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A STUDY OF THE WOMEN OF DANIEL DEFOE AND SAMUEL RICHARDSON: A TEIRESIAN VISION

by

Nancy F. Krippel

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty
of the Graduate School of Loyola University of Chicago
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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1992

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VITA

The author, Nancy Fordtran Krippel, is an Assistant Professor of English at Barat College, Lake Forest, Illinois. Born in Waco, Texas in 1945, she attended Drake University from 1963 to 1966 and received her Bachelor of Arts in English from Barat College in June, 1980. She was awarded a Master of Arts in English from Loyola University in 1984. In 1986, she was appointed to the full-time faculty at Barat and currently also serves as Director of the Study Abroad Program.

Mrs. Krippel contributed a chapter on oral communication in Learning Skills for College and Career, and she gives book reviews at the Lake Forest Public Library, most recently in April on Mating, Norman Rush's cross-gender novel, and as well lectures on various women authors, particularly female mystery writers.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

-"The novel is a picture of real life..."
-Clara Reeves

The beginning of the eighteenth century brought with it the emergence of the novel in England as a literary form which took as its province the lives of ordinary people working out their existences in ordinary ways; prior to this time, literature largely focused on those people who were important, those people on whom the peace of the world depended, but now with the arrival of the novel, a literary form recognized that a private person within a private life was worthy of scrutiny:

> The history of the novel as a "genre" began in the eighteenth century, at a time when people had become preoccupied with their own everyday lives. Like no other art form before it, the novel was directly concerned with the social and historical norms that applied to a particular environment. (Iser xi)

Samuel Johnson reveals his interest in this new type of fiction in his essay, _Rambler_ _4_, where he contends that the novel exerts its power by force of example; the novel form possesses the power not only to imitate life, but also to

affect change in the lives of its readers. Novels "are not only imitative but potentially formative of the reader's experience" (Weinsheimer 1). Johnson expresses concern regarding the power of the novel to convey by example knowledge not only of virtue, but of vice as well. The world of the novel often contains the morally mixed characters that Johnson fears because they reveal true human characteristics. He writes that "the works of fiction, with which the present generation seems more than particularly delighted, are such as exhibit life in its true state."

Ian Watt's Rise of the Novel, as well as other texts on the emergence of the novel form in England, provides a summary of the forces at work which precipitated the interest in this new form; for example, he credits the change in "the outlook of the trading class,...influenced by economic individualism...; and the increasingly important feminine component of the [reading] public" as at least partially responsible for the increased interest and demand for the more secular and "ordinary" topics presented in the novel (49). Watt cites the increase in available leisure time, particularly for women of the middle class, and the increase in literacy among some segments of the lower classes, particularly apprentices and household servants, as contributers to the popularity of this new form. Watt's thesis demands a close linking of the rise of the middle class with the rise of the novel; however, Michael McKeon

questions whether "cultural attitudes...bear a clear relation to the new 'individualism'?" (3). He argues that middle-class individualism begins with the thirteenth- rather than the eighteenth-century. McKeon also questions Watt's use of "formal realism" as a criterion for defining the novel, as opposed to the romance; McKeon observes that "the inadequacy of our theoretical distinction between 'novel' and 'romance'" reveals a fundamental flaw in Watt's theory (3). McKeon's approach to the history of the English novel differs dramatically from Watt's, relying on "a dialectical theory of genre" to illuminate what he calls "questions of truth" and "questions of virtue" (20).

Whether Watt's or McKeon's theories of the rise of the novel fully explain its arrival and its subsequent and enduring popularity, the fact remains that the early eighteenth century experienced an enormous outpouring of fiction: approximately 400 novels or romances appeared in the first four decades of the century. However, only a few of them achieved lasting critical importance, and nearly half of the 400 works were written by women. Dale Spender contends that from the outset the "value system...automatically places women's concerns, and the literature which reflects them, in a subordinate position" (58). She takes Watt to task for simply ignoring the plethora of women writers who appear before, during, and after the big five: Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, Smollett and Sterne, but Patricia Spacks observes

that although

> women wrote most of the novels of the eighteenth century..., employing the highly artificial conventions of the romance...[,] They are on the whole minor writers...generally assumed to have only historic importance, filling in the space between Defoe and Richardson. (Imagining 57)

By the time Defoe published Roxana, fiction for women was well-established; women writers outnumbered men, but their early works were largely still tales of courtship and marriage. Although Daniel Defoe's and Samuel Richardson's novels include many characteristics of the women's novel, presenting subjects of courtship, marriage, and threat, the trials of love and life, their novels differ from those of the women writers of the period in that Defoe and Richardson unconsciously recognized the difference between the novel and the romance, as Clara Reeves in The Progress of Romance (1785) would define it later in the century: "The novel is a picture of real life and manners, and of the times in which it was written. The romance, in lofty elevated language, describes what never happened nor is likely to happen." Moving from the realm of "what might be" into the world of "what is," Defoe's and Richardson's novels offer readers the very thing about which Johnson expresses concern: "life in its true state."

Critics differ in opinion about just where to begin the

history of the novel in England. George Saintsbury, in his early text The English Novel (1917), ignores Defoe and cites Richardson's Pamela as the "first novel." Still other critics wait until the arrival of Henry Fielding to begin the history of the English novel. John Burke suggests that "Defoe's place in its [the novel's] development is often slighted" (169), and Virginia Woolf asserts that Defoe was "the first to shape the novel and launch it on it way" (The Common Reader 127). John Robert Moore's article "Daniel Defoe: Precursor of Samuel Richardson" delineates some of the ways in which Defoe breaks ground for Richardson and those who follow, but Moore also points out that

> Richardson discovered at the beginning of his literary career that his strength lay in the minute development of scenes and characters. Defoe never did learn this, and he continued to promise his readers a "strange variety of incidents." (351)

Defoe paints his canvas with broad strokes, presenting political, social or economic ideas, while Richardson employs a fine pen to recount the minutiae of a young girl's thoughts.

For example, consider the similarity between Defoe's Moll and Richardson's Pamela. Both young girls are domestic servants, educated beyond their stations and exposed to the advances of a social and economic superior; Defoe concentrates into a few pages what Richardson takes a volume

or two to explore. While the reader is privy to every nuance of Pamela's response, Moll simply says: "I made no more resistance to him, but let him do just what he pleased and as often as he pleased." Defoe presents Moll's dilemma in a few concise scenes while Richardson allows Pamela's lamentations and deliberations to occupy page after page. Pamela, perhaps more shrewd than even the mercenary Moll, recognizes that she must not give away her only salable asset: her virginity.

Whatever the difference in style, however, both authors proclaim their desire to provide readers with a moral tale, a story from which the readers may learn something not only about the hero or heroine and his or her particular situation, but also about themselves and their individual lives. Defoe asserts in the preface of Moll Flanders that

> there is not a wicked action in any part of it but is first or last rendered unhappy and unfortunate...Upon this foundation this book is recommended to the reader, as a work from every part of which something may be learnt and...by which the reader will have something of instruction if he pleases to make use of it. (vii)

Richardson announces his hopes on the cover page of his first work: Pamela or Virtue Rewarded is "published in order to cultivate the principles of virtue and religion in the minds of the youth of both sexes." Both authors proclaim their intention that the works be put to "good moral use" and promote that usage by grounding their novels in "truth."

Hence, the feigned autobiographical approach of Moll Flanders and Roxana and the epistolary style ("a secret history, thrown into a series of letters") of Pamela and Clarissa.

By hiding behind the imaginary personas of the novels, the authors hoped to avoid the Puritan distrust of fiction, which since it was not "true" meant it must necessarily be a lie. Defoe warns his readers against novels and romances: "The world is so much taken up of late with novels and romances that it will be hard for a private history to be taken for genuine..." (Preface, Moll Flanders, v). Of Roxana, Defoe states that "this Story differs from most ... [in] That the Foundation of This is laid in Truth of Fact; and so the Work is not a Story, but a History" (Preface 35). Richardson claims the title of editor "of the following Letters, which have their foundation both in Truth and Nature" in his Preface to Pamela, and he explains Clarissa as "History...given in a Series of Letters written principally in a double yet separate correspondence" (Preface xix). Such claims to verisimilitude place these four novels in a different category from their descendants in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which make no such claims. From their own statements, we can assume that Defoe and Richardson want and expect their readers to believe that these four fictional women portray "life in its true state." Also Defoe and Richardson claim to offer their protagonists as models of appropriate behavior.

Interestingly, the eighteenth-century demand for works that offer instruction through characters who serve as role-models stands as one of the functions which contemporary feminist critics apprehend as essential in a work of literature; Cheri Register states that in order "to earn feminist approval, literature must...provide role-models (19). Wendy Martin elaborates on the role-model function of literature by insisting that a text should portray women who are "self-actualizing, whose identities are not dependent on men" (33). Defoe and Richardson did, by their own words, hope to provide role-models for women through their novels.

Another quality that Register and other feminists seek in texts is the promotion of cultural androgyny (Register 19). By virtue of the fact that both men chose to write cross-gender novels, they should have helped to achieve cultural androgyny, which, according to Carolyn Heilbrun, suggests a reconciliation between the extremes of masculine and feminine. Androgyny allows each individual to experience the full range of human possibility without the distinguishing characteristic of gender identification: women can be strong and men tender. "Androgyny seeks to liberate the individual from the confines of the appropriate" (Heilbrun x). Coleridge believed that a great mind must be androgynous, and Virginia Woolf insisted that androgyny is the essential ingredient required for a writer to achieve greatness. She constructs a plan of the soul in which "two powers preside,

one male, one female...The normal and comfortable state of being is that when the two live in harmony...If one is a man, still the woman part of the brain must have effect" (A Room 102). The androgynous mind is one that "transmits emotion without impediment" (102). The most likely impediment is, of course, gender. Women writers too often attempt to write like men or, if not that, are too absorbed in and self-conscious of their own gender. For example, Woolf claims that Charlotte Bronte is not a great novelist because "it is clear that anger was tampering with the integrity of...the novelist"; Woolf perceives that the author's first duty is to the story and Bronte attends to "some personal grievance" rather than her story (76). Apparently, Woolf would have preferred Bronte to ignore her life in favor of Jane's. Lynn Sukenick suggests that Woolf envisions "an ideal in which a woman wrote as a woman but as a woman who had forgotten that she was a woman, writing without grudges or apologies" (43); female authors should set aside their gender and ignore whatever outside forces, primarily those of men, which could hamper an objective rendering of their characters. However, it is not only women who allow gender considerations and personal biases to interfere with the writing; according to Woolf, and other feminist critics, male writers too often present their female characters only in the relation to men,

> And how small a part of a woman's life is that...it remains obvious, even in the writing of Proust, that a man

> is terribly hampered and partial in his knowledge of women, as a woman [is] in her knowledge of men. (86-7)

Although Coleridge, Woolf and Heilbrun propose that writers, both male and female, should attempt to achieve an androgynous approach to their writing in order to eliminate gender differences and identification, many contemporary feminists deny the importance of androgyny, asserting that women are different and should write differently than men. The issue of difference in women's writing has become a hotly debated topic among feminist critics and women writers. Nina Auerbach suggests that men "perform one kind of writing while women write another" (_(Ex)Tensions_ 13). Diana Fuss articulates this argument in _Essentially Speaking_ under her headings of "essentialism" and "constructionism." Fuss defines essentialism as the "belief in the real, true essence of things"(xi) and constructionism as the "position that differences are constructed, not innate" (xii). Fuss seeks to explode the binary opposition inherent in the two categories by "demonstrating how essentialism and constructionism are deeply and inextricably co-implicated with each other" (xii). Her discussion does not precisely confront the subject of androgyny, but it does illuminate one of the major issues dividing the feminist critical community: "the problem of the vexed relationship between feminism and deconstruction" (23). Heilbrun cautions critics not to confuse feminism with androgyny. Although the two may appear

identical, feminism concentrates on the female while androgyny concentrates on male and female equally (58). While various feminist factions struggle with the place and importance of difference and androgyny, essentialism and constructionism, in women's writing, few feminists address themselves to the same issues with male authors, assuming, I think, that while a woman should not write like a man, a man cannot write like a woman. For example, Marica Landy poses the question of whether or not fiction "must reflect the sex of the creator," but she attends only to the consequences for the female writer, ignoring the same dilemma for the male writer (22).

Since Defoe and Richardson chose to write in the guise of women, they placed themselves in a unusual position: both their gender and the gender of their protagonists may have tampered with the integrity of their novels. They attempted not just to describe a woman's life, but rather, in a sense, to live it themselves through their first-person protagonists. Is it possible for a man to create an authentic first-person female? Responses to this question vary, depending largely on when the response was written. For example, in his 1945 text, Edward Wagenknecht claims that no other "English writer...understood women quite so well" as Samuel Richardson (57), and in 1964, Carolyn Heilbrun asserts that "no woman writer has surpassed Richardson in his evocation of the feminine consciousness" (50). However, in

1974 Cheri Register suggests that "male authors, even those who are very sympathetic to women, ...[rarely] succeed in portraying women with whom female readers can identify" (15). Yet, of those 400 publications produced in the first decades of the eighteenth century, the plethora of women who wrote about other women's experiences are largely forgotten (or ignored) by contemporary critics, but whether Defoe's Robinson Crusoe is read by a prosaic fourth-grade audience or Richardson's Clarissa by a more esoteric graduate-school class, these authors and the novels they created continue to live for the contemporary reader.

This could be explained by the simple fact that the authors are men, and men, by and large, create the canon; Spender insists that no mere "coincidence...has been responsible for the disappearance of more than one hundred...women novelists in favor of five men" (5). Women, she claims, have been systemically edited out of literary history by "decision making powers [which] were concentrated in the hands of men who not surprisingly found the good and the great among their fellow men" (140), and Marica Landy agrees with Spender's assessment of the way in which women's writing has been excluded from the canon:

> ...women have played subordinate roles...within the novel tradition...this situation can be attributed to the male guardians of "the great tradition," perpetuated in critical studies and in university curricula. (21)

However, in order to account for the continuing viability of Defoe's and Richardson's novels, we may assume that these two authors did something more than merely just be male writers. They may also be authors who, in spite of their gender, created first-person female narrators who reflect the problems inherent in a woman's life during the eighteenth century.

Works that prick our interest and linger in our memories are usually those that provoke commentary and raise questions, works that challenge our assumptions about the world and the people who inhabit it. Literary characters often baffle, challenge, and fight us at every turn, but in order to achieve a lasting effect, they must be authentic within the world that the work presents us. No matter how fantastical the world is, the characters should function within the context of that world in a way that allows us to believe in them. The novel form, perhaps more than any other literary type, allows for the minute development of characters working out their private existence in a public forum for our entertainment or edification. The novel from its beginnings offered the possibility for detailed examination of the morals and mores of its particular moment in history:

> Whatever is occurring even peripherally in individual or cultural consciousness at large, [is] examined, debated, and regulated through the novel. Historically too the

> novel has been particularly well equipped to execute and transmit definitions of sex. (Miles 72)

Moll Flanders, Roxana, Pamela, and Clarissa require our attention today not only as representatives of the early novel, but also because they spoke in some significant way to the women of their time and reflect the incipient feminist concerns of the period. They are novels that are "extra-ordinary in the feminization of [their] vision, in the centrality of [their] female characters" (Heilbrun 50). As such, they deserve attention not only as precursors of the modern novel, but also as feminist documents of their century, which, through the characters, present contemporary readers with insights into the position of women in eighteenth-century society.

Contemporary women readers, both students and critics, are developing new ways of examining old texts. Adrienne Rich calls this process "Re-vision - the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction" (18). In 1970 Annis Pratt asserts that "it is hardly surprising that there is emerging a new feminist criticism" (11); in 1974 Register explains "the mounting interest in feminist criticism and the novels it recommends" as the result of a "need for female readers to see their own experiences mirrored in literature" (15); in 1980 Peggy Kamuf urges women to remove the "masks of truth with which phallocentric thought hides its fictions" (57). In

1990 debate about just what constitutes a feminist approach to literature rages among feminist critics. Catharine Stimpson observes that in the late 1960's and early 1970's feminists shared a consensus regarding the representation of women, but now consensus within the feminist community is impossible:

> [Feminist] practitioners are too numerous, too diverse, and too varied for one agreement to accommodate all the theories, ideas, and perceptions by and about women. (26)

Many proclaim, with varying degrees of pride, that feminist criticism does not derive from a single authority; the structuralists employ the linguistic principles of Saussure, the psychoanalytics harken back to Freud or Lacan, and the deconstructionists take their cue from Derrida or DeMan, but feminists do not have a unified body of theoretical ideas as a basis for their critical system. Feminist critics possess no "Mother of Us All...to provide their fundamental ideas" (Showalter New Feminist 4). Nina Auerbach states:

> Despite some theoretical stabs, feminist criticism has produced no conclusive definition of its methods and assumptions that would give it definitive contour...it tends to be methodologically idiosyncratic and theoretically evasive, unwilling to make ultimate statements about itself. ("Feminist Criticism Reviewed" 259)

Without a unified body of theory, feminists have, to a great

extent, struck out on their own creating their own methodology, generating what Showalter calls a "vigorous internal debate." Each critic attempts to place herself (or himself, but few men are actively engaged in feminist criticism) within the context of the critical conversation. They write about each other almost as much as they write about literature. Most take Woolf and de Beauvoir as starting points: Showalter cites Woolf; Moi refers to Showalter citing Woolf; Gilbert and Gubar usually get a mention; Ellman is credited with the original explosion of "phallic criticism"; and Spacks takes Millett to task for her "simplified view." Elizabeth Meese pictures feminism as a strategy, which adopts "the clever, chameleonlike hue of the guerrilla fighter...A term with no entry in the dictionary;...[but] despite what we say about one another, [we] are committed to figuring out" (27).

Whatever the internal differences among feminist critics, most agree that this criticism seeks "to expose the tangle of misconceptions, distortions, and...prejudices which frequently govern the depiction of women in literature" (Auerbach 328). Feminist critics assert that the female characters presented in literature either perpetuate stereotypical female behaviors or reinforce idealized male visions of women; since creativity has remained largely a male prerogative, female characters created by men represent male fantasies of women rather than female realities, and so

feminists seek to expose stereotypes and idealizations by promoting those texts which depict authentic women functioning in authentic ways.

Indeed, one of the primary requirements of a text for many feminist critics resides in the author's presentation of female characters who recreate a female experience from a female perspective. Josephine Donovan posits that

> one of the primary criteria by which feminist critics are judging works of literature is by what one might call the 'truth criterion'...we are making judgments based on an assessment of the authenticity of women characters, women's situations, and the authors' perspectives on them. (77)

While certainly it is impossible for every female character in every text to serve as a role-model, it has been a feminist imperative for works to provide role-models for women, but these models must be realistic: "the single [most important] requirement...[is] realism" (Holly 39), and "characters should not be idealized beyond plausibility. The demand for authenticity supersedes all other requirements" (Register 21).

Toril Moi, in Sexual/Textual Politics, asserts that Register's demand for realism clashes with her demand for strong role-models for women. Moi points out that "quite a few women are 'authentically' weak and unimpressive" (47), so Register's prescriptive requirement of authenticity may

supersede the possibility of appropriate role-models. Indeed, not all characters, either male or female, are likely to be strong, self-actualizing, independent people, so that a demand for strong role-models may stand in direct conflict with a demand for authenticity. Moll Flanders may well be a strong, independent woman, who is an authentic representation of her specific situation, but whether or not she also serves as a model for appropriate behavior is somewhat questionable. Readers might well not make the same choice as Clarissa Harlowe, but they can inculcate the strength of her character through the depiction of her decision. However, it is not necessary for every female character to be strong and impressive; even a weak and unpleasant female character may illuminate an authentic problem.

Register suggests, in her 1975 article, that a reader employ sociological data to determine the "reality" of the text and the female characters place in a text, but Moi, in 1985, labels this type of "early" feminist criticism as "excessively naive about the relationship between literature and reality and between author and text" (48-49). She rejects the use of sociological data, such as presented in Bridget Hill's study of eighteenth century women, to confirm or deny the authenticity of fictional characters, and Moi suggests that the feminists who advocate judging a work by standards of authenticity perpetuate patriarchal ideology. However, Fuss expresses concern that Moi's critique supposes

"that 'patriarchal humanism' has an essence which is inherently, inevitably reactionary" (20n14). Moi proposes that feminists should "defend women as women" (13) and proceeds to examine the "woman-centered approach" that dominates feminist criticism in the 1980's. She perceives the movement by female critics to study women's writing as an advance in feminist criticism; however, although Moi discounts attempts to determine authenticity, she concludes her discussion of "Images of Women" criticism by stating that the interest and willingness to take "historical and sociological factors into account...[are] to a large extent...the qualities present-day feminist critics still strive to preserve" (49).

Moi's own interest in the political aspect of feminist criticism is evidenced in her definition of a feminist critic:

> Much like any other radical critic, the feminist critic can be seen as the product of a struggle mainly concerned with social and political change; her specific role within it becomes an attempt to extend such general political action into the cultural domain. (23)

Moi's text, which she labels as "the first full introduction to the field [of feminist criticism]" and "an explicitly critical one" (xiii), demonstrates the widely divergent opinions held by various feminist critics as to the "correct" feminist attitude toward literature by both men and women. She cuts a wide swath through the multiplicity of approaches

and presents a clear summary of the history of feminist criticism (Woolf and de Beauvoir) and current methodology (Showalter and Cixous) while incorporating her own critical and political concerns, but Diana Fuss proposes that Moi's agenda attempts to discredit Anglo-American feminism (20n14).

According to Annis Pratt, feminist criticism requires consideration of both textual and contextual aspects of a work. The textual analysis reveals if the work is "novelistically" successful and the contextual analysis considers how the work as a whole reflects the situation of women. Pratt asserts that by employing both textual and contextual approaches the feminist critic can illuminate the relationship between the fictional depiction of women's roles and the authentic reality of women's lives. She continues her discussion of what constitutes an appropriate feminist analysis of literature by eschewing the political implications of feminist criticism, which are so crucial to Moi:

> The new feminist critic should be a "new critic" (in the aesthetic rather than the political sense) ...to consider literature as it reveals men and women in relationship to each other within a socio-economic context, that web of role expectations in which women are emeshed. (12)

Pratt urges feminist critics to avoid imposing their own stereotypes upon works of fiction and to view the "quest for a feminist literature [as] a humanistic one...devoted to the

cleansing of misconceptions held by both men and women" (18); this can best achieved through contextual analysis which can reveal the unique human identity of women in all its facets.

Lillian Robinson takes exception to Pratt's "contextual" criticism, stating that she "cannot deduce what kind of literary criticism it might inspire" (26), but Robinson does agree with Pratt to the extent that she believes that a feminist critic should not limit herself only to the neglected works of women writers. While this certainly should be one of the tasks of the feminist, it should not be her only area of interest: "we have a significant contribution to make to the radical criticism of that [male] tradition--a contribution that is not encompassed by merely saying 'ugh!' and turning away" (29). As well, Nina Auerbach wishes to protect her right to engage texts male-authored texts (_(Ex)Tensions_ 13), but Spender encourages women critics to recuperate the long neglected women writers:

> Although in some circles it may be in order to 'accept' the disappearance of women writers as just a strange and random quirk...,such an explanation has no place among women critics who have noted that the same fate does not await men. (140)

As well as Spender, other critics, Elaine Showalter for example, call for "a feminist criticism that is genuinely women centered, independent, and intellectually coherent" ("Wilderness" 247). Many contemporary feminist critics eschew

criticism of canonical male-authored texts, preferring, instead, to recover the lost or forgotten female-authored works. Showalter denies an affinity with "separatist fantasies of radical feminist visionaries," but she does assert that

> feminist criticism can[not] find a usable past in the androcentric critical tradition. It has more to learn from women's studies than English studies, more to learn from international feminist theory than from another seminar on the masters. (247)

Showalter places herself firmly outside Pratt's humanistic approach to literature, seeking rather a female perspective of women's literature. As Moi does, Showalter perceives a woman-centered approach to literature as an advance in feminist criticism; women writers should be the focus of women critics and readers. Showalter divides feminist criticism into two categories: that which is concerned with woman as reader, which she labels a feminist critique, and that which focuses on woman as writer, for which she creates the term "gynocritics":

> Its subjects include the psychodynamics of female creativity; linguistics and the problem of a female language; the trajectory of the individual or collective female literary career; literary history; and, of course, studies of particular writers and works.
>
> ("Toward a Feminist Poetics" 128)

While denying a separatist ideology and claiming that both categories are necessary, Showalter focuses her critical conversation on women's writing, but Auerbach takes exception to Showalter's gynocritics, fearing it will attempt "to legislate the future direction of feminist criticism" ("Why Communities of Women Aren't Enough" 153).

In an attempt to "define" feminist literary criticism, Annette Kolodny, like Showalter, delineates types of feminist criticism, but she creates three categories: any criticism written by women, any criticism by women of a canonical text approached from a "feminist" perspective, and any criticism by women about female authors and their texts ("Some Notes" 37). The second category illuminates the wide variety of portrayals of women in literature, but the third category requires the critic to embark on a "more ambitious quest": to discover if indeed there exists, as Virginia Woolf hoped, a uniquely feminine mode of writing. Kolodny concentrates her critical energies on criticism by women about women writers, and she labels "good" feminist criticism as that which explores and analyzes "the variety of literary devices through which women are finding effective voices" (48). Like Moi, Kolodny insists that feminist criticism must be "political" in order to expose sexist bias and literary stereotyping of women's roles; it must "remain a separate and...compensatory...activity, attempting to make up for all that has previously been omitted, lost, or ignored" (55).

Moi, Showalter, and Kolodny, as well as the french feminists, Cixous and Clement, generally reject criticism of canonical male-authored texts as naive or early attempts at feminist criticism; however, while women's writing as been too long ignored by the critical community, an examination of critically established male authors from a woman's perspective is neither passe nor naive. Most critical approaches, be they marxist, feminist, or psychoanalytical, are attempts to read established texts in innovative ways. Kolodny posits that literature is a social institution and reading a learned activity, which can and should be relearned and redefined as the social institution changes: providing "infinite variations of the same text" ("Dancing" 153). Defoe and Richardson provide contemporary readers with an opportunity to judge and evaluate the male perception of women. The informing influence of feminist critical theory allows readers to challenge an accepted or traditional reading of a male-authored text, particularly in the case of two authors who deliberately submerge their gender in the gender of their first-person narrators.

The answer to the question of why Defoe and Richardson chose to write first-person female protagonists lies outside the purview of this study and could easily lead to a quagmire of supposition. Certainly the increase of the number of women in the reading public may have spoken to Defoe, who wrote to support himself; he needed to sell his books, and so he may

have written, in part, to that component of the reading public most likely to buy them. Watt proposes that the low educational level of most women put the classical texts out of reach, so they turned instead to "lighter" works, novels and romances. Richardson's motives were probably somewhat different since he ran a profitable printing business. His impetus may have derived from a genuine desire to demonstrate to young ladies what he considered to be appropriate behavior in relationships with other people, especially male-female relationships. Whatever the reasons why these two authors wrote in the guise of women, we are left with four novels that present four women of disparate social class and financial security attempting to work out their private existences in a world run by and for men. The question that remains for a contemporary reader to resolve is how well do the authors represent these women. Do Defoe and Richardson present first-person narrators who recreate the female experience or do the characters reveal themselves as the products of the male consciousness?

For answers to these questions, we need to turn to the historical accounts of the eighteenth century. The following brief summary of historical data derives from a compilation of sources which offers insights into the position of and the possibilities for women in general. Janelle Greenberg provides a concise summary of the legal status of women in the eighteenth century. Two sets of laws governed women:

public law, by which all women were denied the right to hold office, vote, or serve on juries; and private law, by which women were divided into two categories: those single, feme sole, and those married, feme covert. Although still completely excluded from public life, the single woman controlled her property, lands and goods, in the same manner a man did; she could make a will, enter into contracts, sue and be sued. However, her control vanished as soon as she married: "...by that action she surrendered those rights and fell prey to a whole series of disabilities which placed her in the same legal category as wards, lunatics, idiots, and outlaws" (172). A married woman owned nothing except that which was separated from her husband's ownership prior to their marriage; in regard to that property, a wife was considered legally as a feme sole, but whatever she earned or inherited after the marriage belonged to her husband, as regulated by her status as feme covert. Such was the legal status of all women in the eighteenth century, regardless of social class or financial security, so despite their inherent differences, our four fictional heroines share a life of second-class citizenship with their real life counterparts. Also, even though these four women come from disparate social backgrounds and educational levels, they have one thing in common: each confronts the world on her own without benefit of financial support from her family. Each one confronts "the problem of hammering a living out of an unyielding world with

no more equipment than she is born with" (Utter 19). Even Clarissa could escape from the tyrannical edicts of her family if she were equipped to "do" something other than attempt to please, often unsuccessfully, the men in her life, but "her own likely internalization of the prevailing ideology meant that she herself probably failed to perceive the nature and extent of her disabilities" (Greenberg 179). So Utter queries, "What can the poor girl do?"

Since, according to Lawrence Stone's research, only twenty-five percent of women were employed, and those were mostly unmarried domestic servants (the very position Pamela already holds), the obvious choice for all four of our heroines is marriage, but that choice reduces Roxana to abject poverty and Moll eventually to bigamy. Widow Blackacre, of Wycherley's Plain Dealer, announces the economic pitfalls of marriage: "matrimony to a woman [is] worse than excommunication in depriving her of the benefit of the law." What are the other possibilities? What about seeking a position of a governess? 150 years later it works for Jane Eyre, why not Clarissa? Another main-stay of impoverished young women lies in domestic service; Moll and Pamela take that route with varying degrees of success. Finally, of course, there remains the world's oldest profession: Roxana's ticket out of her poverty-stricken state.

If Pamela flees from Mr. B's advances without a

recommendation, she will be left without a character reference, and so too without her character and no opportunity for another position in domestic service, so what might she do to earn money? M. Dorothy George delineates some employment opportunities for women in London Life in the Eighteenth Century: seasonal migration from the country to work in market gardens, weeding, picking fruit, or carrying produce to market. Women employed in such jobs earned five to seven shillings a week: "...they slept in barns and outhouses and lived chiefly on garden produce allowed them by their employers, so that they returned to their homes with a little fund for the winter" (145). Women also worked as cinder-sifters and attended dust-carts or perhaps sold the labors of their hands in the streets: "Mrs Charke, Colley Cibber's daughter, describes how she made and hawked sausages" (162). The silk trade in London also offered employment opportunities for women and children, although often these were limited to the wives and children of the weavers (184). Pamela cannot return to her father, for he can afford neither to support her on his poor farm nor to provide her with a dowry; therefore, she not only loses her job by fleeing from Mr. B, but she also loses her chance for a husband. Correctly, she recognizes her future could potentially be seriously harmed by leaving Mr. B's household precipitately.

Little of the historical data of the period deals with

the plight of the unmarried woman and the opportunities of gainful and respectable employment open to them. George includes in an appendix a category titled "Women's Work - Occupations of Married Couples" (425-8), but unmarried women, the spinster class, seem to have relied on the charity of family, living with brothers and cousins as unpaid retainers and upper servants. According to Lawrence Stone, it was not until the end of the eighteenth century that the opportunity for being a governess was available to an educated upper-middle class young woman like Clarissa. In 1726 her most viable option was to seek a position as a companion to a wealthy married woman -- a job that Mary Wollstonecraft describes from personal experience as odious: "It is impossible to enumerate the many hours of anguish such a person must spend...[living] with strangers who are so intolerably tyrannical" (Stone 384). If it were possible for Clarissa to have found such a position without her father's knowledge or permission, she would have traded one tyrant for another. One wonders, however, without her family's help, how she might have found a job as a companion; certainly, she had no references. Another alternative for young women of Clarissa's station was teaching in a girls' school. Take, for example, Mary Robinson, whose story seems almost to form the plot of one of the novels: Mary at the age of fifteen, with no qualifications but a lady-like manner, takes a position teaching, but, in spite of economic hardship, her father

forbids her to work. She eventually meets an apparently suitable man, who, after marriage, turns out to be an unfaithful profligate, leaving her in such dire economic straits that her only recourse is to take to the stage, another activity her father had forbade her (O'Malley 80).

Doris Stenton describes the plight of Hester Mulso, an acquaintance of Samuel Richardson's, who, at his home, met an impoverished attorney; they fell in love, but they did not marry for six years because her father refused his consent. Mulso wrote to Richardson about her situation and her concern with the dependence of daughters on their parents:

> 'Custom, indeed, allows not the daughters of people of fashion to seek their own subsistence, and there is not a way for them to gain a creditable livelihood, as gentlemen may.' (295)

Mulso's experience demonstrates that Clarissa, perhaps even more than her fictional companions, was trapped by her social class. Later, Mulso wrote Letters on the Improvement of the Mind for her niece, which earned her great popularity among her contemporaries. In Letters, she dispenses traditional and correct advice; she cautions against the learning of languages, citing the "danger of pedantry and presumption in a woman," and warns young women not to exchange "the graces of imagination for the severity and preciseness of a scholar" (quoted in Stenton 296).

If the situation of unmarried women was precarious, so

too was the situation of married women. They had to rely on the kindness of their husbands, who were often little more than strangers when they married. O'Malley's Women in Subjection reveals that indeed the perils faced by the fictional women of Defoe and Richardson are historically accurate. If Moll sought to keep her husbands ignorant of her true fortune, she did so out of necessity and self-preservation, not merely a mercenary and greedy nature. She recognized the reality of marriage; it may, as Pamela believed, have been the best choice for a woman from among her few and poor alternatives, but marriage was still fraught with peril, as Roxana learns at a young age. In a 1699 sermon, Reverend John Sprint admonished women that absolute obedience to a husband was the first requisite of a happy marriage; he insisted that a wife's first and only duty was to obey her husband in all things (Stone 198). How was Roxana to know if a man loving and generous during courtship might not be profligate and unreasonable during marriage? Yet however he turned out, for the upper and upper-middle class woman, the husband had almost total control over his wife.

Although the theory behind the existing laws protected women, and indeed the great legal writers of the time contended that women were "the favorite of the law," the reality of the situation was simply that women were property themselves. In 1732, Fielding's Mr Modern cautions his wife:

"Your person is mine: I bought it lawfully in the church." A woman belonged first to her father and after marriage to her husband: "She could neither own property nor make a will, and any goods she possessed belonged autocratically and automatically to her husband" (O'Malley 23). Blackstone states in the Commentaries on the Laws of England that by marriage the very being or legal existence of a woman

> is suspended, or at least it is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband, under whose wing, protection and cover she performs everything. (23)

A married woman could neither make contracts independent of her husband's will and pleasure nor engage in any business transaction without his permission. Anything she earned belonged automatically to her husband, and he could use her earnings in any way he saw fit, without consultation or consideration. A married woman could keep only that which she could hide from her husband. O'Malley quotes Sir Frederick Eden, a philanthropic economist:

> As the law now stands, the moment she [a married woman] acquires them [earnings], they become the absolute property of her husband...The instances are not few where a drunken and idle man has an intelligent and industrious wife...who is deterred from working, from a thorough conviction that her mate would...strip her of every farthing which she had not the ingenuity to conceal. (38-9)

Roxana believed that when a woman married, it cost her everything, and indeed her husband controlled both her fortune and his, and even though a woman's primary duties centered on the children, she had no more legal claim to them than she did her money. Further, not only did her fortune and her children belong to the husband, but also so did she. "From the day of her marriage her body was bound to the service of her husband for his pleasure and the begetting of children" (24). A woman's only protection lay in the generosity and good will of her husband. If he lacked these qualities, she was at his mercy, with little recourse in the law. She had to rely mainly on her powers of seduction and the strength of her emotions. George Savile, Marquis of Halifax, in Advice to a Daughter (1688), remonstrated, "you have more strength in your Looks than we have in our Laws and more power by your Tears than we have by our argument." Lady Chudleigh, like Astell, Behn, and Montagu, objected to the narrow view most men took of marriage and wrote "To the Ladies" in which she reveals her unhappiness and bitterness at the restrictive and restricted position of women:

> Wife and Servant are the same,
> But differ in the Name:
> For when that fatal Knot is ty'd,
> Which nothing, nothing can divide:
> When she the word obey has said,
> And Man by Law supreme has made,
> Then all that's kind is laid aside,
> And nothing left but State and Pride:
> Fierce as an Eastern Prince he grows,
> And all his innate rigor shows:
> Then but to look, to laugh, or speak,
> Will the Nuptial Contract break.

Like Mutes she Signs alone must make,
And never any Freedom take:
But still be govern'd by a Nod,
And fear her Husband as her God:
Him still must serve, Him still obey,
And nothing act, and nothing say,
But what her haughty Lord thinks fit,
Who with the Pow'r, has all the Wit.
Then shun, oh! shun that wretched State
And all the fawning Flatt'rers hate:
Value yourselves, and Men despise,
You must be proud, if you'll be wise.
(Poems of Several Occasions 40)

Most men, and women too, believed that women required no education beyond the domestic arts; most wives were little more than glorified servants. Even Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, a proponent of education for women, believed herself to be unique among her sex, and she did not propose that education should prepare a woman for remunerative work. She wrote to her daughter, Lady Bute, about the education of her granddaughter and warned that she should

> conceal whatever learning she attains, with as such solicitude as she would hide crookedness or lameness... The ultimate end of your education was to make you a good wife...hers ought to be, to make her happy in her virgin state. (Letters 225)

However, in the latter half of the seventeenth century, many evidenced concern about education for women, or the lack thereof. Hannah Woolley wrote in the Introduction to The Gentlewoman's Companion (1675) that the education of the female sex is "everywhere neglected, so it ought to be generally lamented," and Defoe in Essay on Projects (1697)

took an even bolder stance:

> ...one of the most barbarous customs in the world [is] that we deny the advantages of learning to our women. We reproach the sex every day with folly and impertinence, While I am confident that had they the advantages of education equal to us they would be guilty of less than ourselves.

Defoe, like Mary Astell in A Serious Proposal to the Ladies, saw education as a remedy for unhappy marriages and proposed Academies for women although he sought to broaden the population proposed by Astell by including women from the middle classes, as well as women of position. Defoe also objected to the religious emphasis in Astell's proposal, but he agreed that what limited women was not a lack of ability, but a lack of education and opportunity. Both Astell and Defoe argued that not only would women gain through education, but also so would their husbands: "Doubtless her Husband is a much happier Man...than he who has none to come home to but an ignorant...Creature" (Astell 97-8). However, the majority of men believed that women needed to be taught nothing but a little housewifery, as evidenced by Lord Halifax's tract advising his daughter how to be happy in the world, which did not include anything resembling education. Stone reports that "most ordinary women took the same view, like Mrs Cappe's aunts...who 'had a great horror of what they called learned ladies', and 'were continually warning me

against spending my time reading'" (357). In spite of those like Defoe and Astell, as well as others, urging the importance and appropriateness of education for women, many, like Lady Montagu, continued to urge women to hide what little learning they might possess in order to find husbands.

Prepared for nothing but domestic service, whether paid or unpaid, married women were in a vulnerable position. Under Blackstone's doctrine that man and woman were one person under law--the man--effectively, a woman ceased to exist in respect to her property when she married. The strict rule of common law did not permit a wife to possess any real or personal property separate from her husband, unless it was specifically set out in a marriage settlement prior the the marriage. If the husband died, a woman understood that her property could be "swept away for the benefit of his creditors and a part, if not the whole, of the family support be destroyed" (Beard 131). A woman, as Roxana is, could be left destitute by the death or disappearance of her husband, and frequently she had little choice but to join the poor relief rolls. The options for gainful employment were meager, at best; George suggests that

> there can be little doubt that the hardships of the age bore with especial weight upon [women]. Social conditions tended to produce a high proportion of widows, deserted wives, and unmarried mothers, while women's occupations were over-stocked, ill-paid and irregular. (172)

Doris Stenton cautions her readers that although it may appear that all women were idle, poorly educated, and undervalued, many women proved exceptions to the rule: Lady Rachel Russell (1636-1723), whose letters reveal the high regard in which she was held; Celia Fiennes (d. 1741), whose travel diaries reveal her curiosity and lively mind; and Catharine Cockburn (b. 1679), a poet, playwright and philosophical writer, who although virtually unknown today, was highly regarded in her own time. These women, and others like them (Mrs. Chapone and Lady Montagu, for example) demonstrate a society which was beginning to encourage and accept the achievements of women. However, for the majority, advantages were few and opportunities limited.

Defoe and Richardson present their readers with four heroines, who serve, as Tobias Smollett wrote in the preface to Ferdinand Count Fathom (1753), as the "principal personage to attract attention, unite the incidents, unwind the clue of the labyrinth and at last close the scene by virtue of....[her] own importance." Our task here is to determine if these fictional women are, given the standards and possibilities of the eighteenth century, plausible within their respective environments: Moll's life as a criminal, Roxana's role of courtesan, Pamela's position as a housemaid, and Clarissa's imprisonment by her family. Each one confronts a different set of circumstances that forces her to rebel against "the general acceptance of the assumptions of

paternalism" in the eighteenth century (Greenberg 179). These women are forced to reject the conventions dictated by a patriarchal system, but their situations are not unique. The system fails Moll and her fictional companions as it often failed the female readers of these novels. Each woman responds differently to this failure; however, if Defoe and Richardson are successful in their attempts to create first-person female narrators, the actions and reactions of their four women should authenticate the realities of women's lives in the eighteenth century.

CHAPTER II

Daniel Defoe's Women: Moll Flanders and Roxana

Although critics frequently disagree regarding Defoe's exact position in the history of the English novel, indeed most award the title of "father" of the novel to Richardson, critics generally agree that something extraordinary happened when Defoe published Robinson Crusoe. It represents a turning point in the development of English fiction. Beginning with Robinson Crusoe the novel grapples with the problems of individual identity through the presentation of individual characters, who "exhibit life in its true state" and who portray all varieties of human experience. Defoe allows Robinson to do what Robinson might realistically do, and by presenting the plot in the form of an autobiography, Defoe asserts the primacy of individual experience. Robinson Crusoe represents itself as an unique experience; Robinson is not everyman, he is not a generalization of mankind--he is just himself. Although Defoe was almost sixty when he turned his pen to writing fiction, he was a prolific phamleteer and journalist, with over 550 publications to his credit; the Review includes over a thousand issues, all produced by him. Many of his non-fictional works contain a strong element of

fiction through his choice of the first-person narrative voice:

> The first-person singular was his favorite literary pose, and he used it in fiction and nonfiction alike....Two voices sound through his work: the public person who speaks in the nonfiction...; and the private impersonation, that first-person voice that gives life to the characters who are the most enduring part of Defoe's legacy as a writer. (Braudy 107)

Although Defoe wrote other novels and a vast collection of non-fiction, his critical fame lies, according to many, with his chef d' oeuvre, Robinson Crusoe: "Defoe's immortality will always rest on Robinson Crusoe, that immensely subtle, complex book with its simple plot" (Backscheider 215). Backscheider is not alone in her assessment of Defoe's achievement with Robinson Crusoe; Coleridge may have been the first to classify this particular Defoe novel among the "greats," but he certainly was not the last. Ian Watt refers to it as "Defoe's most powerful and enduring work" (93); it is the only work of Defoe's that Michael McKeon discusses in any detail. Harold Bloom asserts that the book's status renders "aesthetic judgment ...redundant." While acclaim for Robinson Crusoe abounds, Bloom observes that Moll Flanders provokes wide ranging critical conversation, citing praise from Allen Tate, James Joyce, and William Faulkner, as well as Hazlitt's violent negative response (4-5). Virginia Woolf

suggests that the fame of Robinson Crusoe did Defoe an injustice for it obscured his other, in her opinion, better works:

> On any monument worthy of the name of monument the names of Moll Flanders and Roxana, at least, should be carved as deeply as the name of Defoe. They stand among the few English novels which we can call indisputably great.
>
> (The Common Reader 127)

Although many later critics have taken exception to this oft-quoted assessment of Defoe's women novels, the very fact that these two novels evoke extensive critical debate makes them a more intriguing subject for analysis than the redoubtable Robinson Crusoe. Few critics agree about the relative merits of Defoe's foray into "women's fiction." Arnold Weinstein claims that "Moll Flanders is the richest of his [Defoe's] fictions...[and] that Moll is one of the most fully realized individuals in literature" (145). However, feminist critics frequently dismiss Moll Flanders and Roxana simply because they were written by a man at a time when women, who are now largely ignored by the critical community, wrote prolifically: "Moll Flanders is praised and...pre-served" while novels by women have fallen into a critical abyss. (Spender 157). Other critics study Moll Flanders or Roxana to support whatever particular critical stance they espouse or to expose a particular aspect of Defoe's writing: for example, Shinagel's search for gentility or Starr's study

of spiritual autobiography.

Ian Watt finds Moll "suspiciously like her author...the essence of her character and actions is...essentially masculine" (113). Watt attributes this impression to the fact that "Moll accepts none of the disabilities of her sex" (113), yet she constantly refers to the horror of being a woman alone in the world and the difficulties she faces trying to make her way without the aid of a husband or protector, which is why she is always looking for one. Dorothy Van Ghent, troubled by the way Moll reduces every occurrence in her life to its monetary value, concludes "a complex system of ironies...holds the book together as a coherent and significant work of art" (36). If money is important to Moll, it is because she has so little. Van Ghent is correct to recognize the importance of money to Moll, but that does not require the novel to be ironic; Van Ghent closes her discussion of _Moll Flanders_ by stressing that whatever Defoe's "intentions" with his novel, he demonstrates a full understanding of "his creature, Moll" (43). Mona Scheurmann agrees with Van Ghent's assessment of the importance of money in Defoe's novels; she posits that money, not marriage, makes a women secure, as both Moll and Roxana discover.

Katherine Rogers explores Defoe's women in her essay "Feminism of Daniel Defoe." Through an examination of his non-fiction, which articulates Defoe's "criticism of mar-

riage" and his "sympathetic recognition of women's difficulties in marriage," Rogers contends that, although "Defoe did not present opinions in his novels directly, as he did in his non-fiction" (10), Moll Flanders and Roxana present women who reveal the inequalities inherent in their patriarchal society. Rogers is concerned with a more generalized attitude of "feminism" in Defoe's canon than with the specifics of Moll and Roxana, which represent fictionalized portraits of Defoe's belief that women are just as capable as men, but lack both education and opportunities.

John Richetti in "The Case of Daniel Defoe" creates a comparison of Captain Jack and Moll Flanders; he asserts both books are "at their most memorable and intensely actual in urban crime and punishment" (58). Moll resembles Jack in the way she holds herself apart from those around her, but she assimilates herself into the social constructs with greater ease than Jack: "she learns quickly the tricks of self-preservation and plausible self-invention" (59), but then, as a woman, she has more need to insert herself into the appropriate social institutions. Paula Backscheider attempts to position Defoe as the "father" of the English novel; she asserts that the characteristics of Defoe's writing that have proved to be critically problematic are the same qualities which later writers imitate in their own novels. Backscheider, like Richetti, perceives an affinity between Captain Jack and Defoe's other adventure books and Moll

Flanders, so Backscheider includes Moll Flanders in her chapter, "Crime and Adventure," but she devotes considerable discussion to Roxana, which, according to Backscheider, is the work that originates the novel form in England.

But what about the women Defoe created: Moll and Roxana? Aside from the success or failure of the novels they inhabit, do the women, through their creator, act in ways and speak to us in ways that we, as readers, can accept and believe them as women? In 1908, Holbrook Jackson hailed Defoe as the "most plausible writer in the world" (34), a rather sweeping claim, to say the least. Few contemporary critics give serious consideration to the femininity of Defoe's women and suggest that Moll and Roxana are simply the products of one man's image of what a woman should do within the construct of his fictional world rather than plausible representations of what a woman could do in the real world, but Miriam Lerenbaum asserts, "Defoe shows that he is an acute observer of women and sympathetic to their plight" (102). Defoe presents his women as if they actually existed; do we believe him?

MOLL FLANDERS:

"Nothing matters but the heroine..." -E. M. Forster

Defoe embarks on his novel, Moll Flanders, by insisting to the readers that it is a "private history" and his contribution is only to provide "the pen employed in

finishing her story, and making what you now see" (Preface v). He wishes his readers to have no reason to assume that this is a novel; the title page does not carry Defoe's name, and the format incorporates the traditions of the spiritual autobiography, in which the events of a lifetime are scrutinized for the purpose of revealing the state of the soul of the author/narrator. Defoe has Moll present individual episodes to demonstrate the development of her spiritual condition, in the hope that "the reader will have something of instruction" (vii). Defoe attempts to unite narration and spiritual instruction; the result is an often times disjointed presentation of events, with an underlying continuity provided by Moll's relation of events and an examination of the state of her soul at any given moment in her life:

> Spiritual autobiography pursued thematic coherence amid or despite narrative incoherence [,so]...the fact that Moll's story unravels in a series of rather tenuously connected episodes does not...preclude a gradual, fairly systematic development of the heroine's spiritual condition. (Starr 127)

Moll's narrative develops as such a story might realistically evolve. She skips over large portions of her life, compressing events, particularly relationships, but she does not avoid relating those portions of her life which do not show her to advantage; she describes the text as "an account of

what was, not of what ought or ought not to be" (89), and Leo Braudy considers it to be "the record of...what constitutes human individuality" (107).

Moll's story divides into two main sections: the first and longer deals with her career as a wife, each of the five episodes ends with the death or departure of a husband; the second section relates her career as a thief, eventual arrest, and final transportation to America. Moll's reunion with her family in Virginia provides the vehicle by which the two sections are united. Nothing happens in the novel that does not directly relate to Moll and her adventures; characters and events are included and related only to the extent that they illuminate Moll and in direct proportion to their relevance to Moll's life. Indeed, as Forster claims,

> Moll Flanders stand[s] as our example of a novel, in which character is everything and is given the freest play...Nothing matters but the heroine;...she seems absolutely real from every point of view, we must ask ourselves whether we should recognize her if we met her in daily life. (95)

When Moll is tempted to digress, she herself asserts repeatedly that "this is my own story" (265). Children, in particular, are paid but scant attention by the narrator, coming into and passing out of her life with uncommon speed and ease, in spite of Moll's protestations against the harmful neglect of children: "...to neglect them [children]

is to murder them [and] to give them up...is to neglect them in the highest degree" (154); yet at the end of her narrative Moll refers to her Virginia son as "my only child" (192) although she could lay claim to seven living children. Shirlene Mason proposes that Moll's attitude towards her children reflects "the general practice of eighteenth century mothers to give over the trials of mothering to servants and foster parents" rather than a lack of maternal feeling on Moll's part (54). Dorothy George's research supports the high incidence of "putting children out" among the poor in England. She cites the vast numbers of children sent to the Foundling Hospital: "the gates were besieged. [Children] were sent from the country,... entrusted to carriers, wagoners and even to vagrants" (57). These children belonged primarily to women who were desperately poor themselves. Not only is Moll without means to care for her children, but as well, children do not impact on Moll's life in any important way so they are largely ignored in her narrative. Of course, it is not just children who come and go, but also husbands and lovers. Although Moll is always looking for a husband or protector, she spends little time in her narrative describing her husbands or offering anything more than the most superficial details of her various relationships with men. She disposes of her first husband quickly and efficiently in a few brief sentences:

It concerns the story at hand very little to enter into

> the farther particulars of the family...that I lived with this husband, only to observe that...at the end of five years he died...[and] left me a widow. (54-5)

Moll recognizes that neither her children nor her husbands create her story; she is the prime mover and agent of her life, creating herself in spite of the complications of family connections and obligations.

Right at the beginning of her narrative, Moll impresses upon the reader her essential aloneness, a condition that recurs throughout her life: "I had...been left...without friends,...without help or helper, as was my fate" (12). From the time her mother is transported, Moll survives on the charity of strangers to whom she endears herself and with whom she ingratiates herself: first, after being abandoned or having escaped from a gypsy band, with a poor woman who ran a little school; then the Mayor's wife, who is "mightily pleased" with Moll's pretty ways; and finally, a good gentlewoman, who is the mother of Moll's first husband: "From the outset the burden of proving her right to exist is laid upon her [Moll]" (Woolf Reader 129). In all these places Moll demonstrates herself to be a "very sober, modest, and virtuous young woman" who has had "no occasion to...know what a temptation to wickedness meant" (21). In spite of the inauspicious beginning to her life, in Cinderella-fashion Moll develops into a charming and personable young woman, but regardless of both her inherent virtues and learned talents,

she cannot rise to the class of gentlewoman to which she aspires for the lack of one essential ingredient: money. It is, at last, that lack which leads Moll into temptation. She knows herself to be superior to the daughters of the household in which she is a servant, but, as one of the daughters points out:

> ...if a young woman has beauty, birth, breeding, wit, sense, manners, modesty...,yet if she has not money, she's nobody...; nothing but money now recommends a woman. (22)

So what is a poor girl to do? Perhaps just what Moll does: allows herself through vanity and greed to be seduced by a son of the household. According to Starr, "...vanity contribute[s] at least as much as the wiles of the elder brother to her undoing" (128). Moll is, after all, still really only a child, and an inexperienced one, filled with vanity and pride and a desire to become more than her circumstances offer. When the son woos her with flattery and a "handful of gold," she succumbs to temptation with "thought of nothing but the fine words and the gold" (27). Even though Moll is won by the gold, she evidences a genuine affection for the young master, so when he suggests that she should marry his younger brother, she cries: "Is this your faith and honour, your love, and the solidity of your promises?" Paula Backscheider asserts that Moll's "shock establishes her naivete and promises deep grief and lengthy

suffering" (166). Moll actually seems to have believed, in all her innocence, vanity and pride, that her lover might become her husband. However, that ending of the Cinderella fairy-tale is denied her; instead, with the reality of her position facing her clearly, she marries the younger brother. This situation creates in her considerable discomfort, for she "could not think of being a whore to one brother and a wife to the other" (31); however, the alternative of being turned off with neither money to make her way nor reference to secure another position, "...of being dropped by both of them and left alone in the world to shift for myself...[,] prevailed with me to consent" (53). Arnold Weinstein suggests that the marriage to Robin "is unpalatable not only because she loves the elder brother, but also because <u>her</u> will is counted for nothing" (150). Circumstances here force Moll into a position not of her choosing, as they have already in her young life and will again as her life progresses.

However, in this instance, Moll is really more fortunate than she has any right to expect, having sold her virginity and with nothing but her personal charm to recommend her, she manages to marry into a family of quality, trick her husband into believing she is a virgin on her wedding day, and generally escape unscathed from her premarital dalliance with the older brother. Yet it is he for whom Moll pines; "To the end of her marriage to Robin, the

older brother's face...appear[s] to her, and...haunt[s] her very lovemaking" (Backscheider 166). Moll is even unable to attend his wedding for, as she states, "I could not bear the sight of his being given to another woman though I knew I was never to have him myself" (55). When her husband dies, Moll confesses that she was not "suitably affected" as her affection for the brother remained undiminished during her five-year marriage. At Robin's death, his parents take her two children off her hands, and Moll is "left loose in the world,...still young and handsome...with a tolerable fortune" of 1200 pounds (55). And now, this first episode behind her, Moll embarks on her life. All that has happened to her thus far merely sets the stage for what is to come. She is never again the naive child who believes in the efficacy of love; the harsh reality of the position of the working woman has stripped Moll of her ability to trust. According to Backscheider, "Moll is never again so trusting and vulnerable;....She accepts her lot, but her vulnerability has been established. That she is vulnerable is crucial to the rest of the novel" (166).

Moll emerges from her marriage in what should be an enviable position: she has youth, looks, charm, and some money. What more could a woman hope for? But what to do next is the question. As a widow of some means, Moll has an advantage over many women in her age group: she holds the status of <u>feme sole</u> and as such she has control over her

money. However, unlike the widow of a tradesman, she has no business to take over so she is faced with few prospects of increasing her stock and securing a future for herself. Although an orphan and a former servant, Moll has been educated to the level of gentry: a little music, some dancing, a proficiency with a needle, a smattering of language. She has received exactly the inappropriate and unusable education that Defoe discusses in his "An Academy for Women." She possesses no marketable skill. Nothing she has learned equips her to be more than a servant, a position for which she now considers herself too genteel, or less than a wife, the position to which she aspires. According to Mason, "Defoe obviously sympathizes...and he has no real solution to offer because society does not have more acceptable alternatives" (20). Moll can be either wife or mistress and having learned something from her previous experience she "kept true to this notion that a woman should never be kept for a mistress that had money to make herself a wife," so Moll resolves not to be tricked "by that cheat love" and sets out to be "married or nothing, and to be well married" (56). Moll's attitude here reflects the common assumptions regarding marriage during the eighteenth century; Habakkuk quotes Sir William Temple (1750): "...marriages are made just like other common bargains and sales, by the mere consideration of interest or gain, without any love or esteem" (25). Moll loved the older brother, but that

profited her nothing; her marriage to Robin, however, offered her security and, at his death, a small sum of money.

Unfortunately, the goal, to be married and to be married well, that Moll sets for herself was not an easy one to attain, for the opportunities for remarriage were not plentiful in spite of the high incidence of adult mortality in the early eighteenth century: "There was something like a crisis in marriage towards the end of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries when widows...found it difficult to find husbands" (Hill 241). Habakkuk asserts that the decline in the number of potential husbands resulted in part from "substantial losses...in the Civil Wars" and in part because many men found life "so expensive they could not afford to marry" (24). Richardson notes this problem in Sir Charles Grandison:

> I believe there are more bachelors now in England then there were a few years ago; and probably also the number of them (and of single women, of course) will every year increase.

For some time after Robin's death, although Moll "had abundance of admirers...[,she] found not one fair proposal among them all" (56). Of course, Moll's estimation of a "fair proposal" is highly affected by her notions of gentility, so while she "was not averse to a tradesman," she would have a tradesman who "was something of a gentleman too" (56).

All her life, Moll has longed to be a gentlewoman; as a

child, she believes that means to be "able to work for myself and get enough to keep me," but the person she naively calls a gentlewoman her nurse tells her is "a person of ill fame and has had two bastards" (16-7). Now it seems she has no clearer idea of what constitutes a gentleman than she had of a gentlewomen; she confuses the exterior trappings of wealth with the inherent qualities of good breeding that create gentility:

> ...when my husband had a mind to carry me to the court or to the play, he might become a sword, and look as like a gentleman as another man, and not like one that had the mark of his apron-strings upon his coat or the mark of his hat upon his periwig....(56)

So she weds a draper, her "gentleman-tradesman," and that folly leads her to ruin herself "in the grossest manner that ever a woman did" (56). In about two years, through their joint vanity and pretensions, they have run through their money and the draper is arrested and unable to meet the bond. Moll, although a "plague to folly" in marrying the man, has the sense to put a bit by for herself when she sees the end coming. When he deserts her, Moll can muster 500 pounds to once again start another life.

Although unemcumbered by children, she is still married and that poses a legal, as well as a moral, dilemma. However, since divorce laws were extremely stringent in regards to women, one could be obtained only by an Act of Parliament,

Moll realizes she will not be able to gain a divorce for one would not be granted to her solely on the basis of her husband's desertion: "...legal exit for a woman from marriage was virtually impossible. Except by proving the marriage invalid, no divorce was possible" (Hill 210). However, Moll knows that she will never see her husband again:

> I was a widow bewitched, I had a husband and no husband, and could not pretend to marry again though I knew well enough my husband would never see England any more...I was limited from marriage. (59)

As well, she has "not one friend to advise" her nor no one to whom she "could trust the secret of...[her] circumstances to" (59). Since Moll's husband is under a commission of bankruptcy, whatever she had managed to save for herself or take from the shop was liable and could be seized by creditors to satisfy her husband's debts. Moll could not under English law own anything separate of her husband, except that which she could claim in a marriage contract; he possessed total control of all her assets, personal property, and real estate. "[A] husband's debts became by law a prior charge on his wife's...property" (Stone 195), so Moll stands to lose everything if her small cache of funds is discovered by the bailiff. Money was the only thing that could provide her some measure of security, and in this case, not even her money was secure. Her only hope was to hide what she had and,

as well, who she was in order to maintain her property. Whatever she has learned in the past, she now learns to be secretive about herself and her assets. Her circumstances were tenuous, at best, and so, as many did, Moll casts aside any scruples against bigamous marriage, claiming that "the circumstances I was in made the offer of a good husband the most necessary thing in the world to me" (69). Hill asserts that evidence demonstrates that "[m]any marriages in the eighteenth century must have been bigamous...[,and w]omen entered into bigamous marriages as well as men" (213).

While contemporary readers may fault Moll for her decision to marry again and her rather mercenary motives in seeking another husband, the options available to her are extremely limited. As Mary Wollstonecraft observed in _A Vindication of the Rights of Woman_, "the only way women can rise in the world, -by marriage" (115). Moll has her looks and charm, but no skills. Since the educational system excludes women, she cannot return to school to better herself; she can only use what nature gave her and try to make the most of it. Certainly she has no conscious desire to be a whore or turn to thieving to make her living, but she does what she must to stay alive and live as well as she can. She may aspire to gentility, but genteel poverty does not appeal to her. She has made a serious mistake in marrying her draper, but how should she be punished for that mistake? Starvation seems a bit harsh. She considers her position:

> I was not wicked...Yet,...I had no friends, no, not one friend or relation in the world; and that little I had left apparently wasted, which when it was gone, I saw nothing but misery and starving was before me. (61)

More than anything Moll strives for a secure way to sustain herself: "Her drive is in part the inevitable quest for security, the island of property that will keep one above the water of an individualistic, cruelly commercial society" (Price 33). Moll knows that marriage is the only honorable alternative available to her; without it, she must either enter into service or starve. M. Dorothy George recognizes that "the dominating impression of life in eighteenth-century London, from the standpoint of the individual, was one of uncertainty and insecurity" (262). So far, Moll has experienced that sense of insecurity first hand; she has been abandoned by her mother, left a widow and deserted by her two husbands. Her skills are minimal; apart from doing a bit of handiwork or working as a domestic, she has no real way to earn a living, and Bridget Hill notes that employment opportunities for women in the eighteenth century were neither many nor remunerative, and were often seasonal: "Particularly vulnerable were domestic servants, dressmakers, milliners, tailors, seamstresses, lace and straw workers - all liable to periods of unemployment or underemployment" (173). So even were Moll to find employment using her minimal skills, that offers no substantial protection from

starvation. Moll, even with two husbands behind her (one still alive), believes that only another marriage might provide her with the security she so desperately seeks, but, as she says, she requires a good husband. In the face of a shortage of eligible and willing men, how to get such a husband is the problem she must now solve.

Her Colchester sister-in-law once told her that money was the only thing that made a woman "agreeable," and Moll now agrees:

> This knowledge I soon learnt by experience, viz, that... marriages were here the consequences of politic schemes, for forming interests, carrying on business, and that love had no share...in the matter...money was the thing:...money was always agreeable, whatever the wife was. (62)

Older and wiser, Moll recognizes that men have no scruples "to go a fortune-hunting," why should she? Her showy tradesman had brought her to the brink of ruin so now she sets herself up as a widow of means to snare a husband who can support her and kept her secure, but underlying Moll's need for security is her desire for the genteel life, which establishes the pattern for her next three liaisons. Michael Shinagel argues persuasively that

> Moll's particular problem, however, is that a settled state for her means to be able to live like a gentle-woman...she absolves herself of all moral responsibility

> for her actions [because] Moll must live "handsomely' or she feels she is not really living at all. (155)

Moll is able to ignore the trifling problem of a living husband in order to secure a future for herself, but she is unwilling to settle for a lifestyle beneath her expectations. In each of her next three liaisons, Moll is unable to resist the trappings of gentility; as well, she never learns from her mistakes, although her next mistake is not one she could have foreseen in advance: marrying her brother.

A reader might speculate on Moll's alternative future had not her third marriage resulted in an incestuous union with her half-brother. This marriage appears to provide her with what she has been seeking. Moll tells the reader that

> ...we were married, and very happily married on my side, I assure you, as to the man; for he was the best-humoured man that ever woman had....(75)

> ...my husband continued the same at first, and I thought myself the happiest creature alive when an odd and surprising event put an end to all that felicity in a moment and rendered my condition the most uncomfortable in the world. (78)

In Virginia, Moll achieves the life for which she had been striving: security, family, home and hearth. Moll does not object to working for what she wants, and although she may occasionally yearn for England, she is apparently quite satisfied with her new life in the colonies. However, once

she discovers the truth about her relationship to her husband, she cannot tolerate his presence. Moll may have been willing to sell herself to the older brother of the Colchester family for the prospect of gentility, and she can, without a qualm, enter into a bigamous marriage, but she cannot maintain an incestuous marriage--no matter how good her life is with this husband. Here is where Moll draws the moral and emotional line: neither the pull of gentility nor the need for security can overcome her abhorrence of lying with her brother. She begs him to let her return to England although she provides no sound reason for wishing to do so; not knowing the truth of their relationship, her brother/husband refuses to let her go and Moll says that

> it was out of my power to stir without his consent, as anyone that is acquainted with the constitution of that country knows very well. (83)

As his wife, Moll must accede to his wishes and so for some three years, she remains trapped in an incestuous marriage. Finally, she extricates herself and returns to England, once more alone and friendless.

Casting about for a new situation, Moll "is drawn almost instinctively to the favorite resort of people of quality, Bath" (Shinagel 154) where she says that "though I was a woman without a fortune, I expected something or other might happen in the way that might mend my circumstances, as had been my case before" (95). However, Moll recognizes that

Bath is a place where men may find a mistress, but rarely look for a wife. Even knowing that, Moll stays where she can live the life to which she aspires: a woman of quality. To that end, she takes a maid, hires a coach, and dresses fashionably, for she loves "nothing in the world better than fine clothes" (101), in hopes of obtaining a protector, which she finally does: "a complete gentleman" who already has a wife (97). When, after several years with him, she loses this provider, Moll is once again on the look out for another husband. She knows time runs short for her husband-catching days and also "knowing...that such kind of thing so not often last long, [she] took care to lay up...money...for a wet day" (105); Moll has amassed approximately 450 pounds, which might be sufficient for her to live, yet she has skirted abject poverty for so long that she desperately wants more than she has to protect herself in the future.

Moll began her narrative "a poor desolate girl without friends," and now at forty-two and a hundred or so pages later in her narrative, she is "a women...left desolate and void of counsel" (114). Moll discourses on the hazards of being a woman alone in the world:

> ...and I found by experience that to be friendless is the worst condition, next to being in want, that a woman can be reduced to; I say a woman because 'tis evident men can be their own advisers...but if a woman has no friend to communicate her affairs, 'tis ten to one but she is

> undone; nay, and the more money she has, the more danger she is in of being wronged and deceived;...she is just like a bag of money or a jewel dropped on the highway, which is a prey to the next comer. (114)

Moll articulates here the problem that Roxana will later confront. Moll recognizes the inherent difficulty facing a woman who has no guide, no provider, no protector; after all, she has faced this situation many times in her life already. While Moll's observations foreshadow Roxana's concerns regarding the safeguarding of her wealth, Moll's problem is not how to protect her money, but rather how to get money to worry about. Once again she seeks to solve her dilemma through marriage. Her choice this time reflects her second marriage to the draper; Moll is dazzled by the external appearance of wealth and gentility that James, her Lancashire husband, puts on in order to snare himself a wealthy wife. They are both after the same thing: marriage to a wealthy spouse who can keep them in the style to which they would like to become accustomed. Each is seduced by the other's superficial display of wealth. After the marriage, they discover their mutual deception. Although Moll claims to love him enough to starve with him, Jemmy leaves her, begging for her forgiveness for his part in the deception: "Forgive me! I am not able to see you ruined by me and myself unable to support you" (136). They reunite briefly, but Jemmy's problems with the law force them to part forever. Weinstein

contends that here Moll ignores all that experience has taught her thus far when she "throws caution to the wind and accepts her lover totally, without reservation or limit" (153). In this episode, Moll fully reveals her ability to love and to accept the consequences of loving, nor is her sincerity undercut by her unavoidable parting from Jemmy.

Moll is once again on her own, with even fewer financial resources than before since she shared a portion of her reserves with Jemmy. She now has two living husbands and another child on the way. This may be her lowest point to date; however, she locates a place for her lying-in at the sign of the Cradle with a woman who becomes both mentor and friend for the rest of Moll's time in England. It is she who guides Moll through the perils of childbirth, putting the child out, and laying a snare for Moll's fifth and final husband, her trustee, who has been guarding Moll's small reserve stock. He, of course, knows nothing of the real Moll, who has become an expert, through experience and necessity, at passing herself off as something she is not: a woman of property and a woman of virtue. She tells her readers that

> all the character he had of me was that I was a woman of fortune and that I was a very modest, sober body;... you may see how necessary it is for all women who expect anything in the world to preserve the character of their virtue even when perhaps they may have sacrificed the

thing itself. (123)

When Moll marries him, she experiences a flurry of repentance of her past life and the fraud she has perpetrated upon him; she resolves to be a good wife to him, eschewing the "levity and extravagance" of her former life and choosing instead "to live retired, frugal, and within ourselves." Together, they lived "in an uninterrupted course of ease and content for five years" (167). With him, Moll finds that which she has been seeking: financial security; however, once again, fate takes a hand and this interlude comes to an abrupt end when he loses his money and dies from the blow. Novak proposes that Defoe suggests here that "dishonesty is preferable to despair" (100); Moll is stronger than her husband, for she does not sink under the weight of her despair even though her fortunes have plunged to their nadir. She lives for two years "in this dismal condition...with want of friends and want of bread" (169). She is fifty years old, too old to be courted as a mistress or sought as a wife. Stone reports that normally "men in want stole; women turned to men" to support them (201), but Moll can no longer depend on men to save her, not that the men in her life thus far have really been able to save her anyway. In these desperate straits, Moll commits, without premeditation, her first theft.

Moll is horrified by what she has done, but she is even more horrified by the real and immediate prospect of

starvation, so she uses as her justification the Biblical injunction: "Give me not poverty, lest I steal," and appeals to her readers for understanding:

> Let 'em remember that a time of distress is a time of dreadful temptation, and all the strength to resist is taken away; poverty presses, the soul is made desperate by distress, and what can be done? (169)

What can be done? What should a woman in Moll's situation do? Certainly, turning to theft as a means of support is not a good solution; in fact, some might conclude that taking to the streets as a whore would be a better choice since that is a crime only against herself, not against others. Prostitution in the eighteenth century was evidently widespread. With few alternatives available, many women, particularly single mothers, resorted to prostitution to supplement inadequate, and often seasonal, earnings (Hill 173). However, although Moll is often referred to as a "whore," she is never connected to a brothel nor does she earn her living as a streetwalker. She always sought long-term arrangements with her gentlemen, preferably marriage. Whether Moll now considers her age a detriment to earning a living as a prostitute or she considers herself a cut above the average whore, she eschews that path. Also, according to her description of her first foray, she stumbles into the role of a thief.

Moll blames the devil for guiding her steps to the shop

where a little bundle lay unattended and ripe for the taking. She is overtaken by a force beyond her control; she calls it the devil, but it is really her overwhelming fear of poverty. After this first theft, she lies prostrate with the horror of it for several days, but "the prospect of my own starving, which grew every day more frightful to me, hardened my heart by degrees" (171). So she goes out again and steals a string of beads from a child; with this second successful attempt, Moll's feet are firmly set on the road to Newgate, "the emblem of God's certain justice," and the specter of which, Backscheider argues, provides "much of the energy of the book" (175); however, along the way, Moll discovers that she is good at her new-found profession. Weinstein confirms Moll's prowess: "there is a powerful and lithe intelligence at play....Powers of intellect and perspicacity are needed for successful thieving...[and her] triumphs are those of cunning and creativity" (149). Moll describes with increasing pride a variety of adventures which demonstrate her abilities, finally proclaiming herself "the greatest artist of my time," culminating with the theft of a horse for which she has absolutely no use, simply to demonstrate that it can be done and that she is the one who can do it.

Moll is a clever and determined woman who has learned the hard way to protect herself and trust no one; she is both pragmatic and prudent. She has one confidante whom she trusts, but Moll withholds information even from her, and for

the rest of her cohorts in crime, she remains a cipher. As with her husbands, none of her compatriots know her real name, her background, or her current living accommodations. Although Moll occasionally mouths platitudes and cries of horror over her lifestyle, she continues to pursue it even after she has sufficient sums to support herself legitimately.

It is not until she is arrested, tried, and convicted that Moll truly repents her crimes. At first, she recognizes that her repentance stems from fear, not from a genuine regret for what she has done. In a moment of honest self-appraisal, Moll tells the reader:

> it was repenting after the power of farther sinning was taken away. I seemed not to mourn that I committed such crimes,...but that I was to be punished for it.... (243)
> ...for all my repentance appeared to me to be only the effect of my fear of death, not a sincere regret for the wicked life that I had lived. (245)

However, Moll finally does repent her past life, and it is through this true and honest repentance that she is saved from death and her sentence commuted to transportation. Her repentance is necessary in order for Defoe to be able to resolve the narrative in Moll's favor and allow her to prosper in the end. Since Defoe's stated intentions were that the novel provide instruction for the readers, Moll must both pay for her sins and repent of them. Without

retribution and repentance, she could not be saved. Moll tells her readers that she cannot instruct them, for she does not possess the necessary rhetorical skills, but readers must connect their actions to hers and learn for themselves how to conduct their lives from her story:

> I am not mistress of words to express them. It must be the work of every sober reader to make just reflections as their own circumstances may direct. (254)

Moll's incarceration in Newgate marks her return to the place of her beginnings and provides the opportunity for the re-birth for her fortunes, based on her new-found penitence. The reader is prepared for this when earlier in the narrative, Moll's mother tells her that in America "many a Newgate-bird becomes a great man" (78), and now Moll has become "a mere Newgate-bird." Her repentance coupled with her reunion with Jemmy, the one husband with whom Moll demonstrates a genuine capacity for love, assure the reader that Moll's return to society is appropriate and that she is indeed deserving of spending her final days in comparative ease and happiness:

> ...the story of Moll and Jemmy...reinforces her capacity for sympathy for others, for love, for friendship and reminds us of the girl who would have forgiven and been faithful to the older brother who seduced her had she been able to persuade him to abandon his plan to marry her to Robin. (Backscheider 177)

The final paragraph of her narrative leaves Moll and Jemmy back in England, "in good heart and health." They have completed the terms of their transportation, have amassed a considerable fortune and will live the rest of their lives "in sincere penitence for the wicked lives we have lived" (301).

"Moll Flanders is the chronicle of a full life-span, told by a woman in her seventieth year with wonder and acceptance" (Price 33). Moll's narrative offers us a portrait of a woman struggling to make her way in a harsh and unyielding world. She is often down, but she is never out for the count. She bounces back from each setback with unbounding energy and relentless enthusiasm. Throughout her life, in each episode she relates, Moll demonstrates her abilities and her perseverance. Her husbands may not last long, but she offers each one of them a genuine and tender affection. There is no indication that she would not have remained a faithful and devoted wife to each one had she been allowed that opportunity; even of Robin, who was forced upon her, she says that "we lived very agreeably together" (54). In The Common Reader, Woolf states that "since she [Moll] makes no scruple of telling lies when they serve her purpose, there is something undeniable about her truth when she speaks it" (129). Moll may not have loved Robin with the abandon of her love for his brother, but she gives Robin no cause to doubt her nor the reader any question that she would have

ever been anything less than a dutiful and proper wife to him. And so it is with all her husbands, even when she technically tricks them by displaying an appearance of wealth that overstates the reality of her finances, each one forgives her easily once they find out the truth. Had Robin not died, had her third husband not been her half-brother, had Jemmy not been broke and on the run, had her fifth husband not died destitute, had any one of these things been different, how utterly changed Moll's life might have been, but this is not the story of what ought to be, but what was (so Moll tells us). "What was" is a story of the vicissitudes of change and hardship, of failure and success, of one woman, who in the fullness of time, conquers disaster and experiences life in all its variety.

Forster queries whether readers would recognize Moll if they met her in daily life; his answer is "No" because fictional characters are "people whose secret lives are visible or might be visible: we are people whose secret lives are invisible" (99). My question is whether Moll's secret life is recognizable and "real" to us. Can we image ourselves placed in her situation reacting as she does, doing what she does, living as she does? The answer may well be, like Forster's, "No, I would not do what Moll does," but what <u>she</u> does is believable within the context and confines of Defoe's fictional world. Weinstein claims that "Defoe achieves something rather enormous in his portrayal of a

vigorous old lady bent on affirmation at all costs" (149). In Moll Flanders Defoe gives us a woman we can both admire for her tenacity and applaud for her enthusiasm.

Roxana:

"there are few more repulsive heroines in fiction-"
-George Saintsbury

As he does in the Preface to Moll Flanders, Defoe addresses his readers at the outset of Roxana: "The History of this Beautiful Lady, is to speak for itself...In the Manner she has told the Story" (Preface 36). Once again Defoe makes no claim for himself other than as the editor of another's story, and a woman at that: "his explicit claims for his novel involve the insistence that it taught impeccable morality and that it was strictly true to life" (Durant 168). One presumes that Defoe was writing primarily for the edification of women; Backscheider asserts that "Defoe intended The Fortunate Mistress to be a 'woman's novel'" (Ambition 182). Defoe reports that the lady who relates her story makes "excursions...censuring and condemning her own Practice," but readers, particularly contemporary feminists, may apprehend lessons in Roxana's story, as they do in Moll's, that rather than condemn her, applaud her independent spirit and capable business sense.

What Defoe intended is open to question, as evidenced by the wide-ranging debate among critics as to the central

message and tone of the novel. Roxana often parallels concerns elucidated in Defoe's non-fictional works, particularly the question of the status of women in marriage. In Religious Courtship Defoe warns his readers to resist the temptations of an unsuitable marriage. According to Katherine Rogers, Defoe "made clear his commitment to feminism from his first important book to his last," from An Essay Upon Projects in 1698 to The Complete English Tradesman in 1726, published two years after Roxana, which echoes Roxana's view of the capability of women to manage their own affairs ("Feminism" 3). Yet David Blewett asserts that Roxana chronicles "the moral deterioration and ultimate defeat of the heroine" (9). While, certainly, the strangely abrupt ending of the novel indicates that Roxana has once again fallen on hard times, one wonders if that was not included to pander to the puritan desire for retribution for sins, rather than a reflection of Defoe's personal view of his heroine's deeds and misdeeds.

There is no question that Roxana, Defoe's last novel, is a different book than his previous fictional works, particularly Moll Flanders. James Maddox suggests that although Roxana superficially resembles Moll Flanders and Roxana "attempts to follow the same formula of success..., it blows up in her face" (200). Roxana is not Moll; she comes from a different class, and her response to poverty takes a different form. As well, Defoe presents a more internalized

portrait of Roxana than he does of Moll, whose life we know mostly from what she does rather than what she thinks. In Starr's examination of Defoe's use of the spiritual autobiography, he asserts that "Defoe means to consign Roxana to the devil" and that "making an unregenerate malefactor her own critic is the book's undoing" (165). If Defoe intended the book to reveal only the state of the narrator's soul, then perhaps the book is undone; however, Roxana, while making use of some of the conventions of the spiritual autobiography, is enlarged and enhanced, not lessened, "by ambiguities in the heroine's point of view and by the preponderance of animated but thoroughly untragic narrative" (Starr 183).

Roxana begins much like Moll Flanders, relating the circumstances by which Roxana, a deserted wife, is left destitute and friendless. Like Moll, Roxana comes to this juncture as the result of her relationship with a man: in her case, her feckless husband. Defoe sets up here a completely plausible scenario; it was not uncommon for women to be deserted by their husbands who could no longer support a household. These women were often left totally unprovided for and unable to find work. For example, Bridget Hill's study on women in the eighteenth century cites, as one of many, the case of William Burrage, who in 1756 deserted his wife, leaving her with six small children and no way to provide for them. She turned to the parish for support, but

Mrs. Burrage was one of the lucky ones for many deserted wives ended in the workhouse (212).

Roxana, married young to the charming son of a brewer, bears him five children in rapid succession and watches her husband run through his money and her marriage portion. She anticipates the impending financial disaster, but she is powerless to halt the process. Her feminine wiles and emotional pleadings fail to reform him, and, as a _feme covert_, she has no recourse in the law nor any sympathy from society. Her husband will not listen to her, nor take her advice on financial matters:

> I foresaw the Consequence...and attempted several times to perswade him to apply himself to his business...I saw my Ruin hastening on, without any possible Way to prevent it. I was not wanting with all that Perswasions and Entreaties could perform, but it was all fruitless...he went on, not valuing all that Tears and Lamentations could be supposed to do;...(42)

Lord Halifax counseled his daughter in 1688 that her tears and "looks" carried more strength than men's laws and arguments, but Roxana's life belies the truth of his advice. Try as she may to prevent the ruin she so correctly anticipates, Roxana has not the power to alter her fate, which lies solely in the hands of the men in her life: her foolish husband who ruins his business; her father who does not trust the husband, so leaves Roxana's legacy to the

management of her brother, who proceeds to lose it all and go to prison. These three men have the power to ruin her and they do. Yet, early on, the narrative reveals evidence of Roxana's capabilities to manage money.

When her husband sells the brewery in the face of potential ruin, Roxana attempts to persuade him to "buy some place...and offer'd to join my Part...;so we might have liv'd tollerably" (43). He ignores her advice and she has no recourse but to watch and wait and hope. Mona Scheurmann observes that for an eighteenth-century woman "safety depends on the goodwill and competence of the husband" (311), but Roxana's husband is totally incompetent. Defoe contrasts her intelligence and ability to manage financial affairs with her husband's lack of intelligence and inability to manage their affairs, but the husband's unwillingness to listen to his more intelligent wife reflects society's view of women as second-class citizens, who should be nothing but charming decorations. Mary Wollstonecraft responds to the prevailing view of women, who are "rendered weak and wretched by...a false system of education [which] consider[s] females rather as women than human creatures" (112). Women were to depend on their men, but Roxana's problem is compounded by the fact that her husband possesses no business sense.

She tells her readers: "Never, Ladies, marry a Fool." She has learned through hard experience that marriage is fraught with peril and safety is chimerical. Everything that

happens, all her future decisions, during the rest of her narrative develops logically from this first episode and the knowledge that as long as someone else controls her money she is vulnerable to the vagaries of human frailty. This knowledge colors all her attitudes and decisions: she never allows another man to control her money. Roxana spends the rest of her life attempting to protect herself against returning to her original precarious position. Whatever else, Roxana determines never again to be a victim. Scheurmann continues:

> At different points in the novel Roxana shows weakness or indecision with regard to moral matters, but...she is always in control of her money. Having learned her lesson from her early marriage, Roxana chooses to be mistress or unattached woman. (314)

Only money can provide a measure of security, and for a woman, marriage is a threat to that security.

Abandoned by her husband and left penniless with five children, Roxana begins to sell off her possessions; the landlord takes many in lieu of non-payment of rent, and soon Roxana sits in rags in an empty house. She is stripped of not only her material possessions, but also, reminiscent of Moll's liaison with her draper-gentlemen, her middle-class pretensions to the luxury of upper-class living: the "Mock-Coach" and the trappings of a life above their status. In desperation, Roxana appeals to her husband's family, but her

sister-in-law and other relatives ignore her plight, so finally, with the aid of her maid and a good-hearted but poor gentlewoman, Roxana contrives to place the children at the sister-in-law's home. By this action she hopes to save her children from starvation, but even relieved of the burden of five mouths to feed, Roxana still faces starvation:

> ...nor had I any thing to subsist with, but what I might get by working, and that was not a Town where much work was to be had. (58)

Even if there were employment opportunities available, Roxana possesses no skills that would enable her to work. She was the spoiled and pampered child of "People of better Fashion"; she had received no education but that was the custom of the young English woman, "...having all the Advantages that any Young Woman cou'd desire, to recommend me to others, and form a Prospect of happy living to myself" (39). Although of a different class than Moll, Roxana is no better prepared to support herself than Moll was.

So she accepts "the Bounty of a Man" to alleviate her distress. Like Moll, Roxana pleads that "poverty was my snare" when she becomes the mistress of her landlord:

> I might appeal to any that has had any experience of the World, whether one so entirely destitute as I was... could withstand the Proposal; not that I plead this as a Justification of my Conduct. (73)

She allows one man to rescue her from another man's

improvidence. However, unlike Moll, Roxana spurns marriage when it is offered later by the Dutch merchant. She has has a painful first-hand experience with the failure of the socially-approved method for a woman to support herself: marriage. At the landlord's death, she turns his fortune into her own and increases it, but she has no intention of allowing any man to control her finances.

After the death of her landlord jeweler, Roxana's vanity leads her to become the mistress of a prince, explaining her actions by saying that although "Poverty and Want is an irresistible Temptation to the Poor, Vanity and Great Things are as irresistible to other...[and] I had enough of both" (100). After an eight year liaison with the Prince, Roxana finds herself "not only rich, but very rich; in a word richer than I knew how to think of" (148), but she worries: "I did not forget that I had been Rich and Poor once already" (143). She, quite naturally, prefers being rich to being poor, so she now faces a problem that Moll only dreamed of: how to secure her fortune.

For that, Roxana turns for advice to a man because men control the financial world, and she knows that she is but a novice in financial matters, but she acts on the advice of the merchant herself:

> All this Work took me up near half a Year, and by managing my Business myself, and having large sums to do with, I became as expert in it, as any She-Merchant of

them all. (170)

Roxana is a quick study; she listens, learns, and plans. She keeps her own counsel and husbands her wealth with the intent of increasing it rather than depleting it. She believes that another marriage would certainly deplete her resources. Moll pursues marriage, five times incorrectly, as the path to a comfortable life, but it is not until she turns to thieving and relies on herself that she achieves a modicum of financial security. Roxana, a quicker study than Moll, learns her lesson after only one marriage and having accumulated a fortune, does not intend to invest it in any venture so risky as another marriage. She prefers the life of a _feme sole_ to that of a _feme covert_.

Long before her merchant proposes marriage, Roxana tells her readers: "I had no Inclination to be a Wife again, I had had such bad luck with my first husband,...a Wife is...but an Upper-Servant" (170). Defoe uses this same phrase to describe a wife's position in _Conjugal Lewdness_ (1727) in which he decries a state of matrimony that places the wife in the role of bound apprentice or upper-servant. However, Defoe sought reforms within the system; he believed, as most did, that the natural and proper role for a woman was that of a wife, and he did not advocate that women remain single. Still Roxana frames her argument in favor of being an independent, unattached woman although she does recognize and elucidate the advantages of being a wife and the

disadvantages of being a mistress:

> A Wife appears boldly and honourable with her husband, lives at Home,...and claims upon his Estate, if he dies...The whore sculks about in Lodgings;...is maintained, for a time; but is certainly condemn'd to be abandon'd at last. (171)

Although Roxana understands that marriage is the only socially acceptable path for a woman, when the merchant does propose, she continues her argument against marriage:

> ...if I shou'd be a Wife, all I had then, was given up to the Husband, and I was to be under his Authority only; and as I had Money enough, and needed not fear being what they call <u>a cast-off Mistress</u>, so I had no need to give him twenty Thousand Pounds to marry me. (183)

The merchant tells her that most women are not capable of managing their own money, but having increased her estate and maintained herself for the last ten or so years very nicely, Roxana cannot agree with him. She has lived a life which denies his argument and has no intention of risking what she has for the false security of marriage: "The first marriage led so quickly and painfully to desertion that she cannot risk it again" (Durant 161).

Roxana's position on marriage and the status of women in marriage accurately reflects the reality of eighteenth-century life. Wives were, as she states, virtual slaves to their husbands: bought and paid-for chattel, with few, if

any, rights. The laws, which were, one assumes, intended to protect a weaker, less able sex, allowed for a wife to own nothing: her clothes and personal effects belonged to her husband; if she worked at anything and earned money, that also was his, and he could require that it be paid directly to him. A wife could not leave her effects in a will without her husband's consent, but he had the right to dispose of her property, even that which was hers before the marriage, however he pleased. He could leave his wife's jewelry to his mistress if he chose. As well, the husband owned a wife's body. She could not refuse him, regardless of his treatment of her. Nor could she leave his house and protection unless he gave permission, and if she did leave without permission, the husband could have the law bring her back and prosecute anyone who gave her shelter--even her own mother. In its most extreme form, ownership of a wife could result in her being sold: "Recorded wife-sales increased at the end of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century" (Hill 215). Frequently the wife agreed to such a sale as her only alternative to an unhappy marriage for divorce was virtually impossible for a woman to obtain. Not only the wife, but the children, as well, belonged solely to the husband; he could educate them or not, as he pleased, discipline them, care for their health or welfare as he choose. These are the injustices and inequities in marriage that frighten Roxana and against which she argues so fervently; she recognizes

that the legal system prevented married women from achieving economic security.

However, Defoe undercuts Roxana's position on marriage when she bewails her "wickedness" in refusing the merchant's offer while still agreeing to "lie with him." Watt suggests an explanation for Defoe's stance here:

> Defoe's economic enthusiasm takes him perilously close to proving that, given a knowledge of banking and investment, Roxana's scandalous specialty could be developed into the most lucrative career then open to women. (142)

Considering the underlying instructional purpose of the novel, Defoe could not risk having Roxana refuse marriage without recognizing the moral implications of her decision. However, Rogers asserts that "we should not accept Moll's or Roxana's expressions of guilt at face value; Defoe thought more deeply and boldly than his characters did" (10). Based on his non-fiction writings about marriage, Rogers believes that Defoe understood and sympathized with the restrictions and helplessness of married women. Nevertheless, Roxana rants on for several pages, saying that she was foolish, wicked, stupid, "senceless," vain, and possessed by the Devil (197-202). She is caught in a moral dilemma here: although she does not want to marry again and risk her financial independence, she cannot reject totally the conventional social code which governs her life. Nor could Defoe completely reject the puritan tradition which formed him, so, in spite

of his advanced ideas regarding women, he believed that women should be married. Yet, after this interruption, Roxana quickly reverts to the capable financial manager she has shown herself to be, detailing for the reader her various financial dealings to secure her fortune:

> The Business I had had now with a great many People, for receiving such large Sums, and selling Jewels of such considerable Value, gave me Opportunity to know and converse with several of the best Merchants of the Place; so that I wanted no Direction now, how to get my Money remitted to England; applying therefore, to several Merchants, that I might neither risque it all on the Credit of one Merchant, nor suffer any single Man to know the Quantity of Money I had;...I got Bills of Exchange, payable in London, for all my Money; the first Bills I took with me; the second Bills I left in Trust, (in case of any Disaster at Sea) in the Hands of the first Merchant, him to whom I was recommended...(203)

In her dealings, she shows herself to be neither "stupid" nor "senceless." Roxana returns to England a rich woman and at the zenith of her career as a mistress. No longer a poor, deserted wife, she is now a capable financier, an acclaimed hostess, and perhaps even the mistress of royalty. She is a hard-headed business person, aware that as a single woman, she enjoys that same legal rights as a man, but that were she to marry, she would give up those rights for the rather

dubious privilege of being a wife. Paula Backscheider contends that Roxana's decision to remain single for a large part of her life places Defoe's novel at variance with other fiction by male writers, in which Roxana's choice "was often associated with the evil or 'monster' women, but in fiction by women, such a life was often portrayed as viable, desirable, and even admirable" (189). Defoe's admiration for Roxana's success, though evident, is muted by his need to provide a vehicle for her eventual punishment for her independence. Roxana's downfall comes finally in the form of her long-lost daughter, Susan.

Throughout the course of the first two-thirds of her narrative, Roxana hints at an ominous event which will alter her good fortune. Finally, she tells us:

> I must go back here, after telling openly the wicked things I did, to mention something,...which was fifteen Years before, I had left five little Children, turn'd out, as it were, to the wide World, and to the Charity of their Father's Relations. (230)

At this point the narrative splits; Roxana relates two stories simultaneously: her courtship by and eventual marriage to the Dutchman, and her daughter's search for her and Susan's eventual murder. Here any resemblance between Moll and Roxana explodes: Moll embraces her long-lost son in Virginia while Roxana plays hide-and-seek with Susan. Maddox observes the difference between the two novels, which "is

illustrated in the contrast between Moll's almost operatic embrace of her son and Roxana's mediated murder of her daughter" (215). Moll has found peace through penitence, and having sincerely repented her past life, feels no guilt for abandoning her son years past; however, Roxana cannot set aside her guilt over past actions because she does not repent them; she still believes that they were necessary for her survival, and she believes "that her exposure to Susan would plunge her back into that despised, vulnerable position of helplessness which was her condition when her first husband left her" (Maddox 208).

The "Susan" narrative impacts little on this study of Defoe's women because it reveals more about the author Defoe than it does about the character Roxana. Susan meets her untimely demise to punish Roxana for living a life outside the norm of the eighteenth-century patriarchal and puritanical society. Defoe does not seem certain how much sympathy he should invest in his heroine; he creates a woman who has much to recommend her, yet he cannot quite allow her to prosper or to be happy in the end. She is punished for attempting to undo the wrong she perceives she did her five children; however, if we separate Roxana from her daughter's desperate search for her and Roxana's response to that search, we find a woman of extraordinary personal strength and business acumen, not at all the "repulsive" woman Saintsbury labels her (71). Against the odds and the temper

of her time, Roxana succeeds beyond her wildest dreams: she has money, security, family, and position. She has it all, but she must lose what she has gained by dint of perseverance and perspicacity in order to satisfy the demands of Defoe's prescriptive requirement of providing "instruction" for his readers. Novak observes that Defoe "could not let Roxana escape [because] she is guilty of two economic sins: avarice and luxury" (134). Although Moll exhibits avarice, she never achieves luxury until she redeems herself. Roxana, on the other hand, lives in luxury as the mistress of wealthy and powerful men, so Defoe responds to the strong eighteenth-century "demand for poetic justice" (Backscheider 214). Roxana must pay for her sins.

David Blewett asserts that Defoe creates a world "where individual needs and desires clash with social forces that demand compromise and threaten personal integrity," and "[i]n his analysis of...the social circumstances in which she [Roxana] and the other main characters are trapped, we sense the growing theme of retribution" (10-11). So Defoe returns his heroine to the conventional social structure in the last pages of the novel; he does not, perhaps cannot, allow Roxana to escape punishment for her success in living life on her own terms and in her own way. Instead, he rushes the novel to an abrupt conclusion: "If Defoe was unwilling to detail her failure as thoroughly as he had described her success, it was probably because he had built up her wealth too

ingeniously to want to destroy it" (Novak 139). Instead, Roxana reports only that "after some few Years of flourishing..., I fell into a dreadful Course of Calamities,...the very Reverse of our former Good Days" (379). So ends the story of Roxana.

"[N]o one can read more than a few pages of The Fortunate Mistress without realizing that this is a novel by a man," claims Paula Backscheider (Ambition 200); one presumes her assessment extends as well to Moll Flanders, but of Moll Flanders Robert Donovan asserts:

> Defoe was capable of a more or less complete imaginative identification with his heroine...not that Defoe writes about himself under the guise of Moll, but that he has succeeded, apparently, in putting himself in her place and seeing with her eyes. (22)

Believing, as he asserts in Essay on Projects, that women are "more fearless, perceptive, and capable than the males who ruled them" (Novak 94), Defoe presents his women as people who are capable of overcoming initial and repeated adversities. Moll and Roxana are women who believe that they can succeed although they may not always do so. Certainly Moll fails repeatedly in her attempts to find security, but she continues to strive for that much-needed security, and she does not apparently perceive her failures as the results of some inherent flaw in her.

Roxana, on the other hand, does succeed. In spite of the inauspicious beginning to her adult life, she moves upward financially and socially right to the top of the ladder with her liaison with the King. While Moll's and Roxana's responses to their situations may not represent the norm for women of their time, they do present the possibilities, sometimes the only possibilities, available to women for whom the social system of paternalism fails to provide protection. Moll and Roxana act in ways that the system forced them, and other women like them, to act. Moll and Roxana participate in a desperation shared by many women of their time. While other women may have solved their problems differently than Moll and Roxana do, women did enter into bigamous marriages, as Moll does; women did achieve financial security as mistresses of influential men, as Roxana does. These two women are fighters, which neither negates their essential femaleness nor exposes them as products of a man's imagination. Starr contends that in Defoe's novels,

> it makes for a certain kind of realism that all should be so plausibly filtered through the narrator's consciousness -or at any rate so little should seem interpolated by an authorial consciousness independent of the narrator's. ("Defoe's Prose Style" 255)

Defoe created human histories, which present stories of what people do and undergo, and the world they inhabit seems as real to us as the world we inhabit. We may not, as

Forster states, be able to meet Moll or Roxana on the street, but if we were to, we would recognize them as women who convincingly represent their particular situations and the general plight of women in the eighteenth century.

CHAPTER III

Richardson's Women: Pamela and Clarissa

At the age of fifty and with only one book of model letters to his credit, in 1740 Samuel Richardson published Pamela, which is often regarded as the first English novel. Unlike Defoe, who came to novel writing by way of an extensive career in non-fiction, and produced tales largely of crime and adventure with an underlying thread of instruction, Richardson turned to fiction with little literary background and with apparently the sole purpose of producing works that would instruct young people in correct behavior. While he was writing his volume of model letters, Richardson came across a real-life story about a young woman whose master "attempted her virtue," and he created out of that story, Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded. Richardson hoped that his story might turn young people away from the "pomp and parade of romance-writing" and "promote the cause of religion and virtue."

Richardson chose for his method not the pseudo-autobiographical narrative of Defoe's works, but an epistolary narrative, which allowed for the minute development of the internal workings of the character's

thoughts, as well as the description of events. Holbrook Jackson states that Richardson "made the human heart speak aloud that which hitherto it had only told itself" (52). In order to reveal the workings of the human heart, Richardson's Pamela contains some thirty-two letters in all, with twenty-eight of them from Pamela herself, and Clarissa, the longest novel in English literature, contains 547 letters, most of which are written between Clarissa and Anna Howe or Lovelace and John Belford; however, almost every character takes up his or her pen in the course of the narrative.

Although the epistolary narrative may seem highly artificial to the contemporary reader, it does allow Richardson to carefully analyze his characters while he is creating them. Alastair Fowler observes that "[i]n Richardson's time long narrative letters were common, so that an epistolary novel could plausibly consist of a series of first person narratives" (193). Letters, even though addressed to someone else, resemble soliloquies, which provide a vehicle for self-revelation and analysis of events by the speaker or writer, so Pamela's and Clarissa's letters offer the reader insights into the characters' hearts and minds; Edward Wagenknecht claims that "the epistolary method aids verisimilitude by forcing the author [Richardson] to account for all his information" (53), and Watt observes that the letter format affords the "opportunity for a much fuller and more unreserved expression of the writer's own private

feelings than oral converse" (176). However, recreating an experience through letter-writing includes the possibility of re-writing history, and Terry Eagleton suggests that "in the privacy of the boudoir you can control and recuperate meaning, as you cannot...in personal conversation" (Rape 44); Eagleton contends that the letters may create new events rather than recreate actual events, and the letter-writers may, with deliberation, supplement experience by adding to or deleting from the "real" experience. However, Patricia Spacks asserts that the journals and letters in Pamela are "relatively artless forms" which "dictate the impossibility of rewriting" (Imagining 196), and Richardson's new species of writing to the moment allows readers to "see" events through the narrator's eyes, encountering incident and response simultaneously.

Much of the current contemporary criticism surrounding the novels revolves around the form and function of Richardson's epistolary method, particularly in Pamela. Patricia Spacks devotes the bulk of a chapter in Imagining a Self to a discussion of the writing in Pamela. She refers to Pamela as the first heroine of the English novel and provides a brief overview of the problems of the epistolary convention, but Spacks then cites recent critics who have "begun to consider the possible value of Pamela's obsessional" writing, which "supplies evidence both of her private self-awareness and of her capacity for public moral

utterance" (194). Spacks concentrates her analysis of Pamela on the act of Pamela's writing; she suggests that the central struggle of Richardson's first novel "focuses on the manipulation of language" (210), so Spacks restricts Pamela's importance to her ability to produce her journals and letters. The character of Pamela is less important than the character of the writing, and Spacks largely ignores what is contained within the letters, Pamela's struggle against Mr. B and her struggle with herself.

Nancy Armstrong's Desire and Domestic Fiction traces the political development of women's fiction, which, Armstrong asserts, begins with Pamela because Richardson "endowed female writing - namely, Pamela's letters - with a power that extended beyond the household" (163). Like Spacks, Armstrong concentrates her analysis of Pamela largely on the function and importance of the letter-writing: "It is fair to say that the act of writing becomes so obtrusive that the purity of her [Pamela's] language seems to matter more than that of her body" (119). As the primary narrator, Pamela necessarily interposes herself between the reader and the story, but for Armstrong and Spacks, the letters and journals take precedence over the story and its instructional value, which they perceive to be slight and insignificant. However, Armstrong does observe that the struggle revealed through the letters and journals, the struggle between servant and master, between female and male, between the lower and upper

classes, demonstrates Pamela's victory over the social and political system inherent in that struggle. Since Pamela, a mere servant girl, achieves mastery over her social, political, and economic superior, Richardson's novel offers the possibility for all individuals to claim possession of themselves as their own property, but, according to Armstrong, Pamela's power depends on her use of language. Armstrong insists that "Pamela reminds us at every turn that we are witnessing a process of writing" (119). Indeed, Pamela's rhetorical skill is an important weapon in her battle with Mr. B; however, she employs it not only in her writing, but as well in her verbal confrontations with Mr. B, nor is it the only weapon in her arsenal.

In the main, Armstrong's text deals with women writers, as does Ellen Moers in Literary Women, but she too includes a discussion of Pamela in her section, "Heroinism." She suggests that the story, the literal preservation of Pamela's virtue, is at best silly, but it is not the story that fired Richardson's imagination so much as Pamela's "positive self-assertion through letter-writing" (114). However, Pamela does not consider the preservation of her virtue silly; it is important to her because it is important to her society. Moers asserts that Richardson was primarily concerned with the power of the written word to change the world and that the act of letter-writing provided the main impetus in the novel; the letters themselves are both the subject and the

theme: "They outshine her virtue and crowd out her devotions" (114). Moers cites the amount of space in the novel devoted to the acquiring of writing materials, the secreting of those materials and the letters themselves, the extensive comments on the style, the reading of them aloud, all as support for her conviction that the letters form the basis of the prevailing subject in Pamela. Certainly the creation of and discussion about the letters consume a significant portion of the novel, but critics who concentrate their attention primarily on the act of writing may trivialize the novel. The letters and journals serve as a vehicle to record Pamela's or Clarissa's stories; the letters do not serve as the story itself.

The epistolary format is a literary convention; all narrative methods help to shape the story, not only the way it is told, but also the story itself. Richardson believed the epistolary narrative offered the best vehicle for revealing the writers and their situations. The revelation of the soul comes from within. Presenting the story through first-person letters allows Richardson to get inside his characters and allows readers to apprehend what is going on inside the characters. Critics who privilege the act of writing often do so to the expense of the characters and the stories revealed through the writing process; however, the critical attention to the act of writing is not surprising in light of the structuralist and post-structuralist response

to Derrida's preoccupation with the separation between speech and writing. Derrida elevates writing to a position of superiority over speech, which in large measure accounts for why critics are re-examining Richardson's novels with an increased interest in the writing process of the epistolary narrative.

Therefore, Richardson's novels present a critical problem for readers seeking affirmation of the authenticity of his women, for they can be distracted by the convention of an epistolary narrative. Frequently, contemporary readers react so strongly to the implausibility of a character producing the vast number of letters that these women write that the plausibility of the content of the letters gets overlooked. The sheer quantity of letters does indeed strain the credulity of even the most naive reader; after all, how many young women find the time to write six long letters on their wedding day as Pamela did; in one she writes that with "the pen and paper before me, I amused myself with writing thus far." However, in order to illuminate the women of the novels, we need to concentrate our critical efforts not on _how_ Pamela and Clarissa manage to write, but rather on _what_ they write.

For the purpose of examining the women Richardson creates, we will have to take the letter writing at face value in the same way we accept that Moll's and Roxana's retrospective narratives offer accounts "of what was, not of

what ought or ought not to be" (Moll Flanders 89). Richardson presents us with two female protagonists who face the same essential problem: how to preserve their virtue against the onslaughts of a man who is their social, and in Pamela's case economic, superior. The two novels are long, sometimes tediously so, and they are far longer and more detailed than Defoe's, but within their pages we find two women who, through their writing, breathe life into the events of their narratives.

Pamela:

"...every heroine in fiction is the daughter of Pamela."
-Utter and Needham

Contemporary critics of Pamela generally agree that it is an inferior early attempt by Richardson, and that its interest lies mainly in the way it lays the groundwork for the pinnacle of Richardson's literary career: Clarissa. Eagleton calls Pamela "a kind of fairy-tale pre-run of Clarissa...a cartoon version..., simplified, stereotyped, and comic in overtone" (37); however, Michael McKeon asserts that "Pamela is not an inferior first attempt to achieve what is fulfilled only in Clarissa; it successfully achieves an authentic species of fulfillment which Clarissa, ambitious of other ends, does not even attempt" (380). He argues that Pamela seeks to explode the myth of aristocratic pride, which is exemplified not only by Mr. B and his equivocal sexual

desire for Pamela, but also by his sister's treatment of Pamela after the marriage. McKeon denies those critics who attack Pamela as a paean to female wish-fulfillment through matrimonial subservience. For McKeon, Pamela represents the struggle between the classes, with attention to the gender-conflict developing only when the social conflicts are resolved.

Pamela originally appeared in two volumes, which ended after her assimilation into society, but later Richardson added two more volumes, which critics generally consider inferior to the first and as well less interesting; Elizabeth Brophy asserts: "Pamela II is undoubtedly the least read and the most poorly regarded of Richardson's major works" (38). In the Preface "by the Editor" to the first volumes, Richardson sets out his intentions for Pamela and his contribution to it, and he concludes by stating that "an Editor can judge with an impartiality which is rarely to be found in an Author." Following Defoe's model of concealment, Richardson disclaims authorship of his novel while laying out its purposes: "to inculcate religion and morality." McKeon suggests that "because it [Pamela] is a documentary history,...it is singularly qualified thereby for moral instruction and improvement" (357). Although Pamela follows the pattern of authorial concealment Defoe employed in his "histories," Richardson differs from Defoe in his method of instruction. Rather than offering instruction through the

depiction of "immoral" characters, as Moll and Roxana are, Richardson presents exemplars whom readers can emulate. Since readers, in spite of their own faults, may feel superior to wicked characters, positive examples of honor and virtue better teach moral lessons. Richardson takes for his entire story the opening episode of Moll Flanders: the attempted seduction of a servant-girl, educated beyond her station, by the young master of the household. What Defoe encapsulated into a few pages, Richardson extends to a 500 or so page novel, but the inherent moral values remain unchanged from Moll's story to Pamela's. However, Moll tells her story from the position of knowledge as a retrospective narrator while Pamela writes her story in letters to her parents and in journal form to herself as it is happening, so she knows no more than the readers its eventual outcome.

Pamela's story begins with the death of her mistress and follows her son's, Mr. B's, unsuccessful attempts to persuade Pamela to become his mistress. He flatters, cajoles, threatens, and pleads, but nothing he tries serves to persuade Pamela to alter her firm belief in her own self worth. She will return to her poor, but respectable, family; she will remain a servant in his household or another; she will even become his wife, but she will never, under any circumstances, become his mistress! In the end, Pamela achieves the Cinderella-like conclusion that is denied to Moll; she marries her "Prince Charming." Many contemporary

readers question how Mr. B could possibly be a worthy mate for the virtuous Pamela and would prefer that Pamela reject him as Clarissa later rejects Lovelace when she tells him that no man who has treated her as he has will ever be her husband, but Mr. B is not Lovelace. He, eventually, recognizes the error of his ways, but more important, he recognizes Pamela's value. He comes to love Pamela because of her virtue and purity, and it is because he loves her that Pamela marries him. Through her struggles with him, Pamela achieves her personal independence, and she becomes Mr. B's wife because she has affirmed her self-worth. In the face of emotional and physical trials, Pamela perseveres because she knows her own value. It is appropriate that the novel, as a comedy, include the requisite wedding and the necessary affirmation of social stability through marriage. Margaret Doody observes:

> [*Pamela* is] closely related to the fairy tale,... -*Cinderella*...-which celebrate[s] the union of high and lowly. The ancient roots of the tale give it a strength and simple organic unity of form which the slight works of the new female fiction could not achieve. (34)

In accordance with the emphasis on the individual that the new novel form valorized, Richardson takes for his heroine a humble servant girl and makes the threat against her virtue a worthwhile subject for examination.

Pamela begins her narrative *in medias res*; she has

already been a servant in Lady B's household for some time when the reader is brought into the story. In her first letter to her parents, Pamela provides sufficient background for us to get a picture of her and her life: she is a servant, educated by her "good lady" to write, cast accounts, be expert with a needle, and qualified above her degree. Pamela fears that with Lady B's death she will be forced to return her family, "who have enough to do to maintain yourselves" (43); however, on her deathbed, Lady B recommends Pamela to the care of her son, the young master Mr. B.: "so comes the comfort that I shall not be obliged to return back to be a burden to my dear parents" (43). We are also told that Pamela has "no wages as yet, my lady having said she would do for me as I deserved" (43). Here within the first lines of the narrative, we know that Pamela is young (fifteen years old), educated beyond her station, pampered by her mistress, from a poor but respectable family. Although she has a family who cares for her and about her, she is still essentially alone in the world, dependent on her new master for her welfare. Even though she is trained as a domestic servant, which was the primary occupation of unmarried women in the eighteenth century, Pamela fears, and rightly so, that if she is cast out of her current position she may not be able to sustain herself, for jobs were neither plentiful nor easy to find. Also she has been treated rather better by Lady B than she could expect in another household should she

be able to obtain another position. That Lady B has spoiled her and perhaps given Pamela ideas above her degree is without question, and Pamela does not want to leave a good job for one of unknown circumstances.

Pamela then describes to her family a scene when B gives her some things of his mother's, and Pamela's father answers her letter with admonitions to care for her virtue; he finds B's conduct suspicious and warns her that all her learning and position will gain her nothing if she loses her reputation. Pamela responds that her father's concerns have made her suspicious of B too, but she wonders "what he could get by ruining such a poor creature as me?" (47). She is so far below him on the social scale that it would demean him to seduce her, just as it would demean her to give in to him were he to attempt her virtue. However, as Margaret Doody suggests, the female domestic was at a great disadvantage in any relationship with her master. Exploitation requires a relationship of unbalanced power between two opposing forces. Because she is poor and socially inferior, Pamela must continually struggle for power in a relationship in which she is the moral superior, but in which Mr. B is the economic and social superior. His conduct would likely be condoned by society, but while hers would probably be considered too insignificant to matter, it would change her status and prospects irrevocably; indeed, B's friend and neighbor, Sir Simon Darnford, tells his wife:

> Why, what is all this, my Dear, but that the 'Squire our Neighbor has a mind to his Mother's Waiting-maid? If he takes care she wants for nothing, I don't see any great Injury will be done to her. He hurts no Family by this.

However, if Pamela were to lose her reputation by dallying with him, she would lose everything, "with no prospect but that of being eventually thrown upon the town, where life would be nasty, brutish, and short" (Doody 44). Pamela tells her family that everyone in the household likes her, and she does not seem to apprehend the difference between Lady Daver's offer of employment and Mr. B's offer of gifts. Pamela is either unwilling to see that B may be a danger to her, because she cannot face the truth of it, or unable to see the danger, because she is too young and innocent to recognize such danger when it confronts her. The fact that Pamela does not perceive the immediate danger to her has caused many readers and critics of Pamela to question her motives in remaining in Mr. B's employ.

As far back as Henry Fielding who parodied her in Shamela by portraying her as a designing slut, some readers have interpreted both Pamela's actions and attitudes as indications of her own designs on Mr. B; she stays in Mr. B's employ, even after he makes his first forays against her, in spite of her protestations about the value of her virtue, and she is apparently unwilling to perceive him as an unregenerate scoundrel, in spite his repeated actions to the

contrary. Ellen Moers observes:

> _Pamela_...is an offensive and irritating portrait of a girl who is a cheat, a hypocrite, a flirt, and a tease unless the reader takes Pamela's side, and wants her, as much as Richardson wants her, to achieve a decent and permanent position in life instead of rotting away on the dunghill of prostitution. (71-2)

While Moers' assessment may be hyperbolic, it does articulate one of the difficulties readers encounter with accepting Pamela's decision to stay with Mr. B.: her attraction to him.

It is evident, almost from her first words, that Pamela finds Mr. B attractive; after all, he is young, we assume, handsome, wealthy, a man of social position: a position to which any young girl would aspire, but that does not mean that Pamela would do anything to violate her own principles to "catch" him, nor would she, in reality, have expectations that a man like Mr. B would ever be likely to marry her and marriage is the only possible arrangement for a girl like Pamela, servant or not. Pamela does not fully understand her ambivalent feelings toward B; while she abhors his behavior, she is at the same time attracted to him. She writes: "I think I was loth to leave the house. Can you believe it?--What could be the matter with me, I wonder? I felt something so strange at my heart! I wonder what ailed me." Rosemary Cowler suggests that her ambivalence is one of the aspects of _Pamela_ that makes the main character so real:

> She is a very young, sensitive girl, experiencing for the first time and under extraordinarily trying circumstances some of the moral complexities and inconsistencies that make up actual adult life. (8)

Whatever the inconsistencies in her feelings towards Mr. B that Pamela betrays, she is always consistent in action: she will retain her virtue no matter what attempts he makes against it or what her heart tells her to the contrary.

So when Lady Davers suggests that Pamela should become her lady's maid, Pamela is more than willing to go to her household; nothing in Pamela's response demonstrates her interest in anything more than a secure position. She tells Mr. B: "...as you have no lady for me to wait upon,...I had rather, if it would not displease you, wait upon Lady Davers" (55). Although she may not recognize the danger Mr. B poses to her good name, she is aware that she really has no purpose in his household, and so her position there is tenuous at best. If she accepts Lady Davers offer, Pamela would have a job that she is trained to perform, but she cannot leave B's employ with a reference without his permission. So for the moment, she waits to see what will develop.

When B makes his first attempt on her, despite whatever attraction she may feel, it is her principles, not her heart, that rule. Pamela turns her rhetorical skills on him, and quite effectively puts him in his proper place, as her master. She cries that he "lessened the distance that for-

tune has made between us, by demeaning yourself, to be so free to a poor servant" (55). By pointing out the disparity between their positions, Pamela puts him on the defensive. He cautions her to hold his conduct secret, and she escapes from the summer house unscathed. Although she has bested him in this encounter, Pamela knows that she may not always be so lucky or so clever, yet she is loath to run away without something or somewhere to run to, nor does she know how to best manage her escape.

Uncertain what action to take, she ponders her alternatives: simply to run to the next town, but what would she do then; to wait for a propitious opportunity to make her escape and hope that he leaves her alone in the meantime; to take her gifts from the family or leave them. She fears that Mr. B, in his anger and frustration, may report that she has stolen what he has given to her freely. He is not only her master, but he is also the local Justice of the Peace, so he could easily unjustly prosecute her, which would further diminish her chances for obtaining another position. John Richetti points out that part of Pamela's dilemma stems from the fact that

> her would-be seducer is nothing less than one of the legal representatives of the law, the chief landowner and therefore the magistrate in his part of Lincolnshire where he besieges her virtue. (50)

As well, she is concerned about her safety on the road. She

knows full well that a young girl alone on the road may be prey to all sorts of disasters and dangers. She finally concludes that perhaps since his first attempt on her failed and she made her opposition to any liaison with him clear, he will not try her again. All in all, Pamela's ruminations do not reveal any ulterior motive in staying in his household, but rather a genuine reflection of confusion and fear about an uncertain future should she depart precipitously. As Hamlet ponders that "dread...makes us rather bear those ills we have than fly to others that we know not of," so to Pamela, the known danger of Mr. B is less frightening than the unknown dangers which face her should she leave his household. Even though she is uncertain about what course of action she should undertake, she is absolutely certain of her principles, which remain unshaken: she will not give in to him.

So she stays, wary and concerned, but hopeful Mr. B will not assault her again. She takes up residence with Mrs Jervis, the housekeeper, for protection, but, in spite of her precautions, once again, he catches Pamela alone. She denies that she has told Mrs Jervis about their first encounter, but she asks him: "why should your honour be so angry I should tell Mrs Jervis, or anybody else, what passed, if you intended no harm?...it is not I that expose you, if I say nothing but the truth" (62). Although she claims that as his servant it is not her place to argue with him, she does argue

and she does so better than he, but he attempts to overpower her and she escapes into the next room. While she may be his rhetorical superior, he is still her physical superior, so she resorts to flight and fainting to thwart him.

After this episode, Pamela does reveal all to Mrs Jervis and states: "I was resolved not to stay in the house" (64). He calls Pamela and Mrs Jervis to him and apologizes after a fashion by telling them, "...I was bewitched by her, I think, to be freer than became me; though I had no intention to carry the jest farther" (67). Pamela responds: "it is not a jest that becomes the distance between a master and a servant" (67). Finally, he announces that Pamela may "return to the condition she was taken from" (68), and Pamela is delighted by the news that he will release her. She writes to her parents:

> I know how to be happy with you as ever: For I will lie in the loft, as I used to do;...and fear not, my being a burden to you,...I hope he will let good Mrs Jervis give me a character, for fear it should be thought I was turned away for dishonesty. (68)

If we accept Pamela at her word, and we have no reason not to, she demonstrates only happiness at the prospect of returning to her former condition. If Mrs Jervis supplies a character reference, Pamela may be able to find another position, but even if she cannot, she is now, since his repeated attempts on her, genuinely relieved to leave Mr. B's

household and live in "poverty with honesty, [rather] than plenty with wickedness!" (65). Pamela's critics would prefer that she leave immediately, and cite her delay as proof of her designing nature. Indeed, she does stay to "leave in order every thing belonging to my place" (69), but she also asks Mrs Jervis that "must it not be looked upon as a sort of warrant for such actions, if I stay after this?" (71). She knows she must leave, but she also knows that she needs a good character, so when Mr. B sees the waistcoat Pamela has been flowering and he demands that she stay until it is finished, she stays rather than jeopardize her reference. Pamela understands the reality of her subservient position in the social hierarchy: she is a servant, and as such, she does not own her life. She lives at the whim and fancy of her employer. Jean Hecht in her study of the domestic class in England observes:

> ...the dominion exercised by the master was regarded as almost unlimited...As head of the family, he was seen entitled to the obedience of all its members. He might properly chastise them for dereliction of duty, for insubordination, for impudence, or for anything else he chose to interpret as misconduct...The servant was looked upon as having temporarily relinquished his freedom. (74)

Pamela is not free to act on abstract principle alone, heedless of practical consequences; she is poor and must have

employment to survive, otherwise she will end up, as Moers claims, "on the dunghill of prostitution." Although she wants to escape, she needs to salvage something from her situation: the possibility of another position. That she finds Mr. B attractive does not diminish her credibility; the crucial issue is not her attraction to B, but whether or not that attraction undermines her principles, which it does not. Her decision to conform to Mr. B's demand that she remain and finish his waistcoat does lead her into deeper difficulty and removes her chances to return to her parents. This decision ultimately works in her favor, and allows her to achieve a hitherto undreamed of resolution to her problem, but it does not mark her as a cheat and a hypocrite. Her evident sincerity and unshakable belief in her own value, not the eventual fairy-tale ending, delineates her character. From beginning to end, Pamela resists all efforts to dominate her and seeks only to preserve her virtue and achieve a secure position.

Mrs Jervis encourages Pamela to stay and finish her work, for Jervis "believes [Mr. B] will make [Pamela] an <u>honest</u> present," but Pamela is wise enough to recognize his inherent duplicity; she tells Jervis: "But if he had meant me well, he would have let me go to Lady Davers, and not have hindered my preferment" (74-5). It is not Pamela who dismisses Lady Davers' offer of employment, but Mr. B who rejects it by falsely representing Lady Davers' nephew as a

potential danger to Pamela. However, Jervis tries to reassure Pamela and thereby plants the seed in her mind that Mr. B may feel more towards Pamela than simple lust; Jervis tells Pamela: "he wished...that he knew a lady of birth, just such another as yourself, and he would marry her tomorrow" (78), and "he doats upon you; and I see it is not in his power to help it" (94); Mrs Jervis is not the only member of the household who notices a difference in Mr. B; Mr Longman, the steward, claims, "I never saw such an alteration in any man in my life" (81). Pamela writes: "...his [Mr. B's] temper is quite changed; and I begin to believe what Mrs Jervis told me, that he likes me and can't help it; and is vexed he cannot" (87). She accepts advice and suggestions from Mrs Jervis, whom Pamela considers to be wiser in the ways of the world; after all, Mrs Jervis is her elder and her superior in the household. However, in spite of the possibility that Mr. B may harbor feelings of affection towards her, Pamela still pleads with him to be released and sent home: "I have only to beg, as a favour, that I may go to my father and mother" (91). Some readers find Pamela's behavior duplicitous and manipulative, but what should she do differently to obviate those criticisms? She has only one choice open to her: to run away with no character, no money, no prospects. Instead, she attempts to take her leave through channels of behavior which might allow her to make a fresh start somewhere else.

Finally, after an abortive attempt to seduce Pamela in Mrs Jervis' room, Mr. B dismisses Mrs Jervis as well, and Pamela decides to wait for her to leave so the departure is put off for another week. B offers to set the two of them up in London so he can visit Pamela at will, but Pamela is horrified by his proposition, saying that she would "stoop to the meanest work...rather than bear such ungentlemanly imputations" (102). Since it does not serve Mr. B's ends to have Mrs Jervis accompany Pamela, he makes it up with her and pretends to arrange for Pamela to return to her family, about which Pamela writes: "I am now preparing for my journey...and if I have not time to write, I must tell you the rest, when I am so happy as to be with you" (120). As the moment of her leave-taking approaches, Pamela looks forward to her reunion with her parents and evidences no hesitation or regret about leaving Mr. B. However, instead of returning her home, he kidnaps her and removes her to his Lincolnshire estate, under the guard of servants who neither know nor care for her. By writing to her parents and in general covering his tracks, B cleverly eliminates all avenues of possible escape for Pamela. She is now on her own, without the aid or support of family or friends. She has nothing to protect her but her own wit and intelligence, and her unshakable belief in herself.

To this point and onward in the narrative, nothing that Pamela has done nor will do marks her as an inauthentic

representation of a young servant girl at odds with the system in which she operates, and yet still attempting to work within that system of subservience inherent in her position. Her behavior, her confusion and indecision, her attraction to Mr. B and her ambivalent response to that attraction, all create a convincing picture of a girl who, despite the prevailing attitude of paternalism, believes in herself and her own worth. Pamela is aware of the nuances and complexities of her situation; she attends to practical concerns, but never to the expense of her moral concerns. Her virtue is not a veneer applied from without; her virtue is a deeply felt and closely held principle which guides her and supports her. No matter what the test, no matter what the complication, Pamela's resolution to maintain herself against Mr. B overcomes her attraction to him.

Perhaps the problem with this picture lies with the idea that a servant girl in the eighteenth century would possess such a sense of her self worth that it would enable her to resist the advances of her young master. She is so obviously both his moral and ethical superior; Richardson infuses her with the skills to best B. It is not that she is more intelligent than B, but that she is fighting to retain her most valued possession, her honor, that brings forth heretofore unimagined levels of verbal and mental skills. It may strain the credulity of the reader to see Pamela continually besting Mr. B in spite of her inferior status;

however, Mr.B is not much older than she is nor has his intelligence been tested before. He is used to getting his own way, while Pamela has had to learn how to manage people in order to survive. Robert Utter suggests that the reason Pamela is always the better in any argument with B is that she has the advantage of being on the side of honesty and truth (12). Pamela stands firmly on the high moral ground, while Mr. B stands not so firmly in a quagmire of deceit and deception.

What Pamela does, and does not do, is perfectly plausible given her set of circumstances within the construct of Richardson's novel. She does not have a lot of alternatives facing her: she can starve, she can turn to the streets, she can become a thief. Her abilities, imparted to her by Richardson, are the logical outcome of her precarious position; they are born of desperation. Also she is little more than a child, and she has had little experience of the world. As a domestic in an upper-class household, she has moved in the rarefied atmosphere of their class, even though she is not a part of their world. Her response to Mr. B and her situation create a believable picture of a young girl's confusion and fear, and as well a determination to maintain her virtue. Her actions authenticate her words, and her words recount in vivid detail her battle to preserve her honor. Nothing she says or does undermines the truth of her intentions to protect herself against his repeated attempts

on her virtue.

However, in spite of the plausibility of Pamela's response to the schemes and snares of Mr. B, what is implausible in this novel is how long Richardson allows it to continue. Terry Eagleton suggests that "what threatens to proliferate beyond...control in his writing is nothing less than writing itself" (9). Many a reader grows weary with the great length of Pamela's deliberations and B's repeated and inept attempts on her, and so are apt to question the veracity of her tale out of sheer boredom. Alan McKillop observes:

> Richardson holds to his central situation with a tenacity which is always characteristic of his art; despite simplicity, monotony, absurdity, he will not let go. (35)

So little actually happens and so much space is devoted to nothing but Pamela reiterating her virtue and beauty that readers sometimes want to blow their brains out in pure vexation, as Johnson's celebrated comment affirms: "...if you were to read Richardson for the story,...you would hang yourself. But you must read him for the sentiment, and consider the story as only giving occasion for the sentiment." Richardson wrote for the sentiment and he wasted no opportunity to achieve his avowed purpose in this novel, to promote virtue in the minds of youth.

Also, while the format of the epistolary narrative allows Richardson to present Pamela in intimate and minute

detail, all must be filtered through her. We are privy to every nuance of thought, but since she is the primary narrator, Pamela is forced to praise herself over and over again, so that readers understand and inculcate the great virtue and honesty of her soul. The primary difficulty with Pamela lies not with the story itself, the literal preservation of her virginity, which Ellen Moers refers to as a silly, narrow subject, but which Saintsbury refers to as "the best story in Richardson," for Pamela's virginity comes to represent her character. She makes the distinction clear when she claims that even if, after her kidnaping, Mr. B. should succeed in raping her, she will have nothing to reproach herself for because her "will bore no part in the violation." As Florian Stuber posits: "Pamela has less to do with chastity per se than with the right a woman has over her own body" (18). Nor does the problem lie in Pamela's responses to her situation, which in each instance or moment of decision demonstrate her unshakable conviction that she is better and worth more than Mr. B. knows.

The problem with the novel lies in the complications that arise from the single-voice epistolary narrative. A third person narrative would lend credibility to Pamela's tale, offering a more objective portrait of the girl. The inclusion of letters from other participants in the story would prevent Pamela from appearing so self-centered and self-satisfied. She must be the one to record conversations

extolling her beauty. She must be the one to report occurrences of which she could logically have no knowledge. She introduces one such incident by stating, "...it seems they said to my master...." The novel suffers from the one-sided presentation. Also the complications that arise from Pamela's constant writing, her need to obtain writing materials, the necessary secreting of her journal, all contribute to an air of unreality. She continues to write to her parents even when she expects to be with them the next day. Elizabeth Brophy asserts:

> Rather than reinforcing a sense of reality, this [the obsessive writing] not only tends to remind the reader of the artificiality of the convention, but even to suggest that Pamela's letters are self-conscious rather than spontaneous. (37)

However, the problems of Richardson's first attempt at an epistolary novel do not diminish the believability of what Pamela does, only how we learn about what she does.

Whatever difficulty a twentieth-century reader may encounter with Pamela's narrative, the tremendous popularity of Pamela demonstrates its power in the eighteenth century. According to Eagleton,

> Richardson's characters come to assume the ambiguous aura of myth, that symbolic realm so utterly paradigmatic that we can never quite decide whether it is more or less 'real' than the empirical world. (6)

Pamela was more than a novel or a history, it became a national icon, a rallying cry, a cultural event. This is demonstrated by the oft-repeated incident in the village of Slough, where the people gathered daily to read the story aloud and rushed to enthusiastically ring the church bells when Pamela and Mr. B married. McKillop reports this incident as emblematic of the power and the reception of the book with its readers. People, at the time, believed the story, accepted Pamela and took her plight into their hearts. Two hundred years later, George Saintsbury asks, "Is she a probable human being?" and his answer is an emphatic "yes" (86-7). In addition, Pamela begins the tradition which carries through two hundred years of the English novel. As Utter points out, although few people today read the novel, most know its story, and

> Pamela is as much alive as ever she was, and she is ours to analyze as we will in the search for the origin of the diverse species of heroines of English fiction... [for] every heroine in fiction [is] a daughter of Pamela. (1)

Florian Stuber's article "Teaching Pamela" attests to the novel's enduring relevance. Stuber admits to choosing to teach Pamela in order to test critical assumptions about the novel: "I wanted to see whether these readers [the students] would raise the objections that have been voiced since the publication of Shamela" (10). Stuber quotes extensively from student journals, which demonstrate just how "real" Pamela

appears to contemporary readers; the students' comments reflect a connection between contemporary values and problems and Pamela's particular plight. One student writes: "Pamela portrays a character that is timeless. A majority of women have lived through what Pamela is experiencing" (16), so not only is every heroine in fiction a daughter of Pamela, but also every woman is a daughter of Pamela.

Clarissa:

"...the true history of women's oppression..."
-Terry Eagleton

Many critics consider Clarissa to be the finest product of Richardson's pen; Elizabeth Brophy hails it as his greatest work, and Terry Eagleton cites it as an advance from Pamela, which "represents the comic moment...and, like all cartoons, [is] magically insulated from grave injury...[but] Clarissa will give us the tragic reality" (39). Whether Eagleton's assessment that Clarissa is a development from the simpler, less ambitious, first attempt, Pamela, or McKeon's assertion that Pamela is "ambitious of other ends" than Clarissa is correct, Clarissa does differ significantly from its predecessor, even though the basic story of a young girl threatened and isolated remains unchanged. In Clarissa, Richardson deviates from his editorial stance in Pamela; now he begins with an "Author's Preface," even though he is not announced as the author. Richardson "wants nothing in the

preface which would prove the text to be fictional, but does not wish it to be thought genuine either, since this would weaken its exemplary force" (Eagleton 19), so while he does not disclaim authorship, Richardson attests to the veracity of the story by calling it "a history...given in a series of letters" (xiii) which "are written while the hearts of the writers must be supposed to be wholly engaged in their subjects" (xiv). He also includes his aims in publishing Clarissa's story:

> ...-to warn...one sex against the base arts...of the other -to caution parents against the undue exercise of their natural authority over their children...-to warn children against preferring a man of pleasure to a man of probity,...and [to] look upon the story...as a vehicle...[for] instruction. (xv)

To aid in the verisimilitude of his instruction, Richardson creates two double, yet separate, correspondences between Clarissa and Anna Howe and Lovelace and John Belford, which, as well as the inclusion of numerous other minor correspondents, obviates many of the difficulties inherent in Pamela's single-voice narrative. Anna Howe's probing of Clarissa's narrative creates a fuller development of the heroine's state of mind; Anna also serves as a vehicle to offer praise and admiration of her friend. No longer must readers depend on the heroine for proof of her virtue and honor. Anna provides an objective outside view of motives

and events. Also Mr. B is never fully realized as Lovelace is since readers see B filtered only through Pamela, but Lovelace's own letters expose both his charm and his villainy.

As Eagleton does, Margaret Doody perceives Clarissa as a development from Pamela, but only because it assumes a different direction. Indeed, Clarissa's plight is far worse than Pamela's because Clarissa is isolated by her family while Pamela is isolated from her family. Pamela knows that her family would help her if they could, but Clarissa is totally abandoned because her family forces her into the arms of Lovelace. Pamela's father cautions her, worries about her, but he never mistrusts her, but Clarissa's father suspects her every move. As well, he demands total obedience to his will and pleasure; after confining Clarissa to her room, he writes to her: "I will hear no pleas. I will receive no letter, nor expostulation. Nor shall you hear from me any more till you have changed your name to my liking. This from YOUR INCENSED FATHER" (1:211). Not only her father, but also her sister and brother distrust Clarissa, or at least profess to in order to foment discord out of jealousy and greed. Clarissa describes her position: "a prisoner in my father's house, and my whole family determined to compel me to marry" (1:182). In all things but this one circumstance, Clarissa wants nothing but to be a dutiful daughter; however, her family's unreasonable demand

removes that possibility. As Eagleton observes, Clarissa vividly depicts the oppression of women at the hands of the eighteenth-century patriarchy (17).

Also Clarissa assumes a theological dimension lacking in Pamela. Clarissa takes the value of her soul seriously, even though no one else does, certainly not her father or brother who view her as a commodity, nor Lovelace who views her as a prize. Yet in spite of all, Clarissa possesses a "spiritual perception [that] is abnormally developed in proportion to her other capacities" (Doody 101). Clarissa's will and determination to withstand the pressures of the patriarchal values which pervade her environment coupled with her innocence and generosity create the tragic denouement. As well, the relationships in Clarissa are grounded in monetary concerns, and her tragedy reveals the inherent flaws in a materialistic society which holds property and position in greater value than integrity and individual freedom.

Although feminist critics, such as Moers, Spacks, and Armstrong offer extensive commentary of Richardson's "inferior" first work, Pamela, Clarissa receives barely a mention in their writings. Elizabeth Brophy's work Samuel Richardson contains an extensive commentary on the novel and Harold Bloom's Modern Critical Views: Samuel Richardson includes two articles by women on Clarissa: one devoted to an explication of the "fire-scene" and the other by Rita Goldberg, titled "Clarissa Lives: Sex and the Epistolary

Novel," reveals the way in which the letter-format, so frequently employed as the "favoured means of expressing and even enlarging romantic love" (134), is subverted by Richardson to distance the readers from the actual events of the novel:

> When we consider Richardson's emphasis on the integrity of the person, it is odd that the active expression of the self through deeds carries relatively little weight. We are given direct access to thoughts and emotions, but not to events. (135)

Goldberg's main contention exposes the nature of female passivity, which Clarissa, by her decision to eschew legal redress against both her family and Lovelace, may seem to readers to exemplify; however, it is not passivity that keeps Clarissa from pursuing legal action against Lovelace after the rape, but what she correctly perceives as inequalities in the legal system. While as a _feme_ _sole_ and a woman of position, she has the right to sue him, she doubts the efficacy of such a course of action. The prevailing attitudes of her time are effectively revealed by the acceptance of Lovelace, even after the rape, among those who are supposed to be Clarissa's supporters. Most people believed that his offer of marriage after the rape expiated the crime of the rape itself. The laws were made, interpreted, and executed exclusively by men, so a woman, no matter how good her case might be, realistically had little

hope of a successful outcome in a suit against a man, either "lover" or father.

Goldberg cites Watt's reading of the rape as an example of the mistaken view of Clarissa's apparent passivity: "the rape itself...may be regarded as the ultimate development of the idea of the feminine sexual role as one of passive suffering" (Watt 232); however, Goldberg contends that Watt's interpretation fails because, in this case, the sexual dimension of the rape serves only as a metaphor for the attempted murder of individual identity. At the end of day, even though Lovelace has overpowered Clarissa physically, she overpowers him spiritually and emotionally; she knows that her identity has little to do with the loss of her virginity through rape. Clarissa embodies the true nature of selfhood and inner wholeness:

> [Clarissa] is singleminded, a person absolutely unable to compromise, whose will cannot be broken or even bent by anyone. Such behavior hardly conforms to an ideal of female passivity. (Goldberg 140)

Watt's analysis of Clarissa delves into the psyhco-analytical arena of sexual behaviors and attitudes; he argues that the relationship between Lovelace and Clarissa reveals the "pathological expression of the dichotomisation of the sexual roles in the realm of the unconscious" (231). Watt's commentary reduces Clarissa to the status of helpless victim, in which the role of woman becomes one of prey to the more

powerful male where "sexual intercourse, apparently, means death for the woman" (232); having been drugged and overpowered by Lovelace, Clarissa has no option remaining to her but death to redeem her self-respect. This interpretation denies one of the basic precepts of the novel: Clarissa's virtue remains inviolate in spite of Lovelace's assault upon it. Clarissa is an unknowing and unwilling participant in the rape; although she greatly disturbed and distraught by what has happened to her, the rape does not reduce her to a helpless victim. Lovelace assumes her compliance after the rape as her only means to regain position and reputation, and he is astounded when Clarissa refuses to bend to his will. As Katherine Rogers points out: "most of his contemporaries assumed that even a victim of rape would be eager to marry her attacker in order to salvage her reputation" ("Feminism" 19). Yet Clarissa rejects Lovelace because no man who has treated her as he has will ever be her husband. She does choose death, but not simply to redeem herself for having been raped; she realizes that she cannot live in a world populated by Harlowes and Lovelaces. Her spiritual integrity, still intact, prevents her from compromising her ideals to an inimical environment.

Margaret Doody's reading of Clarissa supports the view that Lovelace is the ultimate loser in the battle of wills between him and Clarissa. Doody observes that after the rape, Clarissa assumes a position of power over Lovelace by

her continued assertion of her own will, "a principle without which life becomes stagnant and individuality meaningless" (105). So even though Clarissa chooses death, she is the victor because Lovelace cannot by any means, fair or foul, conquer her will. Clarissa embodies the true Christian spirit which prefers to dwell in her "Father's" spiritual house in heaven than in Lovelace's house on earth. Doody proposes that Richardson's recurrent use of the word "house" develops the religious overtones of the novel:

> 'House' means a dwelling place...The Harlowe house... becomes a prison...,and the Harlowes and Lovelace drive her from one prison to another. 'House' in the context of Mrs. Sinclair's...mean[s] 'brothel'. It then becomes ...'coffin' and the 'solemn mansion' of the grave. (213)

Doody also includes an interesting chapter in A Natural Passion on the theme of enclosure, imprisonment, and confinement, noting how Clarissa's freedom of movement is gradually restricted as the novel progresses. She begins in possession of her own estate, the "dairy-house," to which she travels frequently, but she is increasingly confined until finally she is enclosed within her own coffin. Doody suggests that availability of physical space corresponds to the emotional condition of the character (188), but I question the validity of that premise in so far as Clarissa's final voluntary enclosure is concerned; she withdraws into her room, preparing her coffin, to protect herself from, as

Shelley named it, "the contagion of the world's slow stain." As her physical world grows smaller, her spiritual horizons grow larger. Her physical withdrawal represents a retreat into spiritual intensity.

In his 1908 text, Holbrook Jackson claims that the complex "structure alone...is an artistic accomplishment of the first order" (58); the intervening eighty years has done little to diminish that assessment of Clarissa, but the complex structure also creates its own difficulties. Mark Kinkead-Weekes proposes that Clarissa is "actually three novels in one, each with a different focus[:]...a reflection of society,...a paradigm of...puritan rebellion,...[and] an exposure of...both the aristocracy and the 'middle class'..." (124). As well, John Dussinger suggests that Richardson "creates not one but at least three Clarissas: the proud exemplar of her sex...;the religious ascetic...;and the sentimental heroine" (40). Both Kinkead-Weekes and Dussinger illuminate parts of Clarissa, but neither reveals the whole; no single critical stance can. Literary criticism offers readers a rich variety of approaches to an individual work. Some current critical theories, such as marxist or feminist, illuminate texts, to some extent, by examining the conditions of the social milieu in which a work is produced or created. Marxist criticism, for example, "analyzes literature in terms of the historical conditions which produce it" (Eagleton Marxism vi). Feminist criticism attempts to reveal the

"gross injustice of theories which sought to confine [the female] sex to a purely relative existence" (Foster 11). Because of the rich fabric of interwoven themes, Clarissa appeals to a variety of critical schools, but rarely does any single critical approach fully illuminate the text. A study of the woman, Clarissa, certainly cannot do justice to a work of this length or complexity, but within its narrow focus an affirmation of the authenticity of Clarissa herself can reveal one more aspect of the novel.

While both Pamela and Clarissa open in medias res, Pamela's narrative begins with her writing to her parents, but Clarissa begins with a letter from Anna Howe to Clarissa asking for the details of and the circumstances leading to the "disturbances that have happened in your family" (1:1). Clarissa's five letter reply provides the background Anna seeks and the reader needs to understand the events which have brought Clarissa to her present state and lays the foundation for the subsequent action. The first part of the novel which ends with Clarissa's "elopement" with Lovelace reveals Clarissa's increasingly desperate circumstances: her isolation is promulgated by her brother, James, whose actions are supported by their dictatorial father and assisted by their ineffectual mother.

The Harlowes wish to enhance their position in the social hierarchy by obtaining a peerage. To that end, they attempt to consolidate and extend their estate. The uncles

remain single so as not to dilute or divide the estate; all must repose in James, the eldest son, as the family's best hope of moving up the social ladder. Usually, among the landed gentry, "the family estate remained intact in the hands of the eldest son" while younger children received their portion by mortgaging property (Habakkuk 15). Often the amount provided for younger children was left to the discretion of the eldest son. However, Clarissa's grandfather deviates from this practice by leaving Clarissa a portion of his estate

> because...Clarissa has been from her infancy a matchless young creature..., and admired by all who knew her...which move[s] me to dispose of the above described estate in the precious child's favour. (1:21)

Now Clarissa is, or should be, independent of her family, but the jealousy engendered by Clarissa's good fortune sows the seeds of the subsequent tragedy, even though she gives over control and management of her estate to her father: "that distinction [the inheritance] has estranged from me my brother's and sister's affections" (1:4). To the contemporary reader, Clarissa's plight may appear to be no more than a plot contrivance, but Richardson grounds his novel in the conventions and attitudes of his time; indeed, breaking into the peerage could be accomplished by amassing a great estate which carried with it political influence, as H. J. Habakkuk observes:

> ...political power was becoming more dependent on the possession of landed wealth, [and] men sought the extension of their estates more continuously than...when political power depended more on royal favour. (25)

Clarissa writes to Anna that her brother "gave himself airs very early" (1:54) and expected, as the eldest son, that the entire estates of the grandfather, father, uncles, and even his godmother should combine with him; however, his sisters "were but encumbrances and drawbacks upon a family" (1:54). In the early eighteenth century, the number of eligible men decreased, so James and his father may have to mortgage land to raise the marriage portion needed to attract a husband for the daughters, particularly Arabella, since she has no money of her own. When Moll looks for a husband, she cannot find a "good" one, and that situation is, if anything, excacerbated among the daughters of the landed gentry.

So Lovelace's original addresses to the elder sister were met with some enthusiasm: "His birth, his fortune in possession-a clear two thousand pounds a year-as Lord M. had assured my uncle; presumptive heir to that nobleman's large estate" (1:5); however, Lovelace's inclinations lie in the direction of the younger sister, Clarissa. Not wishing to lose Lovelace as a potential partner with the family, since most marriages were "just like other common bargains and sales" (Habakkuk 25), the Harlowes encourage this shift in allegiance, until James returns. He fears that his uncles

may follow his grandfather's example and favor Clarissa, if she should marry above them, which would thereby further dilute his estates; also he harbors a personal animosity towards Lovelace: James "justified his avowed inveteracy by common fame, and by what he had known of him at college; declaring that he had ever hated him" (1:15). As the eldest son, James' opinion carries the day and Lovelace is rejected as a possible husband for Clarissa. Although she harbors no desire for a liaison with Lovelace, she absolutely refuses to consider the odious Mr. Solmes, "Rich Solmes you know they call him" (1:25), proposed to her by her family, who "ask not for my approbation, intending as it should seem, to suppose me into their will" (1:32). The entire family turns against her, and her father, largely because of James' insistence, commands her obedience:

> ...Clarissa Harlowe, said he, know that I will be obeyed. ...-No protestation, girl! No words! I will not be prated to! I will be obeyed! I have no child, I will have no child, but an obedient one. (1:36)

The family favors Solmes because his estate joins Clarissa's. Since he evidences no inclination to protect his relations, a union between Solmes and Clarissa would increase the importance of that holding; as Habakkuk demonstrates, in the eighteenth century, it was

> easier to conduct a long-term policy of estate accumulation..., because...greater weight [was] given, when a

> marriage was being considered, to the family's long-term views on the interests of the estates, as compared with personal inclinations. (28)

Solmes is willing to consign the entire estate to the Harlowes, thereby "raising the family" further. "So the Harlowes blend social climbing and economic acquisitiveness, ...[and] the patriarch's control...must be upheld" (Kinkead-Weekes 128).

The family believes that Clarissa's rejection of Solmes indicates her interest in a relationship with Lovelace, which they fear. If she were to marry him, he might contest her estate--a course of action that Clarissa would not undertake on her own. She pleads with her family: "Only leave me myself" (1:399). She cares nothing for the estate nor marriage to anyone who does not meet with her family's approval. She will accommodate herself to them in all things, but she wants and expects the right to veto her family's choice of husband for her; however, even though the general attitude in the eighteenth century leaned towards the rights of women choosing their own husbands, the Harlowes demonstrate "that older patriarchal attitudes were still lethally active" (Eagleton 16). Lawrence Stone's research reveals that "the higher up one goes on the social scale, the more likely...practical considerations of money and status" held sway over freedom of choice, and "veto power...was a card which could hardly be played more than once, at most

twice" (302-3). Clarissa has, by her own words, already rejected several suitors:

> ...finding neither Mr. Symmes nor Mr. Mullins will be accepted, [James] has proposed Mr. Wyerley once more, on the score of his great passion for me. This I have again rejected, and but yesterday he mentioned one who has applied to him by letter...This is Mr. Solmes. (1:25)

If Clarissa acquiesces to her family's demands and marries Solmes, she knows that her life with him would be intolerable. He is "illiterate, knows nothing but the value of estates..., and what belongs to land-jobbing and husbandry" (1:33); yet, this man, who "wants...every qualification that distinguishes a worthy man" (1:287), would control her life: "The subordination of wives to husbands certainly applied to the upper and upper-middle classes" (Stone 199). As a feme covert, Clarissa's relationship to her husband would be that of a child to her parents, so when she asks: "to whom could I appeal with effect against a husband?" (1:152)--the answer is no one. She would simply trade one tyrant for another to whom she would owe absolute obedience, as the Reverend John Sprint preached from his pulpit. Clarissa recognizes the moral and legal responsibilities that accompany the marriage vow, and she takes those responsibilities seriously:

> Marriage is a very solemn engagement, enough to make a young creature's heart ache,...;to give up her very name,

> as a mark of her becoming his absolute and dependent property;...to renounce...all at his pleasure. (1:153)

She knows that marriage to Solmes would force her daily into breaches of "altar-vowed duty" (1:287). She values the state of her soul too much to be forced into an unpalatable relationship with Solmes: "In such a marriage Clarissa would not only be committed to a lifetime of misery, but also would compromise her moral integrity" (Brophy 56). While her family refuses to apprehend her genuine objection to Solmes, calling it mere "fancy," Clarissa apprehends her own worth and will not allow her family's unreasoned demands to undermine her sense of self.

Clarissa's refusal to consider Solmes precipitates her gradual isolation from family and friends; first her father prohibits correspondence with anyone outside the house, but she manages to maintain a clandestine correspondence with Anna, in which Clarissa tells her that the family members "have all an absolute dependence upon what they suppose to be a meekness in my temper. But in this they may be mistaken" (1:37). Next, she is confined to her room and is forbidden to interact with the other family members until she "comes to her senses." She sets herself a course of passive resistance; she does not want to marry Solmes, "let what will be the consequence" (1:38), but in all other things she will do her family's bidding. She has already given over her grandfather's estate to the family; she vows never to marry:

> Clarissa maintains that she prefers the single life and is willing to renounce marriage; her society would have seen this declaration as foolishly extreme, and her family simply do not believe her. (Brophy 75)

In the eighteenth-century, marriage was the only acceptable state for a woman. Society offered no career options for women like Clarissa, nor were there any educational opportunities. A woman married or she was useless, so the Harlowes assume that Clarissa intends to marry Lovelace if she extricates herself from their demands that she marry Solmes. The family is so caught up in their plans for advancement that their own desires blind them to Clarissa's needs, and she is at a loss to understand how the qualities of her nature "which used so lately to gain me applause, now become my crimes" (1:310).

As Clarissa becomes increasingly isolated and the pressure from her family mounts, she recognizes that "Now I have not one person in the world to plead for me, to stand by me" (1:264). Only her secret correspondence with Anna and Lovelace connect her to the world. Anna stands by her friend, but unfortunately, she is in no position to offer any practical assistance to alleviate Clarissa's distress; only the infamous Lovelace offers a possible escape from her now rather desperate situation. Even though she has maintained a correspondence with him, she does so more from a misguided sense of social obligation than she does from a romantic

inclination; in fact, although she evidences a genuine antipathy toward Solmes, she exhibits a general distrust of Lovelace, his reputation, his mien and his manner. Soon after meeting him, she writes to Anna:

> Indeed I would not be in love with him,...because I have no opinion of his morals,...because I think him to be a vain man,...because the assiduities and veneration which you impute to him seem to carry an haughtiness in them, ...Indeed, my dear THIS man is not THE man. I have great objections to him. (1:47)

But desperate times call for desperate measures, and in comparison to Solmes, Lovelace appears to be Prince Charming, riding in on his white charger to rescue the fair damsel. Clarissa's contact with him has been minimal; most of what she knows about him, she learns second-hand and through his letters to her, which reveal only what he wants her to know, but one quality shines through his letters: his intelligence. Unlike the illiterate Solmes, Lovelace is witty, charming and a good letter writer. Also, as Pamela may believe that she could be the agent by which Mr. B is reformed, so too Clarissa acknowledges the appeal of reclaiming "such a man to the paths of virtue and honour" (1:200). Anna Howe favors Lovelace as Clarissa's solution, but, like Pamela before her, Clarissa harbors ambivalent feelings towards Lovelace: she is attracted to him, but she is also aware of his reputation, which repels her. She confesses to Anna: "I like him better

than ever I thought I should like him; and, those faults considered, better perhaps than I <u>ought</u> to like him" (1:203). He claims that he only wants to alleviate her distress and to help her escape from Solmes; since her family remains intractable, Clarissa finds Lovelace increasingly attractive: "I believe it is possible for the persecution I labour under, to induce me to like him still more" (1:203). Also whatever she decides afterwards, Lovelace tells her he will respect her wishes in regard to him. In other words, he will help her with no strings attached to his offer. The reader, at this point, possesses a more accurate picture of Lovelace than does Clarissa, but what she knows of him and what she has grown to feel towards him lead her to accept his help.

This is no common melodrama; Clarissa finds herself, by the general assumption of paternalism that pervades her society, in a totally untenable situation, which is generated by "Hatred to Lovelace, family aggrandisement, and this great motive, <u>parental</u> <u>authority</u>!" (1:61). Her moral integrity, so ridiculed by her family as mere "fancy," compels her to refuse to marry a man she cannot love, honor, or respect. Her family demands obedience; her conscience demands rebellion, but only to avoid the coercion of her family to marry Solmes, which finally forces her into the arms of Lovelace. Since Clarissa can envision no alternative solution to her dilemma, she agrees to run away with him; however, at the last moment, she loses her courage.

Lovelace, recognizing the possibility she might lose heart, tricks her into running away with him. She does not "elope" with him; she goes unwillingly, screaming "No" all the way to the carriage.

Indeed, Clarissa screams "No" throughout the novel, but no one listens to her. Yet, in spite of that, she does prevail. All the figures of patriarchal authority, which include her mother and sister by their tacit compliance and active agreement with the Harlowe men, and Lovelace by his disregard for Clarissa's wishes, are finally brought to their knees by Clarissa's unswerving determination to maintain herself. For all the characters the averment of individual will is the primary motivator, but Clarissa proves to possess the strongest will because she knows her own worth and little cares for the opinion of this world: "to be <u>self-acquitted</u> is a blessing to be preferred to the opinion of all the world" (1:458). Lovelace and the Harlowes, on the other hand, are all very concerned about how they appear to the world. Lovelace ponders what the world would think of him should Clarissa "win" him, rather than he "subdue" her; after all, he has a reputation to protect. The Harlowes refuse to accept Clarissa's pledge to remain single because in "the eyes of the world" they may be judged harsh and unyielding to their daughter, who is "admired by all." Clarissa does not require the approbation of her society; she knows her value comes from within, not from without. Clarissa is a moral person of

transcendent worth. Richardson imbues Clarissa with traits, particularly a strength of purpose and a sense of her own worth, that prepare the reader for inevitable conclusion. Anna Howe observes this in her first letter when she writes:

> I am fitter for _this_ world than you; you for the _next_ than me...But long, long,...may it be before you quit us for company more congenial to you and more worthy of you! (1:43)

All that follows from the abduction proves Anna's prescience regarding Clarissa's future. Although Clarissa has tried and continues to try to accommodate her family's wishes and to live according to the rules of conduct her society dictates appropriate, she cannot adapt her inherent values to the exigencies of the world in which she lives.

At this point in the narrative, any similarity between _Pamela_ and _Clarissa_ evanesces. When Pamela returns willingly to Mr. B, she recognizes her culpability in her own downfall should he prove to be an unregenerate scoundrel. She believes him and trusts him, and he lives up to her opinion of him, but Clarissa's trust in Lovelace is misplaced. Her social class has kept her even more innocent than a fifteen year old servant girl. Clarissa knows nothing of "town" or the world, so she cannot accurately assess Lovelace's intentions and hence misjudges him. She, like Pamela, places her fate and future in the hands of a man, but unlike Pamela, Clarissa does so unwillingly, and Lovelace is an unreformed

rake. Had Mr. B succeeded in raping Pamela, no doubt the outcome of her story would have resembled the denouement of Clarissa. Unlike Pamela, Clarissa suffers at the hands of her family, and unlike Mr. B, Lovelace cannot admit that Clarissa is a superior person, worthy of his love and his submission. Although she suffers, Clarissa is not broken; she may be "bloodied," but she remains "unbowed."

One of the student comments on Pamela in Stuber's article responds to Richardson's portrayal of her, stating that it is "difficult to believe that a man of fifty has so accurately characterized a girl of sixteen" (16). This assessment of Richardson's characterization holds true for Clarissa as well. Richardson did not simply tell a story; he made his readers see it and experience it through his two first-person narrators. We feel their fear; we understand their ambivalence; we experience their indecision, and we empathize with their plights. "Richardson's ability to create a world for his novel and to draw the reader into it is perhaps the greatest manifestation of his genius" (Doody 127), and he draws us in through his women. Their stories may not be typical, for hopefully few families were as intransigent as the Harlowes and few rakes as determined as Lovelace, but their stories are believable. Within the context and framework of the eighteenth-century, Pamela and Clarissa respond to their respective situations in ways that replicate the realities of their time.

Richardson's women became models for future women writers: "Frances Sheridan, Frances (Moore) Brook, Frances Burney, Elizabeth Inchbald, and Jane Austen have all been detected using him as both trainer and sparring partner" (Grundy 225). We can find Clarissa in Edna Pontellier; we can find Pamela in Jane Eyre. The feminization of his vision, as Heilbrun called it, allowed Richardson to create women who have served as models, not only for future writers, but also for his female readers. His women's maintenance of selfhood against almost insurmountable odds begins a quest for female autonomy that is just beginning to reach fruition in the twentieth-century. Pamela and Clarissa neither perpetuate stereotypical female behaviors nor reinforce idealized male versions of women; they become for readers the real, breathing, living women Richardson intended they should be. These fictional women exemplify the dilemmas and deprivations which confronted their real-life contemporaries, and still face ours.

CHAPTER IV

> The novel "established an immediate link with the empirical reality familiar to readers." -Wolfgang Iser

Ian Watt cautions readers who apply "social history to the interpretation of literature" because "the way it affected the thoughts and feelings of the individuals concerned is...hypothetical" (154), but he also asserts that the application of historical data cannot be avoided since social conditions "dictated the way...readers understood the thoughts and actions of the characters" (155). Not only does social history reveal the way in which readers received a work at its publication, but it also allows later readers to authenticate the reality of a text. Historical research confirms the marginality of most women in the early eighteenth century, a circumstance clearly demonstrated in _Moll Flanders_, _Roxana_, _Pamela_, and _Clarissa_. What the four narrators describe in the novels recreates what women experienced in their lives. There was essentially no educational system for women, and if a woman did manage to obtain a little education, she was often counseled to conceal it from her family and particularly her husband. As a _feme covert_, a woman had no control over her own finances. Her

marriage portion was normally paid directly to her husband, either to buy land or to pay debts. Usually, a woman forfeited all rights to financial security when she married. She depended solely and completely on the good-will and charity of her husband. A single women from a prosperous family whose father provided for her did, as a _feme sole_, retain control of her money, but she was still dependent on her father or the eldest brother to provide for her. There were no respectable employment opportunities for middle and upper-middle class women like Roxana and Clarissa, nor anything except domestic service for the lower classes, which Moll and Pamela represent. Women lived on the edge of society, on the sufferance of the patriarchal system represented by their fathers, brothers, and husbands, and as well by women, like Mrs. Harlowe and Mrs. Howe, whose tacit compliance perpetuated the system. When the system failed them, women, regardless of social status or family position, were pushed over the edge into an abyss from which only the most resolute and determined woman could extricate herself.

Each one of our fictional women faces a different set of circumstances that forces her into the abyss. Moll is the illegitimate daughter of a criminal; she finds a position commensurate with her station in life, that of a servant. The social system works for her when she marries Robin, but at his death, she is out in the world alone, without the skills, the education, or the money to achieve a secure life. Her

only hope is to, once more, marry well, to find a "good" husband who will protect her; the system offers her no other opportunities. As the daughter of a wealthy merchant, Roxana begins well-entrenched within the system; she is educated only to be a wife, and, accordingly she is summarily given to her husband, even though her father does not trust him. First her father fails her, then her husband, and finally her brother when he loses her portion entrusted to him by their father. Like Moll, Roxana is thrown out in the world without the resources or the possibilities to maintain herself or her children. Neither Moll nor Roxana have any family to fall back on or turn to for help. Pamela, even though she is the daughter of a poor farmer, is much better off than either Moll or Roxana. She, at least, has the emotional, if not financial, support of her family. Her situation, until she is kidnaped, derives in the main from her desire to secure another position as a domestic and is therefore largely of her own making; however, the patriarchy allowed, perhaps even encouraged, masters to treat servant girls as Mr. B treats Pamela; after all, he harms no family by this. Pamela, unlike Moll, Roxana, and even Clarissa, solves her problem by working through the prevailing social attitudes. Clarissa, like Roxana, is the beloved and pampered daughter of a wealthy family, and she tries to keep to the rules of conduct expected of her, but her family push her to the edge and Lovelace pushes her over. Her unwavering concern for the

state of her soul makes her unable to return to the fold of the patriarchy. Each of these women, in her own way, challenges the demands of patriarchal control: Moll becomes a thief, Roxana learns the intricacies of business, Pamela refuses Mr. B's terms, and Clarissa chooses death. The failure of the social institutions, which are supposed to protect them, requires that these women develop their inner and innate resources to overcome the constraints imposed upon them by the prevailing social code.

Daniel Defoe and Samuel Richardson in their "women" novels present readers with an unusual critical problem because, in all four cases, the gender of the author is submerged in the gender of the first-person narrator. By their anonymity and by their disguising the works as non-fiction, both authors were attempting to pass off the products of male imagination as the products of female consciousness. Are the narrators authentic representations of women in the eighteenth century? Do the actions of the fictional women reflect the possibilities available to real women? Do Defoe and Richardson recreate, through their fictional women, the realities of women living in a patriarchy? The answer to these questions is yes. The authors may be men, but the first-person narrators are women, who behave in authentic ways and in accordance with the limitations and constraints imposed on them by the system in which they operate. Katherine Rogers claims that Defoe and Richardson are radical

feminists. Whether that twentieth-century label applies to these eigtheenth-century authors or not, Defoe and Richardson create women who meet the challenges that confront them and who are resolute in the face of adversity. As well, the plots of the novels form Iser's empirical link with reality, for these two authors did something more than write fiction; they created fictional replications of reality. The plots of the novels are grounded in the historical reality of their time; these four novels

> induced the reader to contemplate the [reality] they embodied, the novel[s] confronted [her/]him with problems arising from [her/]his own surroundings, at the same time holding out various potential solutions...[which] led to a specific effect: namely to involve the reader in the world of the novel and so help [her/]him to understand it--and ultimately his own world--more clearly. (Iser xi)

Not only could eighteenth-century readers, male or female, comprehend their own reality through these novels, but also twentieth-century readers can apprehend the similarities in the situations of Moll, Pamela, Roxana, and Clarissa to contemporary reality.

However, some contemporary readers apprehend little reality in the novels because the way in which the women relate their stories not only replicates their lives but also recreates the styles, attitudes, and sentiments of the eighteenth century. People do not speak today the way that

people spoke two hundred years ago, nor do people live the same way. As Katherine Rogers suggests, the "heroines faint and totter too frequently for modern taste" ("Richardson" 119). For some, it is difficult to lay aside the conventions in the novels which are peculiar to their own time and no longer apply to ours. Women's behaviors were more prescribed; there were greater differences between men's and women's roles. These things may have made it easier for Defoe and Richardson to write in the guise of women than it is for contemporary authors since the distinctions between the sexes are generally more blurred today. As readers, we may want to castigate the narrators for reacting as they do to the system of paternalism, but they react as they must react. It is not within their power to change the system; it is only within their power to deal with the system as it exists. Robert Utter observes:

> Pamela's choice was a narrow one; she was held pretty helpless by the society of her time...She wins...because luck is with her. (478)

So are the choices available to all of the narrators limited by their society, and their narratives are limited by the same conventions. It is incumbent upon contemporary readers to look beyond how these women tell their stories and concentrate instead on the essence of what the women say. Florian Stuber's students' comments reflect the continued viability of Pamela, which is usually considered the least of

these novels:

> 'It amazes me how contemporary this book seems, the plot and the morals'...'the book still holds an audience's interest'...'morals these days really haven't changed all that much'...'The book was written centuries ago and yet you find in it problems in our society'...(8)

Not only Pamela but also Clarissa, Moll Flanders, and Roxana present women whose situations offer insights that are applicable to contemporary society. The narrators' voices still ring true.

Paula Backscheider contends that voice in Roxana is a double-voice, but not Defoe's, rather a woman "describing events as they happen and the narrator commenting and judging...Roxana is [both] narrator and subject" (184). While Backscheider asserts that Defoe creates human characters in Moll and Roxana with whom readers can identify, she also insists that readers quickly recognize that these novels were written by a man. She attributes this to Defoe's "command of his pen, his subject, his character, and her society" (200). She posits that Defoe, as a male writer, is unafraid of being identified with his female protagonists, so he can allow them a freedom and range a woman writer denies her female characters. According to Backscheider, women's fiction presents women who are afraid, primarily of themselves. They are uncertain about their abilities, afraid that they may be "naive, illogical, limited in intelligence,

handicapped by inadequate education and experience" (201). However, Moll and Roxana, too, exhibit fears that they are naive, that they may not be equipped to handle their situations to their best advantage. Moll does not know the best way to secure a place for herself; she is frightened by her life as a thief, but she does not see any other alternative to starving. Even after Roxana achieves wealth and security, she worries about losing it. She fears the repercussions of her decision not to marry the merchant; she questions her choices. What Backscheider proposes seems to indicate that Defoe was a better writer than most women who wrote "women's fiction," which may be why the majority of women who wrote during the eighteenth century are forgotten or ignored today. In Defoe's women's fiction, "Every sentence tells us that these might be people we have seen doing things that some people we know might be capable of doing" (Ambition 201); this air of reality does not reveal the author as a man but rather as an author who excels at his craft.

Patricia Spacks agrees with Backscheider's contention that women writers generally limit their female characters: "they characteristically define a heroine by her weakness" (57). Moll and her fictional companions exhibit weaknesses and fears about those weaknesses, but they eventually find the strength to combat the forces of society that seek to limit and undermine them. Most women in the eighteenth

century were inhibited by the weakness which they perceived as their inevitable condition. Mary Wollstonecraft blames writers, "from Rousseau to Dr. Gregory, [who] contributed to render women more artificial, weak characters,...more useless members of society" (119). Women were trapped in subservient roles, but Moll and Pamela are doubly trapped; not only their gender, but also their social class limits their ability to obtain a secure position. Domestic servants, either male or female, could not claim ownership of their own lives; they lived at the whim and pleasure of their masters. It is doubtful that Pamela thought she possessed the inner resources to defy her master until she was tested. Faced with the choice of giving in to Mr. B or losing her livelihood, she draws upon strengths that had heretofore gone untapped; Pamela, who takes her value seriously, holds out against the demands of her master, until she finds security in marriage. Moll, less concerned about the value of her virtue, gives in to her master, but eventually extricates herself through marriage, which proves to offer only temporary surcease to her insecurity. Because Moll and Pamela derive from the lower classes, they literally have no choice but marriage to improve their lives. Moll tries and fails; Pamela tries and succeeds.

However, marriage, for most women, was not the means to achieve a secure life. Robin dies, and Moll must find another husband, and a "good" husband proves hard to find.

She never does find that husband; instead, after five tries, she learns to rely on herself, and only then does she achieve a semblance of security. Defoe believed that women were more capable than men; what women lacked was an appropriate education. Although Moll's education takes place in the streets, she does learn, and learns well, how to survive as a woman alone in a world run by and for men. Roxana, too, pursues security, but unlike Moll who seeks it through marriage, Roxana learns quickly that marriage only further reduces a woman's level of security. Roxana loses everything when her husband deserts her, but instead of giving up and throwing herself on the poor relief rolls, she uses the only education she has received, how to please a man, and puts it to use outside marriage where it can actually do her some good. She extends her education to mastering the intricacies of high finance and amasses a fortune, the guardianship of which she refuses to abdicate to any man. Clarissa certainly recognizes the hazards of marriage; she knows she will have no recourse should her wishes deviate from her husband's; therefore, she will not marry a man she does not believe she can love and honor--no matter what her family demands. Because of her elevated social position and her inheritance from her grandfather, Clarissa ought to be able to circumvent the pressure from her family, but neither money nor class protect her from the demands of the patriarchy.

While each narrative is unique, all four of the women,

through their creators, Defoe and Richardson, present their stories without the "masks...[by] which phallocentric thought hides its fictions" (Kamuf 57). By grounding their novels in the reality of their time, Defoe and Richardson create four novels which allow women "to see their own experiences mirrored in literature" (Register 15). Feminist critical theory demands from the literature it promotes the very qualities which Defoe and Richardson incorporate into their works: "life in its true state." The authors don masks that allow them to reveal the condition of women in the eighteenth century in all its permutations. Defoe and Richardson present female characters who are not "idealized beyond plausibility" (Register 21) nor who perpetuate literary stereotyping (Kolodny 55). While a precise definition of feminist criticism remains elusive, the general consensus among feminist critics indicates that literary works, by both men and women writers, should present female characters who "expose...the misconceptions [and] distortions...which frequently govern the depiction of women in literature" (Auerbach 328). Defoe and Richardson conform to the feminist requirements of authenticity and plausibility in their presentation of Moll, Roxana, Pamela, and Clarissa. Each one of whom is working out her private existence in the public forum of the world of the novel in ways that replicate the reality of women's lives and the options available to them.

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The dissertation submitted by Nancy F. Krippel has been read and approved by the following committee:

Dr. Douglas White, Director
Professor of English
Loyola University of Chicago

Dr. Paul Jay
Professor of English
Loyola University of Chicago

Dr. John Shea
Professor of English
Loyola University of Chicago

The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have now been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is, therefore, accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

4/15/92
date

Douglas White
Director's Signature