfort and support and guidance on a day-to-day level for their friends, but they are not necessarily able to effect changes in the heroines' lives. In comparison to the heroines' efforts, however, the guides suggest what can be done versus what has been attempted by the heroine.

Ineffective Exemplarity in *Sophia*

After her first two novels, Lennox's heroines become less in need of reform themselves and more possessed of the moral authority that should theoretically allow them to effect reform in others. Yet, once again, Lennox highlights the distance between those who are fundamentally virtuous and those who are not in order to suggest that the virtuous cannot influence or instruct the vicious and that they can only slightly affect others who are also virtuously inclined. In Sophia (1762), Lennox re-examines the theme of two sisters, one chaste the other not, but this time not as a subplot as is found in Harriot Stuart, but as the main plot. The result is that the reader can see even more clearly than in the story of Maria and Miss Belville the inability of the virtuous to affect those inclined toward vice.

Despite her imprudent father, who has died, leaving only debts as his legacy to his family, and an indifferent mother, Mrs. Darnley, Lennox's heroine Sophia grows up

virtuously, with her "just taste and solid judgment [supplying] the place of teachers, precept, and example" (I, 5). While her sister Harriot wastes her time on "dress, company, and gay amusements," Sophia reads (I, 5) and fills her mind with ideas, from whence "she derived the power and habit of constant reflection, which at once enlarged her understanding, and confirmed her in the principles of piety and virtue" (I, 6). That Sophia's reading only "confirms" her in "the principles of piety and virtue" suggests that both her piety and virtue were in place originally and that she exhibits a natural propensity to virtue, despite the lack of guidance during her earliest years.

Lennox shows the exemplary Sophia as both the recipient of advice from Mr. Herbert and the dispenser of advice to Dolly to underscore the restricted extent to which one virtuous person can affect another similarly inclined. Mr. Herbert, a near relation of her father's, eventually becomes her guardian, although he does not live with her family and her mother is alive. He encourages her learning, teaches her French and Italian, and often defends Sophia's actions to her mother. When Mrs. Darnley protests his interference, he says that he considers himself Sophia's guardian "and in that quality I pretend to some right to regulate her conduct on an occasion which requires a guardian's care and authority" (I, 122). Mrs. Darnley sees no need for the penniless Sophia to have a guardian, but he responds, "I am the guardian of her honour and reputation...these make up her fortune: and with those she is richer than if she possessed thousands without them" (I, 123).

In his unofficial capacity as Sophia's guardian, Mr. Herbert occupies a more central role in her life than the moral guides in Lennox's other novels. Even though his influence over Sophia is obviously strong, he still cannot force her to make the correct decision. In two specific instances, Sophia must choose between allowing her feelings for the rakish Sir Charles to rule her or following the correct path. In both cases, Mr. Herbert does not seek to influence her, rather he waits for her to make a decision. Early on in the novel, Sophia doubts that Sir Charles has honorable intentions toward herself and finds herself in conflict

with her mother, who thinks that Sophia should encourage him in his attentions. She confides to Mr. Herbert that "I am reduced to the sad necessity of either acting in open contradiction to her sentiments and commands, or of continuing in a state of humiliating suspense, to which my character must at last fall a sacrifice" (I, 94). Against her mother's advice, Sophia rejects Sir Charles' deed, which would have settled three hundred pounds a year on her. She does not have Mr. Herbert present to confirm her choice, but later she says that "you may judge of my sentiments, Sir...by the resolution I have taken: I wished to consult you; but as I had no opportunity for it, I satisfied myself with doing what I thought you would approve" (I, 105).

In the second episode, Mr. Herbert's mere presence is enough to remind her of her obligations. Harriot leaves her mother's house to avoid further interaction with Sir Charles and en route to the curate's house with whom she will lodge, at Mr. Herbert's expense, she begins to "feel tender regret" for the loss of Sir Charles (I, 136). Her companion on the journey, Mr. Herbert,

by not attempting to divert the course of her reflections, soon drew her out of her reverie: his silence and reserve first intimated to her the impropriety of her behaviour. She immediately assumed her usual composure, and during the remainder of their little journey, she appeared as chearful and serene as if nothing extraordinary had happened. (I, 136-37).

Because Sophia is so well versed in the ways of virtuous behavior, she need only think of Mr. Herbert's reaction to her situation to remember what she owes to herself. But Mr. Herbert is not her sole or even primary reason for her decision. She determines to overcome her feelings for Sir Charles but finds it difficult: "But, good and pious as she was, the passion she could not wholly subdue, she regulated by reason and virtue" (I, 181). Mr. Herbert certainly has played an important role in forming who she is, but equally so her virtue and reason are such integral parts of her nature that she will always make the

correct moral decision, even without his literal direction or guidance. Unlike Harriot Stuart, whose monitor Mrs. Blandon continually tells her she must change, Sophia has internalized her lessons well and acts upon them accordingly. Mr. Herbert is reduced to confirming her decisions and trying to act as mediator between Sophia and her mother.

Even as she has learned to subdue passion through reason, so she in turn counsels another essentially virtuous young woman to do the same. The curate's daughter, Dolly, pines for her suitor Mr. William, who has been banished by her father because of his family's reluctance to agree to the match. Sophia adjures her to "keep your passion so far subject to your reason, as to make it not too difficult to obey your father, if he is fully determined to refuse his consent" (I, 209). In giving this advice, Sophia is not pompous nor condescending but sympathetic as she herself struggles with a similar problem. She admits that "I know...that it is easier to be wise for others than for ourselves; but I know it is not impossible for a heart in love to follow the dictates of reason" (I, 209). She has herself experienced great distress when she believes that Sir Charles is her sister's lover, and she learns "but too well the truth of that maxim, That philosophy easily triumphs over past and future evils, but the present triumph over her" (II, 151). The recognition of her own weakness allows her to counsel wisely. The episodes with Mr. Herbert and Dolly suggest the ways in which one virtuous character can affect another, but these exchanges are limited to giving advice and sympathizing. By his presence Mr. Herbert can recall Sophia to her duty, just as Sophia's presence in Dolly's life reminds her to moderate her passions, but these are fairly subtle forms of teaching and rely entirely on the students' predispositions to the lessons to render them useful, as Lennox makes even more clear in her portrayal of Sophia's sister, mother, and lover.

Sophia's sage advice, however, is completely rejected by her unchaste sister, Harriot. Sophia's strong sense of family duty requires that she consult her sister, as she does on the matter of Sir Charles's deed of settlement (I, 103), but Sophia also feels

justified in trying to help moderate Harriot's behavior, whether in the matter of her intemperate rages (I, 62-63) or in the more serious matter of her being a kept woman. Sophia asks Harriot for the "truth of your situation, and if I find you happy according to my notions of happiness, you will soon be convinced that I can take a sister's share in it" (II, 149). Sophia and her mother are forced by their poverty to retire to the country, while her sister lives in luxury but in sin. Sophia does not give up on her sister, though, and writes "several letters to her, in which she employed all the power of virtuous eloquence to bring her to a sense of her errors," but her efforts were "in vain" (II, 165). Sophia encourages her sister to visit their modest home in hopes that "her example and her arguments might one day influence her to change her conduct" (II, 169), but again she is unsuccessful. Harriot continues to visit in the hopes that by continuing her connection with her mother and especially her virtuous sister, "the world would cease to suspect her, since Sophia approved her conduct" (II, 177). Sophia continues to "entertain hopes of her reformation," even if by her visits, Harriot is kept from a few moments of her sinful existence, because the "abatement of vice is a degree of virtue" (II, 177). Harriot's motives, however, for visiting are not from a desire to reform. Sophia's reasoned arguments provide Harriot with no tangible incentive to change her ways and, eventually, her intemperate rage, touched off by her lover leaving her, causes her sufficient vexation to throw "her into a distemper very fatal to beauty" (II, 231). Once again, as with the two sisters in Harriot Stuart, the language of reason cannot influence that of passion or emotion.

Harriot's passions, like Arabella's in The Female Quixote, are fixed on an improper object; in Harriot's case, the love of finery over virtue. But what makes it possible for Arabella to reform, her innate sense of virtue and vice, is lacking in Harriot, who shows no internal propensity to virtue. Thus, her passion cannot be commuted into a conversion, even when attempted by the exemplary Sophia. Mr. Herbert explains her inability to influence Harriot by arguing that "people of good understanding learn more from the

ignorant than the ignorant do from them, because the wise avoid the follies of fools, but fools will not follow the example of the wise" (I, 104).

Spacks discusses the use of siblings by women novelists "to dramatize the absolute separation of virtue and vice" with "a pair of sisters, one, good in every respect; the other, utterly reprehensible" ("Sisters" 137). She suggests that stories about sibling rivalry "implicitly reassure the reader about envious or rivalrous feelings toward sibling competitors by equating struggles between brothers or sisters with the ancient conflict of good and evil and by offering outcomes in which right always triumphs, outcomes both psychologically and morally comforting" ("Sisters" 136). Sophia certainly triumphs over her sister in a material sense, but Lennox repeatedly uses the stories of virtuous and vicious sisters or friends or sometimes even just acquaintances to illustrate how distinct their moral orientations are and how impossible it is to overcome the barriers between them. While the rewarding of the good sister occurs, there is something less than morally or psychologically comforting about Lennox's view that good can never influence evil.

While Sophia is unable to effect any change in Harriot, she appears to be responsible for changes in both Sir Charles and her mother. Both her mother and Sir Charles show an inclination toward vice yet end up as reformed characters. Sir Charles is a "delight of all who knew him, and even envy itself allowed him to be a man of the strictest honour and unblemished integrity" (17).⁸ Yet he pursues first Harriot and then Sophia with immoral motives. The narrator explains how he can be considered honorable and still be a rake: "such are the illusions of prejudice, and such the tyranny of custom, that he who is called a man of gallantry shall be at the same time esteemed a man of honour, though gallantry comprehends the worst kind of fraud, cruelty, and injustice" (17). Sir Charles's conscience upbraids him, but "custom, prejudice, the insolence of fortune, and the force of example, all conspired to suppress the pleadings of honour and justice in favour of the amiable Sophia, and fixed him in the barbarous resolution of attempting to corrupt that

virtue which made her so worthy of his love" (23). He would have proposed marriage, yet he was "carried away by the force of habit, an insurmountable aversion to marriage, and the false but strongly impressed notion of refinements in an union of hearts, where love was the only tie" (I, 82).

Despite his misguided notions, Sir Charles evinces signs of conscience and real passion for Sophia throughout the novel. When in her presence, "he was awed, disconcerted, and unable to speak; such was the power of virtue, and such the force of real passion" (21). The strength of his passion for Sophia lasts and eventually results in an honest proposal, but accidents and misunderstandings occur, and he believes her desirous of marrying Dolly's beau, Mr. William. After indulging in a hearty fit of jealousy and enduring a subsequent illness, Sir Charles decides to give Sophia the money to enable her to marry her farmer. His motives are not entirely disinterested as, by making her happy, he hopes to "entitle himself to her esteem, since he had unfortunately lost her heart" (II, 189). While custom has allowed for Sir Charles to indulge in less than moral pursuits, he still seems to have grains of decency in his character that Sophia brings to the surface. Although other Lennox heroines cast aspersions on rakes who marry only because they cannot seduce the woman,⁹ Sir Charles is shown to be a reformed libertine whom Sophia gladly marries.

The other reformed character in the novel, Mrs. Darnley, a woman shown clearly to be unworthy of her daughter throughout the novel, nonetheless dies a Christian death. The curate, who helps Mrs. Darnley prepare for death, assures Sophia that her mother's "attachment to the world, which the affluent circumstances to which she was raised but too much increased, had at length given way to more pious sentiments; and she died with the resignation of a christian" (II, 234). This reform is even harder to understand than Sir Charles's. Whereas the reader at least sees a few shreds of decency in him, Mrs. Darnley never seems to acquire any. Even her death is precipitated by her excessive attachment to

her "favourite daughter; for so Harriot always continued to be" (II, 234) upon Harriot's leaving her.

Sophia tries to correct her mother's inappropriate moral responses, while still being a respectful and obedient daughter. After they remove to the country, Sophia is content, but her mother pines for city life and mourns her lack of money. In her most outward display of directness with her mother, Sophia reproaches her for having her priorities mistaken:

Alas! my dear mamma, your greatest affliction is not the loss of your annuity, or the debts with which you are encumbered, it is my sister's unhappy fall from virtue. That parent...who sees a beloved child become a prey to licentious passions, who sees her publicly incur shame and reproach, expelled the society of the good and virtuous, and lead a life of dishonour embittered with the contempt of the world, and the secret upbraidings of her own conscience; that parent can best judge of your anguish now: I have only a sister's feelings for this misfortune! but these feelings are strong enough to make me unhappy. (II, 159-60).

Sophia's words move her mother, and she brings her mother "to declare, that she would rather suffer all the inconveniencies of poverty, than give a sanction to Harriot's guilt, by partaking of its reward" (II, 160). Mrs. Darnley's resolutions only last until Harriot visits, at which time "a slave to her appetites, she could not resist any opportunity of gratifying them; and Harriot found it no difficult matter to force a present upon her, to supply those expences which her extravagance, and not her wants, made necessary" (II, 176). As always Sophia's friend, Mr. Herbert tries to help redeem her mother, too: "In vain did Mr. Herbert fill the letters he wrote to Mrs. Darnley with maxims of morality and pious admonitions; he experienced here the truth of that observation, that it is a work of great difficulty to dispossess vice from a heart, where long possession seems to plead prescription" (II, 166-67). Like Sophia, he finds Mrs. Darnley too hardened to change.

That Mrs. Darnley dies a Christian death and that Sir Charles offers honorable marriage to Sophia suggests that each of them has reformed, but how is it that Sophia manages to reform Sir Charles and her mother and not her sister? First, the link between Sophia's impact on her mother and her mother's dying repentance is never clear. Certainly, any influence for the good that Sophia has, as in the episode regarding Harriot's visits, is temporary. To suggest that Sophia effected any change in her mother's character, therefore, is highly debatable. A weak woman at the best of times, Mrs. Darnley seems a likely candidate for death-bed conversion as her fear persuades her of her shortcomings and allows for repentance. If the illness had not been fatal, the pattern of her previous behavior indicates that in all likelihood she would have returned to her unhappy nature, sometimes mouthing correct words, but eventually gratifying her own extravagant desires. If, as Lennox suggests in The Female Quixote, true repentance needs to precede reform,¹⁰ then any reform by Mrs. Darnley seems temporary at best.

Sophia's impact on Sir Charles is more weighty than on her mother, if only because of the simple reason that he cannot have her without marriage. Her virtue awes him, certainly, but the seeds of goodness are within him, and his rakish actions, his only real flaw, are several times excused, if not condoned, by references to custom. Sir Charles's final words at once pay tribute to Sophia's virtue and his own character. Mr. Herbert congratulates Sir Charles on his constancy to the wedded state, and he tells Mr. Herbert that

had my passion for my Sophia been founded only on the charms of her person, I might probably ere now have become a mere fashionable husband; but her virtue and wit supply her with graces ever varied, and ever new. Thus the steadiness of my affection for her...is but a constant inconstancy, which attaches me successively to one or other of those shining qualities, of which her charming mind is an inexhaustible source. (II, 236-37)

While Sophia clearly keeps him constant by her many good qualities, he remains charmed by them because his original passion for her derived from more than just a desire to sleep with her. So he does exhibit at least a rudimentary tendency to virtue, which custom had almost entirely suppressed. Instead of indicating Sophia's ability to affect reform in others, her reactions to her mother and Sir Charles become more an exploration of her character than of theirs and reveal her to be chaste young woman and dutiful daughter.

Henrietta's Active Attempts to Instruct Others

In Henrietta, the heroine is not a complete paragon like Sophia or Euphemia, but Harriot's weakness consists of having acted hastily in leaving the protection of her aunt's house. An otherwise exemplary young woman, Henrietta seeks to instruct others on a range of moral issues, including religious piety, family pride, and chastity. In turn, Henrietta relies on her moral guide, Mrs. Willis, for advice on what is proper and, even more importantly, for a place to live, her companionship on her return to her aunt's house, and help in finding employment. Whereas Mrs. Willis's advice reminds Henrietta of what she should do, Mrs. Willis's more mundane assistance actually proves more constructive.

After the deaths of her parents, Henrietta's designated guardian, Mr. Bale, is absent from London, and she lives first with her mother's friend, Lady Manning, and then by her aunt, Lady Meadows. Both of these women try to force Henrietta to marry an unworthy man, and the Roman Catholic Lady Meadows threatens to have Henrietta removed to a convent if she does not obey. Henrietta decides she must flee from her aunt's house to escape the untenable options of either an unwanted marriage or the convent. After fleeing from her aunt's house, Henrietta first stays at a less than respectable boarding house, where a nobleman tries to rape her with the contrivance of her landlady, Mrs. Eccles. With her eyes opened to the true nature of her lodgings, Henrietta appeals to Mr. Bale's son for help, and he introduces her to Mrs. Willis, a friend of her guardian. Although Mrs. Willis

is of a lower rank than Henrietta, she learns that Mrs. Willis has genteel "family and connections," which account for the "easy politeness of her manners and behaviour, so seldom found in persons of her rank" (I, 219). Mrs. Willis becomes a guide for Henrietta, much like Harriot Stuart's Mrs. Blandon.

Henrietta tells Mrs. Willis her complete story, and when confronted with another amorous young man, the son of her guardian, she asks for Mrs. Willis's advice. Mrs. Willis reminds Henrietta that all the inconveniences she has suffered "are the necessary consequences of your unprotected state" (I, 252), and she unhesitatingly tells her to return to her aunt. Henrietta resists this advice, because her reasons for leaving still hold. Mrs. Willis points out the irrationality of Henrietta's reaction and the reasons that she must return:

I would not pain you, my dear miss...with the recollection of a past error, were it not to make it useful to you in your present circumstances--Warned as you were of your aunt's designs, it was impossible to carry them into execution without your concurrence: your flight therefore was not necessary, and, if not necessary, surely it was highly imprudent; and, in my opinion, can only be repaired by a voluntary return.--Need I tell you a young lady of your delicacy, that imputations, however unjust, sully, if they do not stain a character.... (I, 251)

When confronted with reason, Henrietta sees her "late conduct in a light in which it had never appeared to her before; the sense of blame so justly incurred, filled her with remorse and shame" (II, 1).

Elizabeth Kraft sees Mrs. Willis "more as a consultant than as a guide," important mostly in her role as "a substitute for Henrietta's absent guardian, Mr. Bale; and, in fact, she, too, is his dependent," with Mr. Bale being the "presiding authority in Henrietta" (89). While Mr. Bale eventually appears and clearly helps resolve Henrietta's financial problems before she can marry at the novel's end, he is not in place when she needs him, as Mrs.

Willis is. She not only gives Henrietta advice, but also she almost literally guides her back to her aunt's house by going with her when Henrietta refuses to return any other way. Mrs. Willis' attempts to instruct Henrietta in her duty, however, are rendered useless by her aunt's continued intransigence, at which time Mrs. Willis offers to help Henrietta find employment. If she appears as more of a consultant than guide, that is precisely Lennox's intention but not because of Mr. Bale's "presiding authority." Rather, Lennox continually emphasizes that while the heroines' guides can dispense advice, they generally offer more comfort and assistance than moral guidance to heroines already predisposed to virtuous behavior.

In contrast to Mrs. Willis's efforts to help Henrietta in relatively pedestrian matters, such as finding employment, Henrietta possess an ambitious moral agenda in which she tries to teach her relatives about family pride and religious steadfastness and others about a range of moral issues. In all of her endeavors, however, she meets with a resounding lack of success. Unlike other Lennox heroines who manifest their goodness by their filial duty and obedience, Henrietta proves her innate worthiness by refusing to compromise her religion, even when instructed to do so by her few living relatives. After Mrs. Willis encourages Henrietta to approach her aunt again, Henrietta finds that her aunt will not help Henrietta further unless she agrees to retire to a convent and renounce her religion. Henrietta refuses, consciously choosing poverty over apostasy. Mrs. Willis remarks upon Henrietta's steadfastness to her religion and says, "I know it must cost you a great deal to throw away the advantages that are offered you, and which possibly you might secure by temporising at least" (II, 24). Here and later, Henrietta refuses to dissimulate, arguing that it is at any time, "mean and scandalous; but in matters of religion it is surely a heinous crime" (II, 24). Henrietta chooses to go into service, rather than succumb to her wealthy aunt's request, and she asks Mrs. Willis to help her find a job. Once Henrietta decides to find employment, rather than convert to her aunt's religion, she adopts as a conscious

philosophy the idea that "poverty, which happily is become my choice, will be my best vindication; and if it affords me no other blessing but that of a good conscience, it will bestow on me the highest that is attainable in this life, and which will enable me to bear cheerfully all the misfortunes that may befall me" (II, 23).

Once out of favor with both her powerful and wealthy relatives for her refusal to compromise her religion, Henrietta does not despair, because she knows that "there is this advantage in virtue, that it is sufficient for itself, and needs not the applause or support of others, its own consciousness is its best reward" (II, 148). Having formed this philosophy, Henrietta imagines herself humbling her proud family when her servitude is revealed. Sustaining her throughout her service a romantic image of relatives seeing her working in a humble position, "circumstances at which they, not I, need be ashamed" (II, 26). She envisions her trip with the rich Miss Cordwain to a country house as possibly producing such a climax: "What a triumph would mine be...if any of my relations should happen to be at this nobleman's seat, and behold me in the character of miss Cordwain's servant!" (II, 48).

In fact, none of her relatives appear at the country house to raise her from her servitude or to feel ashamed of their own dealings with her. When Henrietta eventually stands before her uncle, in order to hear him deliver a marriage proposal from Lord B---, he suggests that the family is embarrassed by her position but makes no other move to correct it than by offering marriage to Lord B---. The dramatic denouement that she anticipates and expects never comes. Her family is not mortified by her choice of occupation, and they make no move to reinstate her to an appropriate rank and fortune.

The lack of response by her family is not the only problem that Henrietta encounters while armed with and guided by her philosophy. While working for Miss Cordwain, Mrs. Autumn, and Miss Belmour, Henrietta realizes that despite her inferior social status, she is morally superior to her employer. To maintain her positions with Miss

Cordwain and Mrs. Autumn, she finds that she must hold her tongue, when she cannot, in all conscience, agree with her employer. This enforced silence does not agree with Henrietta, who is always so willing and desirous of teaching others! In Mrs. Autumn's service, Henrietta finds herself "greatly out of humour with her mistress, and not a little displeas'd at herself, to find that her philosophy, by which she was enabled to bear the change of her fortune with patience and resignation, could not guard her against fretfulness and disgust at the follies she was forced to be witness to" (II, 128). Her philosophy does not enable her to change others, nor does it even act as a sufficient barrier to the pains of her present existence.

When her livelihood depends on another, Henrietta tries to restrain her own proselytizing tendencies, but at all other times Henrietta, more than any other Lennox heroine, actively tries to teach others to behave with propriety. From pointing out the real nature of shepherds and shepherdesses to the romantically inclined Miss Woodby to arguing religion with the priest Danvers to teaching an aged suitor, Sir Isaac Darby, how to act his age, Henrietta's self-conscious virtue not only allows her to but also compels her to try to teach others as she goes from adventure to adventure. Small points to Richardson's influence in this trait of Henrietta's and complains that "she is too conscious of her virtue and of the sins of others, and she never hesitates to inform her acquaintances how they might improve themselves--not infrequently, it turns out, by following her excellent example" (133). Once again, however, despite her own tendency to virtue, she cannot effect changes in others.

Henrietta's most noticeable failures to effect reform in others involve her inability to instill a proper respect for chastity in an earl's son, Lord B---, and in Miss Belmour. Lord B--- cannot help but remind the reader of Mr. B in Pamela and Sir Charles in Lennox's own Sophia. The reader blithely expects the lord to be influenced and reformed by the chaste Henrietta, but this does not occur. From the first moment, Lord B--- has

designs on Henrietta's virtue, and in a scene very reminiscent of Pamela, the lord hides in Henrietta's closet with evil intentions. She spots him before he can act and screams for help. While observing her, he has noticed that "her beauty, which was of that sort, which inspires respect as well as love, the innocence of her deportment, her security amidst the danger which threatened her, excited sentiments that made him half ashamed of his design" (I, 199). In response to her demands that he leave her room, he begs her forgiveness, "I know your virtue now; I will leave you: believe me I am sorry for the terror I have put you into" (I, 201). In an audience with her the next day, he counsels her against staying any longer with Mrs. Eccles, as she is not a fit landlady, and he offers "to serve you in whatever way you shall direct; command my utmost services; dearest creature, dispose of me, my life, and fortune: never did I feel a real passion for any of your sex before" (I, 208). The young lord, seemingly ashamed of his behavior in the face of her virtue, then disappears.

Lord B--- reappears later in the novel, as the fiance of the young cit for whom Henrietta works, but his reform seems to have disappeared. Although Henrietta obviously knows of his engagement, he again offers her his heart, which she rejects. Lord B--- finds himself despairing, because "he was in love with the person of Henrietta, and the fortune of miss Cordwain" (II, 98). He resolves to find a solution by reconciling Henrietta with her aunt, thereby reinstating Henrietta as the heiress to her aunt's fortune and achieving his goal of both a wealthy and beautiful bride. He asks Henrietta to

seem only to comply with your aunt's desires, all obstacles to our union will be removed; a temporary compliance is all that is necessary to secure to you a fortune, and a rank in life suitable to your birth. Do not imagine that I wish to see you a proselyte to the religion she professes: no, if any thing could weaken my passion, your being capable of such a change, upon interested motives would do it. I love you; I repeat it again, I love you for your piety. (II, 157)

She refuses again, unwilling to dissimulate for any reason, and he marries the rich Miss

Cordwain. At the novel's end, the reader learns that his marriage was unhappy and that "tortured with remorse, disappointment, and despair, he had recourse to the bottle, and fell an early sacrifice to intemperance" (II, 313). Instead of a rake reformed, he falls victim to his own greed. Unlike the happy ending of Mr. B and Pamela or even Sophia and Sir Charles, Lord B--- does not win Henrietta, and Henrietta makes it clear why:

no man has a right to the love or esteem of a woman on whom he has entertained dishonourable designs, and, failing in them, offers marriage at last. The lover, who marries his mistress only because he cannot gain her upon easier terms, has just as much generosity as the highwayman who leaves a traveller in possession of his money, because he is not able to take it from him. (II, 103)

Henrietta may not feel that Lord B--- would make a worthy husband, but it is equally clear that her virtue, which inspires his love, cannot inspire him to change.

With Miss Belmour, Henrietta does not rely solely on her own positive example to effect a change in someone else. In addition to her own conduct, she remonstrates directly with Miss Belmour. Although Henrietta is only a companion, Miss Belmour makes her her confidant as well. Miss Belmour tells Henrietta the story of her attachment to a married man, and Henrietta responds, not with the expected sympathy, but "with all the firmness of virtue, opposed the specious arguments she had urged with others which reason, religion, and the purity of her own sentiments suggested to her" (II, 171). In response to Henrietta's reasoned arguments, Miss Belmour "yawned, smiled contemptuously," and then argues in return (II, 172-73). Henrietta continues to expostulate with Miss Belmour, until Miss Belmour agrees to go away from her lover and escape to France. Henrietta joins her, being unwilling "to leave unfinished the good work she had begun; and she was apprehensive that, if the young lady was left to the guidance of her own passions, this sudden sally of resentment would end in a reconciliation fatal to her virtue" (II, 179-80).

While Henrietta believes that Miss Belmour leaves her lover because of her lessons

in virtue, the reader learns that Miss Belmour merely seeks to pique her lover's curiosity and, thus, cure his indifference. She hopes that he will follow her to France, and when she sees that he is not right behind them, "it redoubled her rage, and strengthened a resolution which reason and virtue had very little share in" (II, 183). When her lover eventually abandons her, she enters a convent, takes the veil, but "soon afterwards, repenting of this rash step, she died of grief, remorse, and disappointment" (II, 314). Since her repentance never comes from a proper sense of right and wrong or virtue and vice, like Sophia's sister Harriot and Maria Belville in Harriot Stuart, she cannot be redeemed.

No matter what lesson Henrietta tries to teach, all of her efforts are singularly unsuccessful. Lennox concludes her novel with a brief note about each of the main characters' lives. While this is a fairly conventional means for ending a novel in the eighteenth century, Lennox's examination of the fates of each of the primary characters reveals that those who began the novel with a good character ended it that way and those, like Lord B--- and Miss Belmour, with a propensity toward vice fall victim to their own indiscretions.¹¹ Henrietta's impact on those around her seems to be inconsequential, as the other characters either choose not to recognize her moral authority or are unable or unwilling to change because their own wishes are in conflict with hers.

Privileging Friendship over Exemplarity in *Euphemia*

Appearing almost thirty years after her previous one, Euphemia combines elements of all Lennox's novels, especially the intercontinental adventuring of Harriot Stuart and the essentially perfect heroine of Sophia. In Henrietta and Euphemia, the heroines take different approaches to the question of teaching others: while Henrietta actively seeks to teach those around her, Euphemia models Christian resignation and is much less willing to impose her principles on others. Neither the passive nor the active approach yields better results, however: both are equally ineffective in teaching others how to behave

properly. Although *Euphemia* contains similar episodes concerning the heroine's attempts to teach both those inclined to vice and those inclined to virtue, in her final novel Lennox places more emphasis on what exemplars and guides offer in terms of friendship rather than moral guidance. Friendship may not enable someone to produce a profound change in her life, but it enables her to bear her misfortunes in more comfort.

As in other Lennox novels, the exemplary heroine attempts to influence others, yet *Euphemia* prefers a more passive exemplarity. Like so many other Lennox heroines, *Euphemia* begins life in a secure enough position, but her father's imprudence leaves her and her mother impoverished at his death. Her mother lives long enough to ensure that *Euphemia* marries Mr. Neville. *Euphemia* does not particularly want to marry him but to relieve her ailing mother's cares, she agrees. Her filial duty takes precedence over her own wishes, and she marries Neville. As a dutiful wife, she confesses this truth to Neville: "It is true, Sir, you were my mother's choice; I never had any other will but her's, and her choice regulated mine" (I, 152). *Euphemia's* filial obedience leads to her disastrous marriage, and she writes to Maria about her unromantic marriage in explicit terms:

Destined to live under the control of another, I find obedience to be a very necessary virtue, and in my case it is an indispensable duty. I am a wife; I know to what that sacred tie obliges me: I am determined, by Heaven's assistance, to fulfil the duties of my station. My lot is cast perhaps for misery here; the future will be like the past: so my foreboding heart suggests. I have drawn a blank in the great lottery of life, but there is a state beyond this, in which my hopes aspire to a prize: to that all my wishes, all my endeavours tend. (I, 58)

Her view of her marriage never improves, although she certainly does her duty throughout.

On occasion Neville shows some signs of proper behavior, as he does at the time of *Euphemia's* mother's death (I, 158, 160) and when he goes for help after they are stranded during a snowstorm (IV, 31-35).¹² When his obstinacy is compared to the outright cruelties

of his fellow army officer, Lieutenant Blood, Neville shines in contrast.¹³ Yet even these hints of decency do not blossom into anything more permanent or lasting, as they do for Sir Charles in *Sophia*. Unlike Sir Charles, Neville has no reason or desire to change his approach to his wife or the world. Euphemia notes his obstinacy and her own inability to argue against it: "When Mr. Neville has once given his opinion, however erroneous it may be, it is impossible by argument to set him right, for reason itself would seem to be wrong if it is not of his side" (I, 170). To accept his dictates is difficult, but the alternative of opposing his will is impossible for Euphemia. The seemingly trivial episode of her dress illustrates her problem: "I was sadly perplexed; for I saw nothing but determined opposition would save me from an absurdity, and upon this I could not resolve" (I, 170). Unwilling to use outright opposition, Euphemia can only hope he changes his mind. Euphemia occasionally tries to offer hints, "but this he considers as advice, a liberty not to be endured in a woman and a wife" (IV, 5). Neville's obstinate and repressive nature does not change over the course of the novel, and it is clear that for all of her moral perfection and gentle attempts at persuasion, Euphemia does not affect him at all.

Katharine M. Rogers writes that once Euphemia receives an inheritance from Neville's rich uncle near the end of the novel, she has "everything she wants--devoted children, financial independence, effective freedom from Neville, and a serene consciousness of having at all times done her duty" (156). The reviewer for the *Critical Review*, however, correctly suggests that "the conclusion does not leave the mind wholly at rest: the trials of our heroine are not at an end; and, though in possession of many sources of happiness, the whole may be tainted by the inconsiderate, hasty conduct of such a husband" (*Critical Review* 70 [1790]: 81). Her financial inheritance may offer her the means to provide for her children's education, but certainly she is still married to Neville, and conscious as she is of her duty, she is hardly likely to go against his wishes or even not give him money, as she does earlier in the novel when she receives five hundred pounds

from her godfather (I, 154).

Even Euphemia's influence over her children is tenuous and dependent on her husband. When she is left money by Mr. Neville's uncle, she plans to use it to educate her son as she would wish. By providing for her son's education, she obtains "power enough in her hands, to enable her to follow the light of her own excellent understanding, in an affair of too much consequence to be left to the guidance of a man, who is always counselled by his passions, appetites, and caprice" (IV, 264). But she will surely always be plagued by her husband's disrespect for herself and the possibility that her son might be influenced by it: "the contempt which Mr. Neville has always affected to treat my notions with, will, if it operates as perhaps he intends it should upon his son, render me much less useful to him than I hoped to be" (IV, 255). Euphemia knows that she cannot change Neville and can only hope to teach her son correct moral behavior.

In contrast to Euphemia's passive submission to her husband, her friendship with Maria Harley provides her with an opportunity to teach someone who is predisposed to acknowledge and admire exemplary behavior. Through her own words and through the words of her family and friends, Maria provides an external assessment of Euphemia's character that establishes her as a paragon of virtue and a potentially exemplary figure:

"Miss Lumley [Euphemia's maiden name]," said my uncle, "is indeed a wonderful young woman; she had an excellent mistress in her mother; and she has profited well both by her lessons and examples. Young as she is, she is strict in the performance of her duties, yet she affects no peculiar gravity in her aspect and manners, but tempers her reserve with so much sweetness, that, without endeavoring to please any, she pleases all the world." (I, 166-67)

Maria credits Euphemia with being "the friend of my heart, the companion of my youth, my comfort in adversity, and my example for virtue" (II, 77). Euphemia rejects the idea of being her guide and tells Maria that "you have no need of any precepts, nor indeed of any

instruction; you cannot wander from the right if you go not amiss, if you borrow not a frailty which is none of your own" (II, 24).

That Maria does tend naturally toward proper behavior, as Euphemia suggests, is exhibited clearly when she is courted by young Edward Harley, a relation of her uncle's. When they first meet, Edward and her uncle are estranged over a family matter and are not reconciled until later in the novel. Maria and Edward fall in love, but she listens to her uncle's reasons why they should not marry and expresses her strong sense of filial duty: "As my parent, my friend, my benefactor, he had a right to my obedience...I could not disoblige him, without being guilty of the highest ingratitude" (II, 65). Her obedience is eventually rewarded as her uncle relents and allows young Edward to court and marry Maria.

Although she is nominally Maria's example for virtue, Euphemia rarely needs to remind Maria of what constitutes proper behavior. Instead, their letters are filled with their effusive protestations of friendship for each other in such a way that would make the romantic Miss Woodby from *Henrietta* sigh with delight. While not styling themselves "Clelia" or by any other Arcadian name, their praise for each other borders on the rapturous. At one point, Euphemia cautions Maria that perhaps she praises too highly:

But were it possible for me to suspect the sincerity of your affection, it would be from the extravagant eulogium you bestow on me, for what in my opinion is but an ordinary effect of duty and obedience.

Surely then you mean to excite me to virtue by a new subtility, and the praises you give me are but disguised exhortations. Take notice, this is the construction I shall put upon all such language from you; and if you would not be thought rather to dictate than to commend, avoid it for the future. (I, 77)

Euphemia's warning only slightly tempers their future exchanges and professions of friendship, but there is no sense that such profound expressions are laughable, as they

might be if employed by a romantic young lady such as Miss Woodby.

Although Maria clearly desires to emulate Euphemia's example, she articulates what is only implied in other Lennox novels. Fearing that Euphemia will be angry with her for not profiting more from her own example, the virtuous Maria summarizes the problems faced by the exemplary: "you well know, that there are some of us such spirits, that neither time nor philosophy can work upon us; while there are others again, who prevent the work of time and philosophy by their own natural disposition" (I, 167-68). Those not naturally disposed to listen to moral advice are those inclined toward vice; but those other "spirits," like Maria, can still remain unaffected by the moral guidance of characters such as Euphemia. Significantly, Maria does not indicate who will benefit from such "philosophy," because Lennox believes that neither philosophy nor example can effect pervasive changes in a person's fundamental moral propensities.

Although "philosophy" may not work upon those already inclined toward virtue, Lennox provides a glimpse of what can be achieved when two virtuous characters help each other. Janet Todd argues that "against marriage presses the female tie," and she notes that "Euphemia is clear in preferring her friend to her unsentimental husband and even Maria shows her choice, when as friend and lover depart, she mourns Euphemia's going the most" (Women's 310). Euphemia's relationship with her former governess Mrs. Benson may appear less central than the friendship between Maria and Euphemia, but there are parallels between the two. While Euphemia is appropriately grief stricken after her mother's death, she is comforted by Mrs. Benson, her governess and guide throughout the novel. Like the other guides in Lennox's work, despite her not being Euphemia's social equal, Mrs. Benson is a virtuous monitor. Euphemia writes that her "excellent understanding affords me a perpetual feast; [her] virtue and piety are at once my example and my guide" (IV, 6).

Mrs. Benson accompanies Euphemia and her husband when, for reasons of

economy, they leave England for America. During their visit, Mrs. Benson is a quiet companion, ever present but not the focal point of much activity. When Euphemia's son is stolen by the Native Americans, however, Mrs. Benson reassumes her role as moral guide. Euphemia naturally grieves for her loss, but Mrs. Benson reflects on the Christian meaning of the event and persuades Euphemia to moderate her grief. Mrs. Benson, writing of the tragedy to Maria Harley, notes

where is that confidence in the goodness, that resignation to the will of God, which till I was called upon to exert, I thought I possessed?...we readily trust him for life when we have health...but when dangers assault, when calamities oppress us, we forget that he is powerful to save, and compassionate to relieve. (III, 207)

She reminds Euphemia of her Christian duty and gently admonishes her, "no affliction, my child...is greater than despair; it turns a natural evil into an intolerable one, and constitutes the punishment to which the wicked are condemned" (III, 224). But Mrs. Benson is more than just a token mentor, mouthing Christian platitudes. Although her presence is accentuated during times of crisis in Euphemia's life, it is clear that on a daily basis she provides comfort and friendship for Euphemia who travels with a disliked spouse to a distant land. Her assistance to Euphemia in the mundane aspects of life are recorded with less fanfare than her advice, but she actually provides more long-term help for Euphemia in the small day-to-day acts than in her moral guidance. Despite the need for an occasional reminder from Mrs. Benson, Euphemia is, after all, a dutiful daughter, wife, and eventually mother, even when times are most trying. Euphemia acknowledges the importance of her friends and argues that they are "sufficient to compensate for all the misfortunes of my life" (IV, 190). Indeed, the friendships between Euphemia and Maria and Euphemia and Mrs. Benson become more important than the moral advice that they can impart to each other. None of these women singularly or in a combined effort can produce a virtuous reform in Euphemia's husband, but together they can ensure that Euphemia's life is bearable.

Euphemia features a heroine who acts with Christian resignation, but, unlike Sheridan, Lennox does not use a religious framework for her novels. Like Sheridan, however, Lennox finds that instruction is always limited by a character's fundamental moral propensities. Like Fielding, Lennox explores the abstract concepts of virtue and vice, but unlike Fielding, she does not privilege the nuances in either: one either is inclined toward virtue or not. Character flaws, such as those exhibited by Arabella, Harriot Stuart, and Henrietta, may be present but, in Lennox's view, do not prevent the heroine from being considered as essentially virtuous. Because of the ways in which Sheridan and Lennox view the human character, either as being subject to God's laws or inclined by their original natures toward vice or virtue, the capacity for change is limited. Thus, neither exemplars nor fiction can stimulate profound changes in human nature. These views may seem pessimistic or anachronistic to the twentieth-century reader, but they must be considered as serious objections to authors like Fielding and Richardson who argue so fervently in favor of the didactic capacity of fiction.

Notes to Chapter 4

¹ See Isles, Lennox footnote 30, 340-41 and Isles, Appendix 426 for the ways in which Lennox might have used Clarissa.

² For a sampling of those who either think Arabella should not be cured or who think that the countess should have cured her gradually, see Small 82; Warren 377; Maynadier 43; and Ross, Mirror 170.

³ See Isles, Appendix 422.

⁴ See The Female Quixote endnote for page 277, number 1 on 408.

⁵ See Doody, "Introduction" xxiv-xxv.

⁶ See Isles, Appendix 425.

⁷ Belville is the name of the man who Miss Belville marries, but Lennox refers to her as mademoiselle [sic] Belville, not madam or Mrs. Belville.

⁸ Because the edition of Sophia that I used was missing pages 17-48 in volume one, I substituted text from the serialization of the novel that can be found in The Lady's Museum. Although the serialization and the published novel differ from each other occasionally, the material I have quoted from the serialization is not extensive enough to change my argument substantially.

⁹ See Henrietta II, 103.

¹⁰ Arabella remarks to Glanville that "repentence ought to precede Reformation...; otherwise, there is great room to suspect it is only feigned: And a sincere Repentence shews itself in such visible Marks, that one can hardly be deceived in that which is genuine" (47).

¹¹ Henrietta's brother, Mr. Courteney, whose alias is Mr. Freeman, appears to be a corrupt and corrupting influence, because he tries to have Melvil seduce Henrietta before he learns she is his sister. Yet, despite this urging, which comes to nothing, Freeman is

shown in a positive light because he urges this course of action only in an attempt to protect Melvil and Melvil's family, who he knows would never give their consent to such an unequal match. Although Courteney appears only near the end of the novel, his virtue is made manifest by his desire, as a tutor, to protect his charge Melvil, and by his obligations to Melvil's family for hiring him. Once he learns Henrietta's identity, he is even more zealous in trying to prevent an unequal match for his protege, even at the risk of his own family member's happiness. For his strong sense of duty, he is rewarded at the novel's end, inheriting his aunt's wealth and being introduced to an heiress by the marquis's father.

¹² True, Neville's obstinacy results in their being stranded in the first place, but he does try to rectify the situation, if not his own moral failings.

¹³ Philip Sejourne provides a succinct accounting of Blood's malevolence, 104.

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