THE SENSE OF AMENDING: CLOSURE, JUSTICE, AND THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY FICTIONAL SEQUEL

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This dissertation argues that eighteenth-century authors, in writing sequels to their own works, raise important questions about narrative closure, ideal justice, and the literary canon. It considers works by both traditionally canonical writers (e.g., Daniel Defoe’s *Farther Adventures and Serious Reflections* and Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela II*) and less familiar authors (e.g., Sarah Fielding’s *Familiar Letters and Volume the Last* and Frances Sheridan’s *Conclusion of the Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph*). Sequels demand a re-examination of how we theorize novelistic form and closure (as found in such works as Henry James’s *The Art of Fiction* and Frank Kermode’s *The Sense of an Ending*). Sequels do not conform to classical (i.e., Aristotelian) theories of artistic closure, which treat an artistic production as a complete work composed of “a beginning, a middle, and an end” with a uniform effect on a spectator. Sequel-writers often devote more attention to perspectives that may be excluded from their earlier novels, consequently complicating
earlier assessments of a character’s moral worth or revealing the impermanence of a “happy ending.” Sequels are thus frequently at odds with the dramatic convention of “poetic justice” and often introduce a competing aesthetic, “poetic mercy.” The presence of the sequel calls for a reformulation of the literary canon: without attentiveness to sequels, critics ignore the “story” as many earlier audiences have read it and risk misrepresenting how authors engage with their subject matter. The literary sequel complicates our understanding of the eighteenth-century novel and enables us to engage with questions of justice and literary endings in a different way.
To Teresa.
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PREFACE

Where, for the complete expression of one’s subject, does a particular relation stop?... Really, universally, relations stop nowhere, and the exquisite problem of the artist is eternally but to draw, by a geometry of his own, the circle within which they shall happily appear to do so. He is in the perpetual predicament that the continuity of things is the whole matter…. [T]his continuity is never, by the space of an instant or an inch, broken…. [A] young embroiderer of the canvas of life soon began to work in terror, fairly, of the vast expanse of that surface, of the boundless number of its distinct perforations for the needle, and of the tendency … to cover and consume as many as possible of the little holes. (Henry James, The Art of the Novel 4)

0.1 Artistic Form, Canons, and Closed Systems

In The Art of the Novel, Henry James suggests that the triumph of novelistic form depends upon a lie.¹ While real life might offer an inexhaustible series of relations and connections, the artist’s goal is to cut off connections into more manageable segments. Even though James elsewhere writes that “the only reason for the existence of a novel is that it does attempt to represent life” (“The Art of Fiction” 292), a novel must also represent life as it is not. The author must inscribe a circle within which relations “happily appear” to be completely and definitively encapsulated, despite their failure to

¹ The Art of the Novel is a collection of Henry James’s Prefaces written for the New York edition (1905-7) of his collected work. The quotation appears in his “Preface to Roderick Hudson.”
be so in reality. The art of the novel is rooted in the ability to know which relational segments are to be included or excluded from the circle.

Why must our metaphor for form be a circle? As James himself contends in “The Art of Fiction” (1888), the novel “must demand that it be perfectly free” from prescriptions (296). Nevertheless, the image of the circle itself becomes a devious form of prescription, a kind of “circular” argument. James’ model for artistic form implicitly excludes those novels which do not easily fit this image of self-containment. Delighting in “a deep-breathing economy and organic form,” James dismisses many long novels as simply “large loose baggy monsters” in his “Preface to The Tragic Muse” (The Art of Fiction 84). Henry’s formal circle is defined by economy and contraction, not by expansion and growth.

One of the foremost challenges to this formal circle is in the literary sequel. As J. Paul Hunter has argued in “Serious Reflections on Farther Adventures” (1997), the “refusal of novels to end … is a regular feature of English texts in the eighteenth century” (279). As Henry James notes, in real life “relations stop nowhere,” and novels do not always “stop,” either. The circle represents not simply the artist’s attempt to impose form on the chaos of life but the critic’s attempt to impose form on the chaos of literary texts. If we must imagine a metaphor that can accommodate the presence of the sequel, we must perhaps imagine an infinite line. Or, perhaps in order to describe the relation

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2 James does qualify that he believes in one prescription: “The only obligation to which in advance we may hold a novel … is that it be interesting” (296). As my analysis will suggest, even this prescription can be problematic for those authors who try to challenge audiences whose interests lie in the depiction of conflict and violence.
between an original work and its sequel, we must imagine a series of *overlapping* circles, a Venn diagram in which each “complete” circle is shown not to be complete after all.

The theorizing of the novel has become concerned with the canonization of form. As James remarks in “The Art of Fiction” (1888), the English novel “had no air of having a theory, a conviction, a consciousness of itself behind it—of being the expression of an artistic faith, the result of choice and comparison” (291). Working within this interpretive vacuum, James insists that critics recognize the intentionality behind the artistic product. The formal characteristics of the novel take on an increasing importance in modernism: even the experimentation with form in James Joyce’s *Ulysses* still observes the Aristotelian unities of “time” and “place.” Russian formalism and stylistics place greater weight upon structure and form in a manner that encourages treating an artistic production as a single, complete text. As Mikhail Bakhtin complains in “Discourse in the Novel” (1934-35), “A literary work has been conceived by stylistics as if it were a hermetic and self-sufficient whole, one whose elements constitute a closed system presuming nothing beyond themselves, no other utterances” (273). “Form” can be understood not simply as the expression of perfect completeness but of exclusion.

Our “history of the novel” has habitually been constructed through the exclusion of problematic texts. In *The Rise of the Novel* (1957), Ian Watt locates the eighteenth-century genesis of a “new literary form” in “formal realism,” which is premised on the belief that “the novel is a full and authentic report of human experience” (9, 32). Watt’s explanatory framework for describing the “rise of the novel” is ultimately limited to a study of three authors, Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding. It is noteworthy that even with
only three authors, Ian Watt still finds difficulties in placing Fielding’s *Tom Jones* to fit within his own schema.\(^3\)

In *The Origins of the English Novel* (1987), Michael McKeon attacks the tendency of critics (like Watt) to subsume the eighteenth century novel under one grand scheme which ignores difference. McKeon postulates that a dialectical theory of genre enables the critic to do justice to the epistemological and ethical instability shaping the contours of the novel. Because McKeon is so attentive toward issues of historical development and instability, it is surprising that McKeon disregards the generic instability posed by a sequel. In writing on “the dilemma of quantitative completeness” in Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (316), McKeon treats *Robinson Crusoe* as a quantitatively complete text, largely ignoring Defoe’s subsequent sequels *Farther Adventures* and *Serious Reflections*.\(^4\) Despite its modifications of Watt’s framework, McKeon’s dialectical theory still reduces the complexity of formal and generic instability as represented in the sequel.

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\(^3\) For example, Watt writes that “Fielding cannot be considered as having made quite so direct a contribution as Richardson to the rise of the novel” (239) and that “Fielding’s technique was too eclectic to become a permanent element in the tradition of the novel” (288). Part of Watt’s reason for such dismissals is that Fielding’s novels fail to conform to “formal realism,” which Watt understands as the defining feature of the novel: Fielding provides only a “realism of assessment,” not a “realism of presentation” and individualism.

\(^4\) McKeon’s brief references to Defoe’s sequels largely serve to elide differences between *Robinson Crusoe* and the sequels (i.e., they merely reiterate the earlier work) or to dismiss them as detachable and unimportant. For example, in his sustained account on *Robinson Crusoe*, McKeon briefly mentions the “Preface” of *Farther Adventures* only to remark that “The ‘Editor’ of Part II takes a similar stance” to the editor of *Robinson Crusoe* (315); this quick reference to the sequel simply reinforces the sense that it participates in the same project as the first work. McKeon later remarks that “it is as though [Defoe] has—not withstanding the spiraling misgivings of the *Serious Reflections*—…explicitly sanctioned our resistance to allegorical translation” (319). In this remark, McKeon implies that *Serious Reflections* has little bearing on how we interpret the dialectical tensions within *Robinson Crusoe* itself.
There has been little substantial challenge to the systemic exclusion of sequels from the literary canon. In *Part Two: Reflections on the Sequel* (1998), Paul Budra and Betty A. Schellenberg describe the sequel as “an almost-predictable footnote to the narratives of Western history” (3). While Schellenberg and Budra only employ this “footnote” metaphor in passing, the image merits further elaboration. Sequels often function not simply as footnotes to “the narratives of Western history,” but as “footnotes” to the very narratives which they claim to complete. When Janet Todd acclaims the conclusion of Frances Sheridan’s *Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph* (1761), she mentions in an endnote that her argument is true only so long as one discounts Sheridan’s “rather unfortunate sequel” (298): Sheridan’s sequel becomes quite literally reduced to the status of an endnote.

While Betty A. Schellenberg has argued for the literary merit of sequels written by women novelists, her work encourages the social stigma attached to male-authored sequels. Schellenberg suggests that the freedom of women novelists from “the male author’s pressure to protect the paternal name” led them to produce “more innovative—and hence more successful—sequels than did their male counterparts” (92). In her study, Schellenberg’s claim that male-authored sequels tend to become “safer” texts (89) may

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5 In context, Janet Todd commends *Memoirs* because it concludes unhappily without the protagonist dying at the end. In certain respects, such an ending is not truly an “ending” because the story is unfinished. As Francis M. Dunn points out in his discussion of Greek tragedy in *Tragedy’s End* (1996), “no man is happy before he is dead: the wealth or happiness we enjoy today may be lost tomorrow, and only the man whose fortune remains to the end can truly be called happy” (3). As Dunn notes, Aristotle challenges even this kind of “ending” in *Nicomachean Ethics*: “though a man has lived blessedly until old age and has had a death worthy of his life, many reverses may befall his descendants … it would also be odd if the fortunes of the descendents did not for some time have some effect on the happiness of their ancestors” (qtd. in Dunn 4). A corollary point is that we can never truly say a character will be miserable until they have died, either. Despite the loss of his children and riches, the Biblical character Job lived on to double his previous prosperity.
unfortunately perpetuate dismissive generalizations which ignore the innovation of many individual male sequel-writers. Schellenberg gains respectability for the sequel primarily by dividing “good” and “bad” sequels along gender lines.

Even though Gerard Genette’s *Palimpsests* (1982) offers a helpful schema for understanding the sequel, Genette’s analysis is ultimately problematic. For Genette, the sequel is an expression of “hypertextuality,” in which a text B (the “hypertext”) is grafted onto a prior text A (a “hypotext”). Although this metaphor is helpful on a descriptive level, it is inadequate for conveying the ways in which the relation between these two texts is shaped and qualified by social stigma and canonical concerns. The two texts do not simply coexist side by side; rather, the very terms of sequentiality—that one work “follows” another—often conveys the authorial claim that the later work is more definitive or conclusive than what preceded it. As some sequels are accepted (e.g., *Don Quixote Part 2*) and others are excluded (e.g., Defoe’s *Farther Adventures*), canon-formation suggests an implicit struggle between hypotext and hypertext, where one work is often seen as central and primal, while the other text exists on the margins.⁶

Genette’s analysis of the literary sequel also merits refinement because of its preference for allographic sequels over autographic sequels. As Christopher Richards suggests in *The Idea of the Sequel* (1989), Genette’s chief hypertextual interest is in imitation, which leads him to privilege “allographic” works (i.e., a sequel written by a

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⁶ One illuminative analogy for understanding this struggle between an early work and its later sequel might be in the staple of Restoration comedy, the competition between an older and younger brother. It is thematically fitting that Sir John Vanbrugh’s *The Relapse*, a sequel to Colley Cibber’s *Love’s Last Shift*, features an upstart younger brother competing with the reputation of his older brother, Lord Foppington. More often than not, the relation between a sequel and its predecessor may imperceptibly develop into a competition over which work is superior and offers the “true” conclusion of a story.
different author) over autographic works (i.e., a sequel written by the same author).  

Paying homage to D'Alembert’s definitions in *Dictionaire des synonymes*, Genette suggests that allographic sequels typically tend toward “completion” or “continuation” (they seek to bring a work to a close), but autographic sequels tend toward “prolongation.” In Genette’s schema, the “motive [of the autographic sequel] is generally a desire to capitalize on a first or even a second success … and it is entirely natural that an author should wish to profit from such a windfall” (206). Genette’s analysis of this economic motive is unnecessarily reductive, locating the desire to prolong a narrative in the desire to make money. Children’s book sequels, for example, may use the prolongation of narrative to reflect on the brevity of childhood. Genette is also inconsistent in more often assigning an economic motive to the sequels of original

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7 Richards grounds his analysis in Genette’s remark that an “original author’s ‘suite,’ following things to the letter, eludes our examination since it does not progress by imitation … an author who prolongs himself undoubtedly, to an extent, imitates himself, unless he transcends himself, betrays himself, or undermines himself, but all this has nothing much to do with hypertextuality.” (qtd. in Richards 42)

8 Genette notes that D'Alembert distinguishes between “the continuation” and “la suite, the sequel: ‘One may write a continuation of someone else’s work and the sequel to one’s own” (161). Although Genette does not unequivocally endorse D’Alembert’s distinction, he seems to accept as a general rule that allographic novels seek completion and autographic novels simply seek continuation.

9 In Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871), a sequel to *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), the implied author reflects on Alice’s having grown up, with nothing left but the shadow of the past: “Still she haunts me, phantomwise./Alice moving under skies/Never seen by waking eyes” (209). Carroll continues, “In a Wonderland [children] lie,/Dreaming as the days go by,/Dreaming as the summers die” (ibid.). J. M. Barrie’s *Peter and Wendy* (1911), an implied “sequel” to *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* (1906), announces its concern with the impermanence of childhood in the very first paragraph: “All children, except one, grow up. They soon know that they will grow up … One day when [Wendy] was two years old she was playing in a garden … She must have looked rather delightful, for Mrs. Darling put her hand to her heart and cried, ‘Oh, why can’t you remain like this for ever!’ This was all that passed between them on the subject, but henceforth Wendy knew that she must grow up. You always know after you are two. Two is the beginning of the end” (69). In the concluding volume of *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, aptly titled *The End* (2006), Lemony Snicket reflects on the paradox that endings are both impossible yet also inevitable: even though “one could say … that no story really has an end … and so *The End* is really the middle of the story,” nevertheless, one “cannot sit in the midst of things forever. Eventually one must face that the end is near” (289). Even if a child’s life story may not have “ended,” childhood itself ends quite quickly, and a heightened consciousness of childhood’s transience may influence the composition of sequels within children’s literature.
authors than to those of their continuators. The autographic sequel does not fit comfortably within Genette’s grand schema for hypertextual imitation, and Genette in fact contributes to the general disregard for the autographic sequel.

It is precisely the failure of the sequel to “fit in” to our history of the literary canon that marks its importance. In The True Story of the Novel (1997), Margaret Doody notes that even “dead white males” have been misrepresented due to canon exclusion: the Lucianic Henry Fielding has been lost while the “realist magistrate” who writes Tom Jones remains (4). Excluding a sequel risks not simply the misrepresentation of a canonical author, but of the canonical “text” itself and of its early reception.

In ignoring sequels, we are left with an enclosed text which is cut off from what follows and treated as self-contained. The critical shibboleth is not so much that “there is nothing outside the text” as that “There is a text”—a fixed, impermeable text that is unalterable, and its demarcations incontestable. Book historians such as Jerome McGann have made us more conscious of the danger in idealizing one edition as the “definitive” or authoritative text; nevertheless, the literary sequel has remained largely absent from such discourse. Notably, when Joan Coates Cleary, the editor of the World’s Classics edition of Frances Sheridan’s Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph, makes a brief reference to

10 Genette does admit that “shrewd inheritors [i.e., allographic writers] have been known to produce interminable sequels to adventures that were terminated over and over again” (207). Nevertheless, Genette most associates the practice of writing “interminable sequels” to the original authors in need of money.

11 Jerome McGann argues against the theory of “final authorial intention,” which identifies an author’s earliest writing as the most authoritative text. McGann is critical of such models because they treat an author as an autonomous creator, thereby ignoring the social and collaborative dimension of his or her work. As my analysis will suggest, a problem with “final authorial intention” is that it is misnamed: it is concerned not with authors’ final intentions but their earliest ones. Textual editions which omit earlier published sequels thus perpetuate a false sense of a text’s “finality.”
Sheridan’s sequel, she dismisses the work as a “self-contained” story (xv). Cleary’s purpose seems not so much to argue that the “self-contained” sequel can be read alone on its own merits—the work is no longer in print, after all—but instead to argue that the sequel is something extraneous to the “real” story of Sidney Bidulph. The sequel becomes defined by its lack of necessary connection to what has come before.

Sequels are problematic because they challenge our most engrained critical habits in the treatment of novelistic closure. Their very problematic character may lead to their dismissal from scholarly consideration. Despite Marianna Torgovnick’s claim in Closure in the Novel (1981) that the sequential novel “does not lend itself to detailed analysis” (14), the sequential novel is not so much resistant to “detailed analysis” as it is resistant to our most common reading strategies. The Jamesian model of perfect form cannot easily accommodate a serial work.

Henry James’ preoccupation with formal perfection can be seen not simply as initiating novelistic criticism but developing earlier artistic prescriptions. Since Aristotle’s Poetics, we have been accustomed to treating the “work” as a whole which has a “beginning, a middle, and an end,”12 a complete entity which has a uniform impact on the spectator. According to Aristotle, artistic beauty depends upon magnitude—a plot’s length must “be easily embraced by the memory” (66). Implicitly, Aristotle argues that the artistic work must sometimes exclude material in order to accommodate the human mind’s capacity for apprehending beauty.13

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12 See Aristotle’s Poetics, chapter VII, p. 65.

13 Even though many of Aristotle’s remarks are intended for dramatic composition, Aristotle applies similar principles to narrative: “as to that poetic imitation which is narrative in form … the plot manifestly ought, as in a tragedy, to be constructed on dramatic principles. It should have for its subject a
Aristotle’s argument should be disturbing to anyone who studies long novels. The Aristotelian conception of “the work” carries with it an impulse to abridge a text, to make it fit the capacities of the human mind (rather than challenge the human mind to grasp a complex work). The canonical exclusion of sequels thus performs a function analogous to that of the modern-day abridgement: it jettisons the material we deem least important (and perhaps least convenient). Condensation of a work makes the Jamesian “monster” a little less loose and baggy.

The exclusion of the sequel is symptomatic not merely of the habit of abridging longer texts, but of teaching shorter works instead. In teaching an author who is widely regarded as “canonical,” instructors may sometimes privilege the shorter works: Charles Dicken’s *Great Expectations* (1860), George Eliot’s *Silas Marner* (1861), and James Joyce’s *Dubliners* (1914) offer an appealing alternative to such weighty tomes as *Oliver Twist* (1837), *Middlemarch* (1871), and *Ulysses* (1922). If professors balk at assigning Richardson’s *Clarissa* (1747-48) to undergraduates because of its length, it should be no wonder they might balk at making a novel “longer” by assigning its sequel.

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14 In *The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel* (2000), Leah Price describes how literary anthologies serve an ideological function and “determine not simply who gets published or what gets read, but who reads, and how” (3). Since Price suggests that “few genres have been better placed to escape the anthology’s sphere of influence” than the novel, it is important to call attention to the ways in which the literary sequel is best placed to fall victim to the habit of anthologizing: in praxis, it has become the most easily removable part of a story.

15 Even the instructor who wishes to assign the sequel might be prevented, since many sequels (e.g., Richardson’s *Pamela II* and Sarah Fielding’s *Familiar Letters*) are not currently in print or are available only through services such as ECCO.
Efforts to “expand” the canon may in fact prevent a thoughtful consideration of previously excluded authors. Literary anthologies which incorporate selections from many lesser-known authors may exacerbate problems by condensing the very voices they seek to include. In *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (1983), Edward Said remarks that in debates between opposing perspectives, “there is a marked willingness to take positions simplifying and exaggerating not only one’s opponent but one’s own team” (158). Excerpting a work is ultimately a way of simplifying and reducing it.\(^{16}\) The act of anthologizing requires that we fragment the voices we wish to value. While it may be problematic if we reduce the canon to sound-bites from “literature’s greatest hits,” we cannot solve the problem by simply adding sound-bites from “the subaltern’s greatest hits” either. The problem is not simply that readers have failed to encounter different voices, but that they may be unaccustomed to listening to any one voice for a sustained period of time. While short selections run the risk of caricature, sequels often point to the irreducible complexity of reality and the artificiality of “endings.”

Our accepted notions of the nature of narrative reinforce the conception that humans have an intense, psychological desire for a complete, unified text. In 1966, the critic Frank Kermode called attention to this need for structured narrative in *The Sense of an Ending*. According to Kermode, humans need to interpret the world according to sense-making patterns; humans exist “in the middle” and “project [them]selves … past

\(^{16}\) Of course, almost any form of critical writing must perform an act of over-simplification and reduction. In entering into a critical conversation, even this dissertation necessarily reduces the complexity of the critical texts with which it engages. Nevertheless, even when such reductions become unavoidable or necessary, it is important to recognize the dangers attending such abridgments.
the End, so as to see the structure whole” (8). Much of our theory of narrative depends upon the belief that people seek a complete work, vision, and ending, giving them one coherent narrative. Cutting off sequels from an earlier work reinforces our sense of a stable text and a definitive ending.

Nevertheless, this model fails to accommodate what we might call a “sense of amending,” or even a “sense of a rending.” That is, there may be a human need to address and amend a seeming (or serious) omission in an earlier work. There may even be a psychological compulsion to create a rupture and to take apart an earlier text. Sequels may give us a picture of Pangaea or of shifting plate tectonics, a sense of newfound finality or of fissures. In Continuance and Change (1972), Robert K. Morris argues that novel criticism’s focus on “the art of the novel” has led to the exclusion of “the art of the novel sequence,” and Morris seeks to develop a theoretical model for interpreting the role of time and change in sequentially-ordered novels (xvii). In The Limits of Interpretation (1990), Umberto Eco explores strategies for interpreting serials under the rubric of a “neobaroque aesthetic” (97). Despite such explorations, the Aristotelian model of closure and unity continues to hold relative sway in our treatment of novelistic form.

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17 Kermode does admit that, in a sense, “endings” (or the interpretation of them) do change from generation to generation: “the artifice of eternity exists only for the dying generations; and since they choose, alter the shape of time, and die, the eternal artifice must change. The golden bird will not always sing the same song, though a primeval pattern underlies its notes” (31). Nevertheless, Kermode admits change primarily as it takes place from generation to generation; he does not explore how the same individuals (or generations) might become dissatisfied with an ending that had once seemed satisfying to them.

18 Umberto Eco is responding to a larger movement in Italy for creation of a “new aesthetics of seriality.” See Eco’s The Limits of Interpretation, p. 84. For more on “the art of serialization” in the eighteenth century, see Robert D. Mayo’s The English Novel in the Magazines, 1740-1815 (1962).
Given the persistence of Aristotle’s model, it is important to note that Aristotle’s formulations were inadequate even for approaching works contemporary with his *Poetics*. Aristotle isolates *Oedipus Tyrannus* as a single text, “the *Oedipus,*” thereby refusing to treat Sophocles’s Theban plays or “Oedipus trilogy” (*Oedipus Tyrannus, Oedipus at Colonus*, and *Antigone*) as a coherent or sequential run. For Aristotle, it is not relevant for the interpretation of *Oedipus Tyrannus* that at the time of its composition Sophocles had already written of the Oedipal line,¹⁹ and that as an old man he would return to Oedipus’s story finally to conclude it.²⁰ *Oedipus Tyrannus* exists as a single, perfect text.

On a fundamental level, Aristotle’s model is ahistorical. Aristotle may be concerned with how characters and their circumstances change within a particular work (e.g., *peripetia*) but not between two works. Aristotle’s dramatic theory observes the convention of “unity of time,”²¹ which compresses action into the space of one day and consequently prevents the depiction of slow and gradual change. Such an aesthetic prescription allows only for the depiction of change that is extreme (a reversal of fortune) and quick (tidily contained within the space of a day). We are not permitted to see the long-lasting consequences of the extreme change or the representation of gradual change, such as take place between *Oedipus* and *Oedipus at Colonus.*

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¹⁹ The order in which Sophocles wrote the trilogy is as follows: *Antigone, Oedipus Tyrannus,* and *Oedipus at Colonus*. The director George Lucas is not the only person to write the last episode in his series before writing the first one.

²⁰ It is interesting to note that though *Oedipus Tyrannus* received only second prize in the Athenian dramatic competition, *Oedipus at Colonus* would win first.

²¹ Aristotle writes that “Tragedy endeavors, as far as possible, to confine itself to a single revolution of the sun, or but slightly to exceed this limit; whereas the Epic [poem’s] action has no limits of time” (chapter V, p. 60).
Aristotle’s very definition of an ending resists the possibility of representing later change. Aristotle defines an end as “that which itself naturally follows some other thing … but has nothing following it” (65). By definition, the ending of *Oedipus Tyrannus* cannot be “followed” by its sequel, *Oedipus at Colonus*. An ending is that for which we never see the consequences or what “naturally follows.” The power of Aristotle’s notions and formulations has left us relatively ill-equipped for interpreting works which fall outside of Aristotle’s schema.

This dissertation seeks to redress this critical imbalance. It argues that eighteenth-century authors, in writing sequels to their own works, raise important questions about narrative closure, ideal justice, and the literary canon. Sequels are problematic for classical theories of closure, which treat an artistic production as a complete work composed of “a beginning, a middle, and an end” with a uniform effect on a spectator. Writing a sequel often emboldens writers to challenge prescriptive notions of artistic form and the structuring of narrative. Far from simply repeating themselves, sequel-writers often seek to represent new perspectives that may be excluded from their earlier novels. Sequels often complicate earlier assessments of a character’s moral worth, as a “bad” character becomes “good” (or vice versa), or they reveal the impermanence of a “happy ending” by showing that the virtuous may lose a reward they had earlier received. Sequels are thus frequently at odds with the dramatic convention of “poetic justice” and gesture toward an aesthetic of sympathy that I term “poetic mercy.” The presence of the sequel calls for further re-examination of the literary canon: the failure to read original works alongside their sequels not only ignores the “story” as many earlier audiences have read it but misrepresents the full complexity of an author’s treatment of his or her subject.
matter. In listening attentively to an author’s sequel, we often discover that the author’s “meaning” is not as univocal as the first work’s familiar (but ultimately truncated) form may lead us to believe.

0.2 Not a Novel? Time, Plot, and Narrative Form

Perhaps one of the most intriguing objections to Frank Kermode’s narratological speculations in Sense of an Ending is Kermode’s failure to historicize the individual’s conception of time. In Telling Time (1996), Stuart Sherman critiques Kermode’s argument that human beings use sense-making paradigms to understand a teleological purpose in time. According to Kermode, the “tick-tock” of a clock represents purposed plot. It is like kairos, or seasonal time: “the interval between … tick and tock is now charged with significant duration” (Kermode 45). Novelistic time is thus contrasted to chronos, or “empty” time: “the interval between tock and tick represents purely successive, disorganized time” (ibid.). Sherman argues that Kermode’s argument ignores the historical specificity of “tick-tock.” While many humans may organize and give purpose to time through plot and fictions, their practice does not thereby disqualify competing models such as “tick-tick.” Sherman writes,

The primacy of Tock in The Sense of an Ending forestalls attention to narrative forms developed under the alternate sign of Tick. Kermode’s distinction between ‘mere chronicity and times which are discordant and full’ limits the range of his narratology. Kairos ‘is the time of the novelist’ (46) … but not of the annalist, chronicler, or diarist (so the whole thrust of the argument, as well as the distribution of examples, suggests)….the new diurnal forms of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—diaries, newspapers and related writings—occupy a paradigm of time and form undreamt of (or at least unattended to) in Kermode’s narratology. (12)
According to Sherman, there is a wealth of possibility in alternatives to Kermode’s model of narratology. Sherman capably points out that Kermode avoids literary forms that are not “plot-driven,” such as diaries and newspapers. Despite offering a substantial challenge to Kermode, Sherman’s *Telling Time* explores primarily non-novelistic texts such as Pepys’s journal, the *Spectator* letters, and travel-writing.\(^{22}\)

This dissertation complements Sherman’s study by grappling more directly with how diurnal form complicates our understanding of “plot” within narrative and the novel.

A recurring characteristic of literary sequels is not simply to challenge Aristotelian theories of closure but our very notion of “plot.” Many sequels have affinities for diurnal forms. Jane Barker’s *A Patch-Work Screen for the Ladies* (1723), Daniel Defoe’s *Serious Reflections* (1720), Sarah Fielding’s *Familiar Letters* (1747), and Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela II* (1741) are all “sequels” to novels,\(^ {23}\) but they fail to conform to what we expect from a novel: a central plot.\(^ {24}\) Sequels often greatly experiment with form, juxtaposing descriptions of domestic life alongside theatrical criticism (e.g., *Pamela II*),\(^ {25}\) recipes alongside inset stories (*Patch-work Screen*), familiar

\(^{22}\) Sherman only considers the novel in the last chapter, with the examples of Daniel Defoe and Frances Burney.

\(^{23}\) That is, they are all works which have characters who also appeared in an earlier work and are connected to that work.

\(^{24}\) In *Sarah Fielding* (1996), Linda Bree remarks that Fielding’s *Familiar Letters* is “not a novel in any sense in which the term would have been understood in the 18th century” (47). Such a claim assumes that the “novel” is a stable category. As Michael Austin remarks in discussing whether Defoe’s *Serious Reflections* can rightly be termed a “novel,” Defoe “was working with a very different set of narrative expectations than we are used to” (7).

\(^{25}\) In addition to describing her home life with Mr. B., Pamela includes her own analysis of Ambrose Philips’ *The Distress’d Mother* (1712).
letters alongside fairy tales and dramas (Familiar Letters), and an essay on solitude alongside an apocalyptic vision of the end of the world (Serious Reflections).  

Jane Barker’s image of her sequel as a “patch-work lining” serves as a metaphor for many sequels. In announcing her desire to pursue “The Sequel of Galesia’s Story,” Barker anticipates, “But I doubt my Reader will say, Why so long about it? And why a HISTORY reduc’d into Patches?” (51) Building from the image of her sequel as one “patch” of Galesia’s history, Barker develops the metaphor of her sequel as a locus of multiple patches for multiple characters. The “story” of the sequel becomes not a focus on Galesia alone, but on the ways in which she and her friends together compose a patch-work screen. The patch-work is a metaphor not only for the artistic work, but for life. Barker writes,

…whenever one sees a Set of Ladies together, their Sentiments are as differently mix’d as the Patches in their Work: To wit, Whigs and Tories, High-Church and Low-Church, Jacobites and Williamites, and many more Distinctions, which they divide and sub-divide, ‘till at last they make this Dis-union meet in an harmonious Tea-Table Entertainment. (52)

The “patch-work” is a place where opposing perspectives meet, where “Dis-union” becomes a kind of union and harmony, where hodgepodge and diversity are the pattern. The artistic vision is not one of coherence but of diversity: as one character remarks, “these melancholy dark Patches, set off the light Colours” (92). Questions of artistic form and diversity of perspective become indissolubly linked: The patchwork

26 In Before Novels (1990), J. Paul Hunter writes that “not until almost the end of the eighteenth century does the novel expand its horizons beyond the single individual to consider relationships, or settings, or symbols as central” (329). Nevertheless, through sequential works, writers did explore relationships and the centrality of certain symbols (e.g., a patch-work screen).
challenge to Aristotelian unity is defined by its ability to embrace even religious and political enmities. Barker is not simply creating an alternative female space but a lively alternative to the preferred literary form. Barker connects the writing of her sequel to the questioning of artistic form and the challenging of religious and political prejudices.

Barker hints that patchwork is, in fact, less destructive of artistic beauty and ethical behavior than other forms of composition. Barker balks at “embroidery,” suggesting that it is “pernicious to the Eyes” (54). In the terms of Barker’s analogy, “embroidery” seems to refer to the more “unified” Aristotelian novel: tellingly, Henry James describes the master of form as a “young embroiderer of the canvas of life” (The Art of the Novel 4). Barker rejects this textual embroidery, noting that early embroiderers “cou’d not see the Danger themselves and their Posterity might be in, a Thousand Years hence, about I know not what” (54).

The ambiguity of Barker’s reference to a “danger” of “I know not what” invites the reader to imagine a variety of possible dangers accompanying this established form. Given Barker’s own marginalization in Protestant England as a Jacobite and Catholic convert, Barker is acutely aware of “patches” that do not fit within Protestant England (as well as the legislative attempts to penalize or remove them). Barker has reason to fear that the desire for artistic “unity” works in tandem with the desire for ethical and religious conformity, excising the voices that do not belong to preserve the purity of form. Barker urges that one of the strengths of patchwork is that “in Patch-work there is no Harm done; a smear’d Finger does but add a Spot to a Patch, or a shade to a Light-Colour” (54). While Barker’s statement may be a claim on the artistic level (e.g., one poorly composed inset story does not ruin the other stories), it can also be read as an
ethical (or even religious) claim: we are in no moral danger when we hear one “wrong” voice amongst a host of good ones. The true danger—the danger of which “I know not what”—may lie in uniformity itself and in compulsory conformity. For Barker, the problem lies not in a lack of uniformity but in the refusal to accept other “patches.” Disparate points of view and disparate artistic forms go hand in hand.

Sequels may not be unique in integrating seemingly disparate forms. In The English Novel (2005), Terry Eagleton remarks that the novel “is less a genre than an anti-genre. It cannibalizes other literary modes and mixes the bits and pieces promiscuously together” (1). Nevertheless, sequential novels may in fact be the most resistant to observing an established form or genre because they already resist our most formalized rules of narrative and closure. Sequels in fact intensify certain characteristics often associated with the novel. As noted earlier, Bakhtin is suspicious of critics who treat a literary work “as if it were a hermetic and self-sufficient whole, one whose elements constitute a closed system presuming nothing beyond themselves, no other utterances” (273). The sequel is always another utterance, or “more last words” which refuse to accept that a novelistic system is now closed. It is in the sequel that dialogue is at its most emphatic. It is perhaps because of the sequel’s dialogic character and its resistance to established form that it has become so disreputable.

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While efforts at historicizing may help trace the influence of other voices and thus resist the “closed system,” these efforts are largely confined at tracing influences on the first text—not on later texts which may influence how the earliest audiences read the text. For example, Joan Coates Cleary’s introduction to Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph devotes much attention to earlier influences of the novel, such as Gregory’s Legacy to His Daughters and Fordyce’s Sermons to Young Women, but only devotes half a sentence to describing Sheridan’s sequel.
0.3 Defining the Sequel and the Boundaries of the Study

The sequel does not simply defy form, but even definition. In the eighteenth century, a variety of works within disparate genres have title pages which advertise themselves as “sequels”—not simply novels,\(^{28}\) plays,\(^ {29}\) poems,\(^ {30}\) but even philosophical works, sermons, and periodical literature have “sequels.”\(^ {31}\) These sequential works are not always even by the original authors, as when Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela* is followed by John Kelly’s *Pamela’s Conduct in High Life* (1741) and the anonymously-authored *Pamela in High Life* (1741). There are works which do not even advertise themselves as “sequels” but imply in their title an inextricable connection to an earlier work: for example, Samuel Jackson Pratt advertises his novel, *The Tutor of Truth. By the Author of the Pupil of Pleasure* (1779). Pratt thus uses alliteration and implied contrasts (pupil vs. tutor, truth-seeking vs. pleasure-seeking) to connect the two works. Robert Bage’s title page, *Man as He Is. By the author of Hermsprong* (1796) associates the work with his earlier novel *Hermsprong: Or, Man as He is Not* (1796).

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\(^{28}\) Additional examples include Sarah Scott’s *The History of Sir George Ellison* (1766), Frances Brooke’s *The History of Charles Mandeville* (1790), and Charlotte Smith’s *The Wanderings of Warwick* (1794). Although *The Wanderings of Warwick* was not advertised as a “sequel,” the novel’s very first words merit such a designation: “the hero of a former story …” (1)

\(^{29}\) For example, John Gay’s *Polly* (1729), John Dryden’s *The Indian Emperor* (1665), Behn’s *The Rover, Part 2* (1681), George Farquhar’s *Sir Harry Wildair* (1701), Susanna Centlivre’s *Mar-Plot; or, the Second Part of the Busie-body* (1711), Henry Fielding’s *Miss Lucy in Town* (1742), and Samuel Foote’s *The Englishman Return’d From Paris* (1756).

\(^{30}\) For example, see John Milton’s *Paradise Regained* (1671), Samuel Butler’s additions to *Hudibras* (1663 and 1678), John Dryden and Nahum Tate’s “Absalom and Achitophel, second part” (1682), Sir Richard Blackmore’s “Instructions to Vander Bank” (1709), Edward Young’s *The Complaint; or, Night Thoughts* (with installments published 1742-1746), Alexander Pope’s fourth part of *The Dunciad* (1743), Tobias Smollett’s “Reproof” (1747, advertised as a “sequel” to the poem “Advice”), and William Blake’s *Songs of Experience* (1794).

\(^{31}\) For example, Sir Richard Steele advertises his periodical *The Englishman* as “the sequel to the Guardian” (1713).
Works explicitly labeled as “sequels” often imply a contrast with an earlier work or a refinement of its theme: For example, George Hay’s *The Devout Christian Instructed in the Law of Christ from the Written Word* (1783) is advertised as a “sequel” to *The Sincere Christian instructed in the Faith of Christ* (1783), thereby endeavoring to harmonize faith and works. After writing *Plain Reasons for Being a Christian* (1730), Samuel Chandler published his “sequel,” *Plain Reasons for Being a Protestant* (1735). Even though John Milton’s *Paradise Regained* (1671) is not advertised as a “sequel,” its title and beginning lines invite comparison with *Paradise Lost* (1667). Regardless of whether a work is marketed as a “sequel,” its title often invites (or perhaps demands) we view it as irreducibly connected to an earlier work.

A further challenge in defining the “sequel” is that many works which we tend to call sequels were in fact advertised as “second parts”—Defoe’s *Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719) was subtitled as “the second and last part of his life,” and John Gay’s *Polly* (1729) was subtitled as “the second part of *The Beggar’s Opera.*” The habit of present-day criticism is to reserve the term “second part” only for those sequels believed to be integral to “the work” as a whole. By referring to the “second part” of *Don Quixote* or “part two” of *Pilgrim’s Progress,* we use language to imply that Cervantes’s sequel is in fact an indispensable part of the entire work. “Second part”

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32 The cover simply states, “Paradise Regain’d. A Poem. In IV Books. To which is added Samson Agonistes.” The first lines of *Paradise Regain’d* are, “I who erewhile the happy Garden sung./By one man’s disobedience lost, now sing/Recover’d Paradise to all mankind …” (I:1-3).

33 This fine distinction between “second part” and “sequel” is analogous to Littre’s distinction between “continuation” and “sequel.” Littre writes that “sequel is more general, since it does not indicate whether that to which a sequel is given be completed or not, whereas continuation asserts positively that the thing had been left at a point of incompleteness” (qtd. in Genette 162).
implies a kind of seamlessness and canonicity that the term “sequel” simply does not, and we must recognize that social stigma is attached to the latter term. Some of the most successful sequels are rarely even called “sequels” at all, such as Mark Twain’s *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), Frances Burney’s *Evelina* (1778), and James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922). Sequels are problematic not simply because they complicate our notions of form, nor because the term itself becomes the haven for a hodgepodge of genres in the eighteenth century, but because our usage of the term carries with it some degree of caprice. The term “second part” carries with it the implicit agenda of distinguishing it from the “sequel.”

In conducting this study, it is imperative to keep in mind that sequels resist not simply the closure of definition, but of the “definitive” study. As Kermode suggests in *Sense of an Ending*, humans do seek patterns and the imposition of order, and so do dissertations, lest, as “loose baggy monsters,” they fill their readers with horror. Nevertheless, this dissertation does its subject matter a disservice (and becomes self-referentially incoherent) if it does not at least resist the effort to impose one pristine definition upon the “sequel” in order to clean up the term’s eighteenth-century messiness. Eighteenth-century authors who wrote works described as “sequels” understood the term

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34 Frances Burney’s *Evelina* (1778), her first published (and most published) work, is itself a sequel to the novel *Caroline Evelyn*, which Burney burnt when she was fifteen years old. As Frances Burney writes in the dedication of *The Wanderer*, “on my fifteenth birth-day, I made so resolute a conquest over an inclination at which I blushed [i.e. the desire to write], and that I had always kept secret, that I committed to the flames whatever, up to that moment, I had committed to paper” (8). It is important to remember that Burney’s *Evelina* is a sequel (at least in Burney’s own mind); it is in fact the first book’s very inaccessibility to us and to Burney that gives *Evelina* its urgency. Though the first novel was burnt (much as the paper proving that Lady Belmont was legitimately married), Burney cannot resist the urge to write and return to the events of this past novel through examining their effect on Evelina, and *Evelina* begins with a summary of the events taking place in the earlier novel. *Ulysses* is Joyce’s sequel to *A Portrait of the Artist* (1916), but it is often interpreted as a stand-alone work.
to allow for a variety of texts with different degrees of connection to an earlier work. The “sequel” may conclude the life of a former character (e.g., Fielding’s *Volume the Last*) or place its focus on an entirely new character—for example, Christiana in Part II of *Pilgrim’s Progress* replaces her husband Christian, the protagonist of Part I. A sequel might offer a linear story or a hodgepodge of various forms.

I will be drawing several boundaries controlling the purview of my study. First, my individual chapters focus only on “sequels” which make undeniably strong claims of connection and association with an earlier work. Defoe’s sequel to *The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719) was advertised as “the second and last part of his life.” In Defoe’s third volume, *Serious Reflections During the Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1720), Defoe claims that this supposed “sequel” in fact produced the two works that came before it.35 Samuel Richardson’s sequel to *Pamela*, now commonly called *Pamela II*, was simply marketed as volumes III and IV of the original work. Sarah Fielding’s *Familiar Letters* is advertised as “a sequel” to *The Adventures of David Simple*, and Fielding’s later sequel is titled, *Volume the Last, in which His History is Concluded* (1753). Frances Sheridan’s *The Conclusion of the Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph* (1767) was regularly published together with *The Memoirs* as volumes IV and V of the work. All four authors thus make undeniable claims of the later work’s relation to the former.36

35 Crusoe writes that his third work is “not merely the Product of the two first Volumes, but the two first Volumes may rather be called the Product of this:” (A2)

36 Even though Sheridan’s *The Conclusion of the Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph* was published posthumously, it seems clear that Sheridan had intended all five volumes to be read together.
A second boundary of my study is that my analysis will focus only on authors who write “sequels” to their own work. While I am attentive to how allographic sequels might shape the contours of an autographic sequel—e.g., how John Kelly’s spurious continuation *Pamela’s Conduct in High-Life* influences Samuel Richardson’s composition of the sequel *Pamela II*—my chief concern is with how the original author transforms his or her earlier text. Autographic sequels not only respond to perspectives offered in allographic sequels, but they also often incorporate them.  

This dissertation was also designed to analyze how sequels inform our understanding of narrative and the novel. Consequently, each chapter focuses on a different novelist. Nevertheless, as my analysis will suggest, many “sequels” to earlier novels do not appear to be “novels” at all (e.g., Defoe’s *Serious Reflections* and Fielding’s *Familiar Letters*). The adoption of seemingly non-novelistic forms in fact reflects how authors experimented and sought alternative models of composition. Eighteenth-century novelistic closure also cannot be understood without attentiveness to aesthetic debate occurring outside the novel. As I will show, the dramatic theory of “poetic justice” becomes incorporated into the theorizing of the novel.

The final limitation of my study is that it focuses on the “sequel” as distinct from the “serial.” As noted earlier, writers such as Robert K. Morris and Umberto Eco have argued for the importance of an aesthetic of “seriality.” Serial works encourage endless

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37 For a more thorough consideration of how eighteenth-century characters were re-imagined by allographic authors (or readers), see David A. Brewer’s *The Afterlife of Character* (2005). Brewer is particularly concerned with showing that popular works of the canon represented a “textual commons” in which readers could assert their personal ownership over an author’s characters. Through “imaginative expansion,” readers appropriated characters and envisioned their further adventures even after the “story” has ended. According to Brewer, such acts of imagination served to create a kind of “social canonicity” which in fact buttressed the original text’s claims to canonicity and importance.
prolongation and repetition (e.g., the multiple seasons of *The Simpsons*) in a way that the one-shot (or two-shot) sequel does not. A sequel often provides an author’s sole opportunity to revisit a popular work; as a result, its composition might seem to offer the last chance to “finish” a story or to complicate it. Such works may carry a sense of urgency and a concentration of energy that longer serial works do not. For the purposes of this study, I am therefore limiting my study to novels which are no more than three in sequence (i.e., the “trilogy”). I have chosen the number three (rather than two) in part to allow for the inclusion of Sarah Fielding’s critically acclaimed *Volume the Last*, which is the third work in Fielding’s “David Simple” sequence.

0.4 The Origins of the Sequel: Common Objections to its Artistic Merit

Perhaps the most common justification for treating sequels as unworthy of study rests upon their perceived origins. In common opinion, the sequel originates in the author’s desire to earn some easy money. As Terry Castle remarks in *Masquerade and Civilization*, “the sequel has been an offshoot of the best-seller syndrome” (133). Similarly, in *The Rise of the Novel*, Ian Watt dismisses Daniel Defoe’s sequel *Serious Reflections of Robinson Crusoe* because “the volume was primarily put together to cash in on the great success of the first part” (89). Linda Bree remarks that Fielding’s *Familiar Letters* creates a “slightly specious link” to *The Adventures of David Simple* in order “to build on—not to say cash in on—the success of *David Simple*” (56). It seems that many critics locate the sequel’s origin in the author’s greed.

Such an objection savors of special pleading when we consider that economic concerns influence the composition of virtually all literary works, not simply the sequel.
Despite Samuel Johnson’s famous generalization that “no man but a blockhead ever wrote, except for money” (qtd. in Boswell III: 19), Johnsonian criticism does not therefore disregard *Rasselas*’s aesthetic merit. Since Sarah Fielding’s *The Adventures of David Simple* attributes its origins to her own financial struggles, we should be cautious of lauding *David Simple* as an artistic triumph while treating *Familiar Letters* as merely opportunistic and money-making. This economic objection against sequels also presumes that writers expected their sequels to be commercial successes, which is not always the case. An established popular audience can offer a venue for unpopular ideas and experimentation.

Another common objection raised against the sequel’s origins is that novelists write sequels in order to consolidate authorial control and exclude opposing voices. In *The Afterlife of Character, 1726-1825* (2005), David A. Brewer describes how canonical authors such as Samuel Richardson, Laurence Sterne, and Sir Walter Scott used sequels to re-assert their authority and exclusive ownership over their characters (121). Betty A. Schellenberg suggests that male-authored sequels safeguard their writers’ paternal authority and property rights by tending toward “safer” themes and texts. In this light, sequels would seem to support the closing of a system rather than an opening of it.

The problem with this objection is that it suggests an earlier work was somehow more “open” to other readings or other viewpoints than is often the case. We do not tend to privilege an article published in a non-refereed journal as “more open” to the truth than

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38 Johnson reportedly composed *Rasselas* in one week in order to pay for his mother’s funeral expenses.

39 As I argue in my chapter on Defoe’s *Serious Reflections*, there is reason to believe that Defoe wrote *Serious Reflections* in spite of anticipating it would be commercially unsuccessful.
the peer-reviewed article; in fact, our presumption is that hearing an opposing perspective or a critical voice can improve one’s writing or argument. Even when a sequel-writer might have desired to consolidate authority, eighteenth-century print culture necessitated that the author respond to another voice, and in so doing, grant the voice an audience.

Even the sequel-writer who rejects opposing voices finds it impossible to ignore them. In *The Fable of the Bees* Vol. 2 (1729), Bernard Mandeville reprints the following rumor published in the *Daily Journal*:

> On Friday Evening the first Instant, A Gentleman, well dress’d, appeared at the Bonefire before St. James’s-Gate, who declared himself the Author of a Book, entituled, *The Fable of the Bees*: And that he was sorry for writing the same: and recollecting his former Promise, pronounced these Words: *I commit my Book to the Flames*; and threw it in accordingly. (23)

Mandeville describes his own puzzlement in determining how to respond to this spurious story about himself. Mandeville remarks,

> …this Story has been much talk’d of, and … several [of my acquaintances] have earnestly press’d me more than once to advertise the Falsity of it, which I could never comply with for fear of being laugh’d at, as some Years ago poor Dr. Partridge was, for seriously maintaining, that he was not dead. (27)40

As Mandeville suggests, opposing voices and opposing stories cannot simply be ignored. In order to declare he will not respond to the false story, Mandeville must still recount the story for the whole world to hear. At the same time that Partridge asserts, quite literally, that “the author is not dead,” he must give voice to the claims of the

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40 Under the pseudonym “Isaac Bickerstaff,” Swift satirized the predictions of the astrologist John Partridge by writing that Partridge would die an “infallible death” that year. Partridge responded by protesting that he was not in fact dead, which Swift declared was a lie.
astrologer who has foretold his death. While an original work might be able to pretend that opposing voices do not exist, the sequel-writer lacks this luxury.

The proliferation of ripostes and spurious continuations do not simply lead to the “death” of Mr. Partridge or the author. In Spectator 445, Joseph Addison recollects, “upon Mr. Baxter’s Death, there was published a Sheet of very good Sayings, inscribed, The Last Words of Mr. Baxter. The Title sold so great a Number of these Papers, that about a Week after, there came out a second Sheet, inscribed, More Last Words of Mr. Baxter” (IV: 63). In William Darrell’s A Supplement to the First Part of the Gentleman Instructed (1708), the publisher describes the earlier work preceding the supplement:

It was the Author’s Desire of being unknown, which made him willing to pass for being Dead; but this Supplement which is the genuine Ofspring [sic] of the same Pen, has too much of him in it, not to convince the World he is still alive; and whoever reads the second Part will find there such a Harmony of Thought and Expression with the first, that if the Author had been dead, one would almost conclude him risen again to write it. (n.p.)

Darrell’s Supplement might suggest that we might need to develop a theory on the “resurrection of the author” rather than the death of him or her. David A. Brewer’s The Afterlife of Character (2005) has called attention to the ways in which readers doggedly demand that a character’s exploits continue even after the canonical work has ended. There seems to be just as stubborn an insistence that the “author” remains alive and vocal, either through a living author’s response to others’ voices or through the discovery of an expired author’s “more last words.” The vibrancy of print culture demands not only that sequel-writers engage with other voices but demonstrate their own vitality.

Critical response to an earlier work often provokes a creative response in the sequel. In Eurydice Hiss’d (1737), Henry Fielding takes advantage of the negative
response to his earlier play *Eurydice*. Spatter, the implied author of the play, describes her newest tragedy called “The Damnation of Eurydice”:

… you will allow I have chose this Subject very cunningly, for as the Town have damn’d my [earlier] Play for their own Sakes, they will not damn the damnation of it…. what signifies denying the Fact after [the crowd’s] Sentence, and dying with a Lye in your Mouth? No, no, rather, like a good pious criminal, rejoice, that in being put to shame, you make some Atonement for your Sins. (37-8)

At the same time that *Eurydice Hiss’d* claims to become a “safer” text, it is boldly subversive. If the purpose of a sequel is to make money and gain popular acclaim, all Spatter need do is recant and enjoy her profits. “Like a good pious criminal” or a rake converted in the fifth act of a play, all Spatter needs to do for a reward is to be “put to shame” and damn her earlier actions, and the audience will be forced to applaud her. Spatter seems to hint that, rather than “dying with a Lye in your Mouth,” she can die comfortably and at leisure with the very different lie, “I condemn my earlier work.” Crowds love deathbed conversions and authorial retractions, and Spatter reminds audiences how often such “repentance” is faked. Rather than simply conforming to societal pressures attacking his work, Fielding makes conformity a badge of subversion: the audience can never know what beliefs the “reformed” author is hiding in a sequel. Fielding uses the pressure of conformity to critique conformity and its implicit reward of hypocritical “conversions.”

Mandeville’s and Fielding’s response to critical voices suggests that sequel-writing is almost inherently dialogical. No matter how “close-minded” the sequel-writer may be, he or she is always being compelled to respond to new circumstances or new voices. If sequel-writers are not responding defensively to their critics, they may be
responding to new personal experiences or new historical developments. “Endings” are susceptible to change ultimately because authors (and their characters) are susceptible to change and to subsequent “serious reflections.” While we might presume that sequel-writers are primarily responding to critics who pressure for more conformity, they may also be responding to those critics who observe too much social conformity in the first work: upon further reflection, sequel-writers may question their earlier assumptions. Even when a sequel originates in the desire to secure authorial control, it does not thereby achieve a “safer” text or a closed off system.

Common objections against sequels’ economic opportunism or consolidation of authority highlight the fact that debates about a sequel’s artistic merit often center on questions of origin. The sequel’s disrepute depends upon proving that a sequel does not originate as a natural development of characters or elements in the earlier novel, but as a response to something petty and outside the novel, such as monetary need or anxiety over authorial control. These objections may in fact originate from the need to disqualify a sequel and show that it is not “really” connected to its predecessor. Ironically, the very fact that the sequel is connected to an illustrious predecessor (e.g., by its title or by a recurring character) is seen as proof that the sequel is inferior: woefully inept, it clings to the coattails of its more accomplished cousin. A sequel’s demand of its importance as a “second part” of an established novel becomes in fact the grounds for its disqualification.

Perhaps the most significant problem with these objections is that they savor of special pleading. We might simply presume that the “good” sequels (e.g., Cervantes’s Don Quixote Part 2 and John Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress Part 2) “made it” to the canon, and the “bad” ones did not. Such an assumption ignores the way in which
canonical rejection is tied to historical factors. In the five editions of Frances Sheridan’s
*The Memoirs* published before the end of the eighteenth century, the sequel was included
in the third (1767), fourth (1772), and fifth (1796), yet today, it is not included at all.
Although most present day re-publications of *The Adventures of David Simple* (1747)
have included her sequel *Volume the Last* (1753), this habit of inclusion is only as old as
1969; between 1759 and 1969, *Volume the Last* was not included in any editions of *David
Simple*. While present day editors have chosen to include *Volume the Last* in editions
of *David Simple*, they have uniformly chosen to reject Sarah Fielding’s *first* sequel,
*Familiar Letters Between the Principal Characters in David Simple* (1747), because they
feel it does not advance the “story” or plot—it is not a “true sequel” like *Volume the Last*
is. We may justifiably question why *Volume the Last* has been excluded for so long,
why *Familiar Letters* is still excluded, and why a sequel such as *Conclusion of the
Memoirs* is now detachable. Given that these sequels’ “origins” and merit did not
change, we ought to ask why their canonical status did.

41 See Anna M. Fitzer’s “Mrs. Sheridan’s Active Demon: *Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph* and
the Sly Rake in Petticoats,” p. 43.

42 See Peter Sabor’s Introduction to *The Adventures of David Simple*, xvi. In the 1969 edition of
*The Adventures of David Simple* for Oxford University Press, Malcolm Kelsall chooses to include *Volume
the Last* because it is “Miss Fielding’s best work, tight in structure, ironic” (xi). Peter Sabor’s edition of
*David Simple* for the publisher *Eighteenth-Century Novels By Women* (1998) and Linda Bree’s edition for
Penguin books (2002) similarly includes *Volume the Last*.

43 Malcolm Kelsall rejects the relevance of *Familiar Letters*, since it has “very little to do with *The
Adventures,” whereas *Volume the Last* is a “true sequel” (xi). Peter Sabor decides not to include *Familiar
Letters* because no subsequent editions were published past 1759 (the same could have been said of *Volume
the Last* until 1969) and “the work is only loosely connected to the *Adventures*” (xii). Linda Bree
comments that *Familiar Letters* “does not carry their story forward in any significant way” and is not a
“true sequel” as *Volume the Last* is (xxxi). While we may expect characters to undergo life-changing
events in sequels, we may question whether defiance toward an audience’s expectations for plot
progression means that a work is not a “true sequel.” In *Tom Jones*, Henry Fielding’s narrator begins each
section with a chapter that does not advance the “plot” yet still contributes meaningfully to the work as a
whole.
If we must attribute an “origin” for the sequel, let us postulate that the sequel originates in the act of looking back at an earlier work from a new vantage point. Writing a sequel offers an author the opportunity to re-visit a popular work and to raise new questions, to challenge earlier conclusions, to show new developments in already established characters, or to introduce new voices into an already established frame. In contrast to Schellenberg’s claim that male authors of sequels tend toward “safer” texts, my dissertation shall show that both male and female authors typically devote more time and manifest more sympathy toward perspectives marginalized in their earlier novels.

Even when a sequel “originates” from a suspect intent (e.g., money-making or consolidation of power), these initial concerns are not determinative of the final work. The author who writes a sequel in order to make money still knows that s/he must provide novelty to sustain readers’ interest. This pressure compels writers to include new perspectives and voices. It is hardly coincidental that sequels often adopt the perspective of the opposite sex. The need to say something “new” pressures the author to explore what has not yet been said and who has not yet spoken.

Even the author who seeks to re-assert authorial control must usually provide conflict and a “plot,” which provides impetus for examining how an earlier seemingly “happy ending” can lead to frustration or disappointment. Ironically, even the refusal to depict conflict or major plot twists introduces a conflict between the author’s vision and the reader’s own expectations of change and excitement: both reader and author are

44 For example, sequels such as John Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress Part 2, Frances Sheridan’s Conclusion of the Memoirs (1767), and Sarah Scott’s The History of Sir George Ellison (1766) all represent attempts to represent a voice of the opposite sex. Pilgrim’s Progress Part 2 focuses on Christian’s wife Christiana, and Sheridan’s Conclusion includes male letter-writers. Scott’s The History of Sir George Ellison (the sequel to Millennium Hall) has a central male protagonist.
challenged to think in new ways. The sequel’s internal logic is that of dialogic, of complication and destabilization of an earlier work—or of our expectations of what a work should be.

0.5 Intertextual Dialogue and the “Annihilation” of the Author

The sequel offers the possibility of “more last words” and of further dialogue. In a 1972 interview with Mel Gussow, the playwright Tom Stoppard remarks on why he writes plays:

I write plays because writing dialogue is the only respectable way of contradicting yourself. I’m the kind of person who embarks on an endless leapfrog down the great moral issues. I put a position, rebut it, refute the rebuttal, and rebut the refutation. (Gussow 54.)

While “writing dialogue” may not carry the stigma of sequel-writing, the two types of writing may satisfy a similar impulse. The artistic demand to provide an “ending” does not lend itself toward an “endless leapfrog” in moral speculation. We might describe the relationship between a novel and its sequel as an “intertextual dialogue,” a dialogue taking place between two different works. Tom Stoppard’s Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead (1966) does not simply feature dialogue between the characters Rosencrantz and Guildenstern but between Stoppard’s own play and Shakespeare’s Hamlet. Stoppard takes two peripheral characters from Hamlet, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and places them at the center of his play. Intertextual dialogue naturally plays with centers and peripherals, with a character’s place on the

45 I shall be developing this observation in my analysis of Defoe’s Farther Adventures and Serious Reflections and Richardson’s Pamela II.
margin or in the middle. Sequels provide not simply the possibility of dialogue with another but with oneself, of refuting and rebutting an earlier conclusion. The desire to challenge ethical closure is often intertwined with the desire to challenge narrative closure.

In *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711), a collection of occasional essays and miscellaneous reflections, Lord Shaftesbury theorizes about the nature of dialogue and implicitly on sequel-writing. In his essay “Soliloquy,” Lord Shaftesbury criticizes the “modern” author of memoirs, who conducts a “pretty amour and intercourse of caresses between the author and reader” (90). Opposed to this “coquetry,” Lord Shaftesbury celebrates the dialogistic philosophical works of the ancients:

> For here [in dialogue] the author is annihilated, and the reader, being no way applied to, stands for nobody. The self-interesting parties both vanish at once…. These two [dialoguing] characters are mere strangers, in whose favour you are no way engaged. (90)

For Shaftesbury, dialogue permits the “annihilation” of categories such as author and reader. It permits a kind of transcendence in which partiality—even personal identity itself—seems to “vanish.” Even though “dialogue” involves two different and distinct voices, it ultimately makes the boundaries between voices more porous. The reader (and author) can move back and forth between two different voices rather than being trapped in the immobility of the author-reader relation.

According to Shaftesbury (as well as Bakhtin), it is imperative for writers to be dialogical. The best thinker for Shaftesbury is “a strong self-examiner and a thorough-paced dialogist” in private (“Soliloquy” 76). Dialogism paradoxically entails both self-
destruction and self-multiplication: the soliloquist on the stage “carries on the business of self-dissection. By virtue of this soliloquy, he becomes two distinct persons. He is pupil and preceptor”(72). Ultimately, Shaftesbury envisions not so much the “death” of the author as a re-creation, a self-multiplication in which the author becomes two separate individuals.

Shaftesbury’s reflections become most interesting in the context of his own sequel, *Miscellaneous Reflections on the Preceding Treatises and Other Critical Subjects* (1711). After anthologizing five previously written essays (including “Soliloquy”) in two volumes, Shaftesbury adds an additional volume which includes five new miscellaneous essays. The “author” of the miscellanies claims not to be the author of the earlier writings: “my chief intention in the following sheets is to descant cursorily upon some late pieces of a British author” (“Miscellany I” 342). In these miscellaneous sequels, the “real” author is annihilated—the miscellany writer must act as the author’s “interpreter or paraphrast,” proposing to “imitate and accompany him as far as my miscellaneous character will permit” (“Miscellany III” 408). In writing this series of miscellanies, Shaftesbury is able to mimic the very “dialogic” form he earlier elevated—his miscellanies celebrate not the annihilation of the abstraction “the author” but ultimately the annihilation and recreation of the concrete self, as “Shaftesbury the author” and “Shaftesbury the commentator.” The miscellanies themselves, the free exercise of

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46 The essays included are “A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm,” *Sensus Communis*, an Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour,” “Soliloquy, or Advice to an Author,” “An Inquiry Concerning Virtue or Merit,” and “The Moralists, a Philosophical Rhapsody.”

47 Since the title page of three-volume set of *Characteristics* (1711) does not specify Shaftesbury as the author, the difference between “author of the first two volumes” and “author of the miscellanies” is even more ambiguous.
ridicule (and parody), and the annihilation of the author, are all manifestations of Shaftesbury’s desire for an endless contestation of dogmatic beliefs. Shaftesbury’s writings participate in a spirit of open-endedness that springs from the same source that many sequels do. Shaftesbury’s characterization and theorization of his own writings thus provide us with a model for theorizing the sequel through the lens of “dialogue.”

As a “commentator” and writer of miscellanies, the sequel-writer must simultaneously imitate and depart from the path laid by the earlier “author.” As sequel-writer, Shafestbury writes, “while I accompany [the first author] in this particular treatise, I ought not to make the least escape out of the high road of demonstration into the diverting paths of poetry or humour” (“Miscellany IV” 425). He writes later, “according as my genius and present disposition will permit, I still intend to accompany him at a distance, keep him in sight and convoy him, the best I am able, through the dangerous seas he is about to pass” (“Miscellany III” 418, emphasis mine). Shaftesbury’s language suggests a simultaneous desire to exist alongside the original work (to “accompany” it) and to exist apart from it (“at a distance”), to imitate but also to move through a different pathway.

Although the word “sequel” etymologically means to “follow,” Shaftesbury employs the metaphor of “accompaniment.” Such terminology involves conceiving of the sequel not as that which “follows” but as that which also disrupts strict chronology and linearity. Shaftesbury’s Miscellany is “outside” the Characteristics yet also, inextricably, a part of them. As the “author” is annihilated through dialogue, so also does the sequel strive for its own kind of “annihilation.” The “successful” sequel is often that which annihilates its own identity as “sequel,” as “follower,” and which becomes fully
integrated and accepted as an indispensable part of the complete canonical text, just as Shaftesbury’s *Miscellanies* are a part of his three-volume *Characteristics*.

Textual identity is in fact analogous to human identity, in that it is in a tension between a state of stability and metamorphosis. Despite Shaftesbury’s desire to “annihilate” the author and make him/her two distinct people, he claims later in “Soliloquy” that “it is the known province of philosophy to teach us ourselves, keep us the self-same persons and so regulate our governing fancies …. there is that which, being wholly metamorphosed and converted, we are thereby in reality transformed and lost” (127). Writing dialogistic philosophy is a task which Shaftesbury claims should not only “annihilate” the author, not only “double” him/her, but also “keep us the self-same persons.”

Philosophy thus acts both to subvert identity and to maintain it.

Shaftesbury’s observations on human identity are also true of Shaftesbury’s own text(s). As Lawrence E. Klein comments in his introduction to *Characteristics*, “the miscellanies of the third volume allowed Shaftesbury to bring some coherence to this assemblage” (xii); yet while bringing this coherence, the “miscellany author” claims to be a different author, someone who conjectures what the first author originally intended, who tries to “correct” him at the same time he tries to imitate him.

These miscellanies function to regulate textual identity at the same time that they confuse our understanding.

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48 It may be important to keep in mind the immediate context in which Lord Shaftesbury describes this regulatory function of philosophy; it is at the moment that he is distinguishing philosophy from religion (and perhaps ultimately from enthusiasm).

49 Shaftesbury writes, “According to this method, while I serve as critic or interpreter to this new writer, I may the better correct his phlegm and give him more of the fashionable air and manner of the world” (342).

50 We might compare this self-interpretive hermeneutic to Alexander Pope’s “Key to the Lock,” in which Pope writes as a rabid anti-Catholic searching the text for “papist” propaganda.
of who the author is (“Which author is ‘Shaftesbury?’”) and what “the text” is (Is it the single essay “Soliloquy,” the first two volumes of Characteristics, or all three volumes published together?).

For Shaftesbury, the very form of the miscellany is intrinsically anti-foundational: “I have grounded my miscellanies upon a certain set of treatises already published. Grounds and foundations are of no moment in a kind of work which, according to modern establishment, has properly neither top nor bottom, beginning nor end” (“Miscellany I” 342). Shaftesbury ironically invokes a “ground” for something which has no bottom. Miscellanies by their nature deny both a vertical relationship (top, bottom) and a horizontal/linear one (beginning, end). Shaftesbury ridicules the randomness of the miscellany form while celebrating it. By having neither top nor bottom, the miscellany simultaneously reaches the highest of human aspirations and sinks below rational thought. The miscellany manifests endless metamorphosis at the same time it establishes the stable coherence of its predecessor.

Shaftesbury’s reflections on the “miscellany” are indebted to the description of another kind of “sequel”: the “afterpiece” in the drama. Shaftesbury describes the nature of his miscellany in a reference to French drama: “when I was a spectator in the French

51 This defiance to beginnings and endings are important. Shaftesbury later repeats that in miscellanies, the author can write “without a shape or body to his work, without a real beginning, a middle or an end” (349).

52 As Shaftesbury writes, in the miscellany “the most confused head, if fraught with a little invention and provided with commonplace-book learning, might exert itself to as much advantage as the most orderly and well-settled judgment” (340). The miscellany pokes fun at itself and at the text that preceded it.

53 It thus carries analogies to the false sublime of Pope’s The Art of Sinking in Poetry and Fielding’s Tragedy of Tragedies.
theatre, I found it the custom at the end of every grave and solemn tragedy to introduce a comic farce or miscellany which they called the ‘little piece’…. [Interweaving burlesque wit with its opposite of tragedy] makes the most accomplished kind of theatrical miscellany, called by our poets a tragi-comedy” (“Miscellany I” 341, emphasis mine). 54

Thus, the comic spirit of the theatrical miscellany is to bring opposites together, either by appending itself to a tragic text or interweaving itself within the tragic text. Where “dialogue” creates two different persons in opposition, the theatrical miscellany—a kind of “sequel” which follows an earlier performed work—places itself in opposition to its earlier text and in integration with it. The sequel miscellany offers the chance to have a dialogue with an earlier dialogue.

Shaftesbury describes the miscellany in terms that resembles Jane Barker’s description of her own sequel, The Patch-Work Screen. Shaftesbury describes the manner of a miscellany as that of “patchwork,” because it involves “cutting and shreds of learning, with various fragments and points of wit … tacked in any fantastic form,” “the wild and whimsical” (“Miscellany I” 340-341). Miscellanies customarily integrate seeming opposites, such as the serious and the comic. Like the sequel, the miscellany characteristically deviates from ordering principles such as “unity of action.” Instead, it opts for a kind of self-parody and self-refutation, a heightening of the possibility of dialogue and complexity.

The reflections of Lord Shaftesbury and of Tom Stoppard illuminate the narrative possibilities of the novelistic sequel. Writing dialogue permits Stoppard to engage in an

54 For Shaftesbury, “criticism” and “the burlesque” often overlap as categories: “It is no wonder if what is generally current in this kind [of criticism] lies in a manner buried and in disguise under burlesque” (457).
“endless leapfrog down the great moral issues.” For Shaftesbury, writing dialogue enables the author to become “two distinct persons” and annihilate the distinctions between author and reader. Dialogue, like the sequel, offers the possibility for the creation of new “selves” and perspectives. Like the writer of sequels, the author of miscellanies and of dialogue can write “without a shape or body to his work, without a real beginning, a middle or an end” (349).

0.6 “Poetic Justice,” Theories of Closure, and the Sequel

Our own theories of eighteenth-century closure must be attentive to how eighteenth-century writers themselves theorized endings. Familiarity with the theory of “poetic justice” is indispensable for understanding how writers of the period challenge “happy endings” and prevalent conceptions of justice. In the theory of “poetic justice” (a term first coined by Thomas Rymer but deeply indebted to French neoclassical theory), theories of closure and justice intersect; the author is called upon to represent the equal distribution of rewards for the virtuous and punishments for the wicked at the story’s end. We can better understand eighteenth-century writers’ resistance to closure through examining the most prevalent prescriptions for ideal closure in “poetic justice.”

Writers who struggle with sequels often know themselves to be at odds with the questions raised by “poetic justice.” The beggar poet who wrote Beggar’s Opera (1728) apparently sees the sequel Polly as his opportunity to provide true “poetical justice” and

55 Variant spellings of the term “poetic justice” include “poetical justice” and “poetick justice.”
the moral he failed to provide earlier when audiences wanted a happy ending. The same Samuel Richardson who would come to challenge “poetic justice” explicitly in his postscript to Clarissa had already dealt with the nature of virtue’s “reward” in Pamela II (1741) when Mr. B. initiates an affair. The same Sarah Fielding who attacked “poetical justice” in her Remarks on Clarissa (1750) examines how the same virtuous David Simple, whose integrity has rewarded him with friends at the end of Part I of David Simple (1744), will lose most of them in Volume the Last (1753). Even though Sheridan’s Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph (1761) explicitly challenges the convention of “poetic justice,” the sequel Conclusion of the Memoirs (1767) examines new ways in which “poetic justice” fails as an ideal. Such sequels question whether an earlier representation of “justice” is truly just.

Even as “poetic justice” encourages writers to seek one, ideal, definitive ending, the theory encourages the proliferation of possible endings. In Spectator 40 (1711), Joseph Addison blames the convention of poetic justice for leading to Nahum Tate’s revisions of Shakespeare’s King Lear (1605), which features Cordelia’s reward rather than her death. “Poetic justice” can provoke theorists, playwrights, and spectators to question whether Shakespeare’s King Lear ever can truly be completed or perfected.

56 In John Gay’s The Beggar’s Opera, the Beggar laments that the crowd’s entertainments have convinced him to disobey “strict poetical justice” in his play, so that the likeable scoundrel Macheath escapes hanging. The intended “moral” was that “the lower sort of people have their vices in a degree as well as the rich: and that they are punished for them” (206). Gay implies that poetic justice is biased in practice: both the low and the rich have vices, but under “poetic justice,” it is only the poor who are punished for them. In Polly, Macheath’s fate is less fortunate: after he dies, Polly falls in love with an Indian prince. Gay implicates his audience for desiring Macheath’s good fortune simply because he is a charming individual. In another play, The What D’Ye Call It (1715), John Gay claims that “Poetical Justice [is] strictly observed” (62). This play involves “tyrant Justices” who punish the poor for poaching but allow a squire to debauch a poor man’s daughter (66). Gay suggests that “justice,” and “poetic justice,” are often misapplied.
since ideal “justice” might demand further revisions or even new endings. In *The Provok’d Husband* (1728), Colley Cibber revises and completes Sir John Vanbrugh’s unfinished play, *A Journey to London*, and alters it according to “poetic justice.” In his Preface “To the Reader,” Cibber reveals that Vanbrugh intended the play to conclude with the main character throwing his disobedient and unchaste wife out of the house. Cibber writes,

> [W]hen [Vanbrugh’s] performance came … to my hands, I thought such violent measures, however just they might be in real life, were too severe…. Therefore … I preserved the lady’s chastity, that the sense of her errors might make a reconciliation not impracticable. (6)

In Cibber’s revised play, Lord Townly expresses concern that he “not urge [his wife’s] punishment beyond her crimes” (140). In his decision to throw his wife out, Townly is resolved that no one must suspect the cause is infidelity: he tells his friends, “do her fame that justice” to declare her chaste (*ibid*.). After Lady Townly repents of her extravagant spending, the couple is reconciled, and their virtuous friend Manly tricks the rakish Count Basset into marrying the woman he made pregnant. When Lord Townly remarks, “Never were knaves and fools better disposed of,” Manly describes the situation as “a sort of poetical justice, my lord, not much above the judgment of a modern comedy” (159).

Manly’s reference to “a sort of poetical justice” offers an implicit defense of Cibber’s revisions. Although Cibber had conceded that Vanbrugh’s intended ending would have been “just” in “real life,” Cibber suggests that Vanbrugh’s ideal is

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57 By titling the work as *The Provok’d Husband*, Cibber encourages us to see the play as a riposte to Sir John Vanbrugh’s earlier play, *The Provok’d Wife* (1697).
nevertheless fundamentally “unjust”—Vanbrugh is more concerned with punishment than with forgiveness. Lord Townly’s insistence that his wife not receive “punishment beyond her crimes” seems to express Cibber’s own resolve not to punish the character as harshly as Vanbrugh had envisioned. At the same time that “poetic justice” implies the possibility of an ideal ending, it inspires an endless contestation over whether a particular ending is the “right” one.58 The theory of “poetic justice” provides an indispensable lens through which we can view revised endings and sequels.

Authors who never explicitly refer to the theory of “poetic justice” may write sequels which complicate earlier conceptions of justice. Pilgrim’s Progress, Part I (1678) concludes with the harsh manifestation of heavenly justice: the protagonist Christian sees that “there was a way to Hell, even from the Gates of Heaven,” and the character Ignorance is thrown into hell (133). In his sequel, Bunyan becomes concerned with showing God’s great mercy to the flawed and spiritually weak. (One of the central characters is even named “Mercy.”) Bunyan resolves to depict the salvation of “Master Ready-to-halt./A Man with Crutches, but much without fault” (141). In Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, Crusoe returns to his island to see “justice” done in executing the marooned English sailors who escaped in the first book, and he instead sees their salvation. Many sequels displace the notion of “justice” by emphasizing the role of mercy.

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58 It is interesting to note that Sir John Vanbrugh wrote The Relapse, a sequel to Colley Cibber’s Love’s Last Shift. While Cibber’s play ended with the reformation of the rakish character Lovelace, Vanbrugh’s sequel depicts the rake’s relapse. While Vanbrugh figuratively “revises” Cibber’s ending in Love’s Last Shift by adding a sequel, Cibber literally revises Vanbrugh’s ending in adapting Vanbrugh’s unfinished manuscript. In the contest over “more last words,” Cibber has gotten the last laugh.
“Justice” presumes a degree of knowledge and stability of character that can be dangerously wrong. By its very nature, the idea of “justice” suggests a degree of epistemological certainty: it presumes the possibility of knowing enough about a person’s attitudes and actions to make a definitive judicial pronouncement of a merited punishment or reward. In his influential *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, John Locke emphasizes the extent to which human knowledge falls “short of the reality of things” (479). Locke argues that “all the right and justice of reward and punishment” is founded in “personal identity” and “the identity of consciousness” (308-9). Locke reflects on the strange example of a man who cannot remember committing a crime while he was drunk: “we say such an one is not himself, or besides himself; in which phrases it is insinuated … that self was changed, the selfsame person was no longer in that man” (309). Locke says:

Human laws punish [the now sober man] with a justice suitable to their way of knowledge; because … they cannot distinguish certainly what is real, what counterfeit;…But in the great day [of God’s judgment], wherein the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open, it may be reasonable to think, no one shall be made to answer for what he knows nothing of. (310)

Locke’s analysis calls into question both human knowledge and stable identity. Human laws punish on the basis of “identity of substance”—on what *body* has committed a crime. They ignore the importance of “identity of consciousness”—that the crime might have been committed by a different “self.” Locke emphasizes that another’s consciousness is inaccessible to human judges—humans cannot distinguish the “real” from the “counterfeit,” cannot tell if the “self was changed.” By distinguishing between the “drunk” self and the “sober” self, Locke leaves open the possibility of *multiple* selves
which have all inhabited the same body. It is important to acknowledge that Locke distinguishes these multiple selves on the basis of memory and consciousness—it is because a man does not remember sleep-walking that God will probably not hold him guilty for a crime committed in his sleep. Nevertheless, a consequence of Locke’s theory is that it opens up the possibility that identity can so radically change that the human judicial system is incapable of rightly punishing it.

Lockean philosophy creates a fundamental rift with dominant prescriptions in aesthetic theory. While “poetic justice” implies a human capacity to make a once-for-all judicial pronouncement of a character’s moral worth, Locke emphasizes uncertainty and implies the possibility of multiple selves within a “character.” While Locke gestures toward a multiplication of “selves” and of judgments, Lockean philosophy creates a fundamental rift with dominant prescriptions in aesthetic theory. While “poetic justice” implies a human capacity to make a once-for-all judicial pronouncement of a character’s moral worth, Locke emphasizes uncertainty and implies the possibility of multiple selves within a “character.” While Locke gestures toward a multiplication of “selves” and of judgments,59 “poetic justice” demands a united person and a definitive judgment. Both systems offer competing models for understanding human identity and justice.

In *Tom Jones* (1749), Fielding suggests that this multiplication of the self necessitates greater care in criticizing individuals. Having just described how Tom Jones’ trusted friend, Black George, has stolen Tom’s money, the narrator tries to palliate Black George’s crime through a stage analogy. In both real life and upon the dramatic stage, the narrator remarks that “it is often the same person who represents the villain and the hero” (285, italics mine). Rather than viewing a play as one coherent and complete work, Fielding’s analogy stresses a play’s interconnection with other plays: “A single bad act no more constitutes a villain in life than a single bad part on the stage” (286).

59 Locke remarks that “we must, in many things, content ourselves with faith and probability” (481). This lack of certainty entails that even the possibilities we reject as improbable might still, in principle, be viable.
Actors (as well as characters) cannot be completely defined upon the basis of one action or brief performance: “the man of candour and of true understanding is never hasty to condemn” (286). It is only by seeing several plays together, or several actions together, that one can see just how multi-faceted human personality is.

Sequel-writing re-inforces a Lockean multiplication of the self. As described above, Shaftesbury saw “dialogue” as offering the possibility to divide the “author” into two distinct persons. In writing a sequel, Shaftesbury divides himself further by pretending that the author of the first two volumes of Characteristics is different from the author of the third. Not only is a character capable of becoming a different “person,” but so is an author.

Sequel-writing necessarily involves implicit engagement with the convention of “poetic justice.” In revisiting a character or story, authors must always reveal what happens after the “happy ending” and a supposedly ideal distribution of rewards and punishments. Sequels must necessarily answer whether the “self” (and its reward) is constant or whether it changes through time. As characters develop into different selves, authors may undergo an “annihilation” and become someone different, as “Shaftesbury” is transformed into “the author of the miscellanies.”

0.7 “Poetic Justice” and its Discontents

I shall now describe how the theory of “poetic justice” was formulated in the late seventeenth and eighteenth century. This survey will suggest that many of the dramatic theorists who proclaimed the benefits of “poetic justice” regularly subordinated the concern for rewarded virtue to a concern for the punishment of wickedness. While
“poetic justice” emphasizes the importance of the punishment, I suggest that many sequel-writers implicitly argued for a principle which I call “poetic mercy,” in which authors challenge earlier punishments as being too harsh or depict “wicked” characters from an earlier work more sympathetically in the sequel.

Although the British critic Thomas Rymer originated the term “poetic justice,” Rymer’s ideas ultimately originate in works of French neoclassicism. To understand the theory’s roots, it is important to sketch the historical context of mid-seventeenth century France. In an effort to consolidate France’s political and cultural power, Cardinal Richelieu encouraged the foundation of a French Academy to standardize the written language and establish rules of taste. Richelieu saw a dramatic controversy over Corneille’s play *Le Cid* (1637) as offering an opportunity to allow the Academy to make a definitive pronouncement on the play’s merits and weaknesses, thereby establishing the Academy’s reputation and authority. Despite a popular success, *Le Cid* created a heated argument in French over dramatic convention (commonly called the *Querelle du Cid*). The play’s most notable violation of dramatic “rules” and decency is found in the play’s conclusion, which hints that Chimène, the heroine of the play, will marry her father’s murderer, the chivalrous Don Rodrigo. Under pressure from Cardinal Richelieu, Corneille agreed to have the debate referred to the Academy, which offered the authoritative evaluation of *Le Cid* in *Sentiments de l’Académie*.

Unfortunately, there has been little recent scholarship written on the theorizing and practice of poetic justice. For its practice on the English stage, see Michael A. Quinlan’s *Poetic Justice in the Drama: The History of an Ethical Principle in Literary Criticism* (1912). For the theory’s heritage in French neoclassicism, see John D. Ebbs’s *The Principle of Poetic Justice Illustrated in Restoration Tragedy* (1973). While “poetic justice” is most often associated with Restoration tragedy, it has also influenced Restoration comedy: see Aubrey L. Williams’ *An Approach to Congreve* (1979) for an analysis of the theory’s influence upon Congreve’s comedies.
With its established recognition under governmental oversight, the French Academy came increasingly to treat aesthetic issues through the lens of political utility. For many French neoclassicist theorists, the objective of tragedy was to form spectators into better citizens by representing the earthly reward of virtue and punishment of vice. Critics such as d’Aubignac, Mesnardière, and Rapin emphasized the moral and political utility of the drama in the proper dispersal of rewards and punishments. In *La Pratique du Théâtre* (1657), abbé d’Aubignac insists that the stage offers a “secrète instruction” in virtue to spectators (7). As the 1684 London edition of *The Whole Art of the Stage* translates,

> The most indispensable Rule of Drammatick Poems, is, that in them Virtues always ought to be rewarded, or at least commended, in spite of all the Injuries of Fortune; and that likewise Vices be always punished, or at least detested with horror … (5.)

D’Aubignac sees the stage as so valuable because it can “shew the greatness of a State, either in Peace or War; to inspire the People with Courage, or to instruct them in the knowledge and practice of Virtue” (7). In *La Poètique* (1640), Mesnardière argues that because of the power of spectacle to lead by force of example, tragedy should conclude with the punishment of vice. Thomas Rymer, the originator of the term “poetic

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61 In French, D’Aubignac writes, “La principale regle du Poëme dramatique, est que les vertus y soient toûjours recompensées, ou pour le moins toûjours loüées, mal-gré les outrages de la Fortune, et que les vices y soient toûjours punis, ou pour le moins toûjours en horreur …” (*La Pratique du Théâtre* 8-9).

62 In French, “… soit pour faire paroistre la grandeur d’un Estat dans la paix, ou Durant la guerre, soit pour inspirer au Peuple, le courage, ou pour l’instruire insensiblement en la connoissance des vertus” (*La Pratique du Théâtre* 10).

63 “Mais il touchera son esprit par la force de l’Exèple, qui est extrêmement puissant dans les Spectacles animez, et qui oblige le Poëte de finir la Tragedie par la punition des vices, qui donne de la terreur, et qui est, s’il faut dire ainsi, une Prédication actiue, et un Sermon deliciieux” (216-17).
“justice,” offers his own translation of Rapin’s *Reflexions sur la poétique d’Aristotle*,
which insists that tragedy is “a public lesson of good manners for the instruction of the
world” and lets “men see that vice never escapes unpunished” (282). This French
neoclassical doctrine—that in drama the virtuous should be rewarded and the evil
punished—dominates English criticism as the concept of “poetic justice.”

In arguing for the adoption of “poetic justice,” Thomas Rymer argues that
dramatic poesy can please spectators only if it depicts the equal distribution of rewards
and punishments. According to Rymer in *The Tragedies of the Last Age* (1677), since
history depicts the “unequal distribution of rewards and punishments … a scandal to the
*Divine Providence,*” ancient authors—specifically Sophocles and Euripides—determined
that the poet “must of necessity see justice exactly administered, if he intended to please”
(22). Such poetry is “more philosophical and more accurate” than history (23) and
observes “that constant order, that harmony and beauty of Providence, that necessary
relation and chain, whereby the causes and the effects, the vertues and rewards, the vices
and their punishments are proportion’d and link’d together” (75). The proportional
dispersal of punishments and rewards conveys a sense of order and meaning. While for
Locke, the image of divine judgment should remind us of our uncertainty, Rymer’s image
gives us a sense of stability and harmony.

Despite this affirmation of certainty and order in poetic justice, Rymer’s
prescription is intended to allow for a greater moral ambiguity and complexity in
dramatic characters. For Rymer, an audience needs the religious solace that poetic justice
affords, and poetic justice is possible only if the play’s malefactor commits no more
crimes than can be adequately punished. Poets ought to palliate their characters’ crimes with extenuating circumstances or by remorse, since such ambiguity is the only way to achieve the artistic (or Aristotelian) objective of pity. Following Rymer’s chain of reasoning, “poetic justice”—the proportional rewards of virtue and punishments of vice—ultimately provides a theological rationale for making criminals appear more pitiable and their crimes more tolerable. Even though we might expect poetic justice simply to be reductive, Rymer believes that the theory should allow greater psychological depth in the depiction of the “villain,” and this depth encourages more ambivalence in the audience toward his or her fate.

Rymer’s defense of the ambiguous villain ultimately rests upon a troubling conception of the relation between innocence and punishment. Rymer rewrites the plot of *The Tragedy of Rollo* to manifest poetic justice by having the usurper king’s two innocent sons kill each other: divine justice is vindicated through punishing the sons for their father’s sins (even when that father died in peace). Rymer claims that the sons’ “innocence makes the punishment more signal and extraordinary, and more discovers the

64 Rymer writes that poets “were oblig’d to have a strict eye on their Malefactor, that he transgrest not too far, that he committed not two crimes, when but responsible for one” (27).

65 Rymer writes that because a willful murderer “could never move pity,” the ancients “so qualifi’d, so allaid, and cover’d the crime with circumstances, that … either the causes and provocations before it, or the remorse and penitence … make the Criminal every way a fit object for pity” (28). Rymer advocates this model for the English stage.

66 In *Heads of an Answer to Rymer* (1677), John Dryden may in fact be satirizing Rymer’s concern with pity for a malefactor. Dryden writes, “The pity which the poet is to labour for is for the criminal, not for those, or him, whom he has murdered, or who have been the occasion of the tragedy” (154). Dryden’s emphasis on pity “for the criminal” might suggest an implicit criticism of Rymer: the “pity” is directed more at the murderer than at his or her victim.

67 Rymer writes, “This ungrateful Villain most treacherously murders the King his master, settles himself on his Throne, dies in Peace …” (25).
work of heaven” (25). While we might think that the deaths of innocent people pose a problem for “providential justice,” Rymer claims that their deaths offer greater proof that Providence is at work. Providential activity centers not on the deliverance of the innocent but on the punishment of every transgression. Almost any form of suffering can ultimately be interpreted as a providential punishment.

In Rymer’s formulation, poetic justice appears to have two objectives that are in irreducible tension with each other: to make the spectator both feel pity for the (relatively) innocent malefactor and to make the spectator derive satisfaction from the punishment of that malefactor. The theory paradoxically encourages spectators to sympathize with a (relatively) virtuous character’s distress and to scrutinize that character for flaws which prove that they merit their suffering. This paradox helps us to account for why Colley Cibber’s revised ending in The Provok’d Husband suggests that “poetical justice” in fact demands mercy for the spendthrift wife, Lady Townly. Cibber utilizes Rymer’s term to argue that the playwright was required to save relatively “innocent” characters rather than to punish them. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that Thomas Rymer’s formulation and its appropriation tended to emphasize the idea that every flaw must be punished to reflect providential justice. The concern with providential activity is not with the deliverance of the innocent, but the punishment of every transgression.  

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68 Rymer also notes that the brothers should not be “absolutely innocent,” because “then no Poetical Justice could have touch’d them” (26). Their guilt lay in their failure to offer up the throne to the rightful heir.

69 Admittedly, in A Short View of Tragedy (1693), Rymer criticizes Shakespeare’s Othello because of its lack of reward for the virtuous Desdemona: “Is not this to envenome and sour our spirits, to make us repine and grumble at Providence; and the government of the World? If this be our end, what boots it to be
Rymer’s justification of suffering as providential punishment became integrated into late seventeenth and eighteenth century dramatic criticism. In his preface to the drama *Love’s Victim, or the Queen of Wales* (1701), the playwright Charles Gildon contends that his play observes the strictures of poetic justice, even though his seemingly virtuous heroine, Guinoenda, has died at the end. Gildon insists,

I have borrow’d a Justification of her Suffering from our receiv’d Notion of the Childrens being punish’d for the Parents Offences, and knowing no Crime more capable of justifying that providential Punishment, than Tyranny, I have supposed her Father a Tyrant, and he and his Family unfortunate on that very account…. [Additionally] I at the end of the Third Act, took care to let her Love transport her to fly to the Refuge of a Falshood … which … [could] Justifie her Punishment. (n.p.)

Gildon thus argues that Providence demands the death of a virtuous woman for two reasons: first, because her father was a wicked man, and second, because she told a lie. What is particularly strange about Gildon’s reference to her “wicked father” is that the play makes virtually no reference to him; he has been dead for some years, and Guinoenda mentions him only in passing. Even if it is improper for Guinoenda to tell a lie in order to save her husband’s life, she dies, but her husband, who tells the same lie, survives! As the critic Lewis M. Magill notes in “Poetic Justice: The Dilemma of the Early Creators of Sentimental Tragedy” (1957), what “Gildon is really trying to do is to find excuses for Guinoenda’s death *ex post facto*” (30).

Vertuous?” (161) Nevertheless, Rymer’s condemnation of innocent suffering is inconsistent with his other criticism: when he insists in *Tragedies of the Last Age* that in *Antigone*, “we have every thing just” (34), he glosses over the injustice of Antigone’s death to focus on the “just” punishment of Creon. Even in the case of *Othello*, Rymer seems to question whether Desdemona has actually behaved virtuously, because she is a senator’s daughter who has married a black man; Rymer writes that the “moral” is a “caution to all Maidens of Quality how, without their Parents consent, they run away with Blackamoors” (132).
What makes Gildon’s defense particularly interesting is in how he accommodates his story to fit with “poetic justice” and providential justice. Gildon essentially asks his critics to perform a kind of “close reading” of the play, since the crucial clue for understanding the play’s meaning and the purposes of providence is a mere passing reference to Guinoenda’s tyrannical father. Gildon also asks his critics to perform a kind of “hermeneutics of suspicion” that is directed not at the author, but at the character; instead of criticizing Gildon for killing off his virtuous heroine, Gildon suggests the critics should be censuring Guinoenda for telling a lie. Even though Gildon seems to advocate a kind of deeper reading that closely examines every action of a character, he ultimately encourages a superficial kind of reading: Gildon’s argument asks his readers to direct their suspicions at only some of the characters—not at the husband who tells a lie and lives, but at the wife who tells a lie and dies. Gildon advocates a kind of reading that, because it knows the ending, can retrospectively determine a person’s guilt. Ultimately, Gildon’s rhetorical strategy could potentially interpret all suffering as a divine punishment for wickedness. 70

Gildon’s understanding of “poetic justice” is not unique. In The Dramatic Writings of Will. Shaksper, with the Notes of all the Various Commentators (1785-88), George Steevens discusses the fate of Shakespeare’s heroine, Lavinia, in Titus Andronicus. Steevens writes of Lavinia, “Her subsequent raillery to [the character] Tamora is of so coarse a nature, that if her tongue had been all she was condemned to

70 In Rambler 114 (1751), Samuel Johnson’s objections to capital punishment could just as well be applied to “poetic justice” when it punishes the smallest of infractions with death: “The greater part of mankind … will scarcely believe that two malefactors so different in guilt can be justly doomed to the same punishment;…The heart of a good man cannot but recoil at the thought of punishing a slight injury with death” (208).
lose, perhaps the author (whoever he was) might have escaped censure on the score of poetic justice” (5).

It seems that to Steevens, Shakespeare’s stage direction, “Enter … LAVINIA, her hands cut off and her tongue cut out, and ravished,” is gratuitous. However, the stage direction, “Enter … LAVINIA, her tongue cut out,” would accord with ideal justice. In observing “poetic justice,” writers or critics such as Gildon and Steevens are intent on determining the maximum penalty for a character’s fault. Every word a character speaks can be scrutinized to see whether the character might deserve a torn-out tongue. “Poetic justice” thus offers an artistic rationale for justifying substantial amounts of human suffering.

Even the most visible critics of poetic justice do not object to the principle’s justification of human suffering. Joseph Addison’s criticisms of “poetic justice” in Spectator 40 (1711) largely stem from his identifying “poetic justice” as a prescription for the reward of virtue, much as does Colley Cibber. Addison writes,

The English Writers of Tragedy are possessed with a Notion, that when they represent a virtuous or innocent Person in Distress, they ought not to leave him till they have delivered him out of his Troubles….Who were the first that established this Rule I know not; but I am sure it has no Foundation in Nature, in Reason, or in the Practice of the Ancients. (I:168-9.)

In To the Spectator (1712), Sir John Dennis is quick to defend the principle’s reward of virtue and its classical pedigree. Sir John Dennis insists that “Aristotle was the first who establish’d this … Doctrine of modern Criticism, but Mr. Rymer was the first who introduc’d it into our native Language” (19). As proof of poetic justice’s Aristotelian lineage, Dennis quotes from chapter 13 of Poetics, in which Aristotle writes
“that we must not choose a very good Man, to plunge him from a prosperous Condition into Adversity, for instead of moving Compassion and Terbour, that on the contrary would create Horrour” (Dennis 19). Although Dennis admits that Aristotle prefers the unhappy endings present in Euripides’ plays, he argues that Aristotle does give a “second Preference” for endings which is “favourable to the Good, and fatal to the Wicked” (19). Sir John Dennis’ argument is somewhat misleading, since “second Preference” is simply a euphemism for “last place.” Sir John Dennis thus tries to establish the happy ending as an Aristotelian doctrine.

Sir John Dennis’ defense ultimately undermines the associations of poetic justice with happy endings and rewards. In Spectator 40, Addison lists a number of plays which end unhappily for the “innocent,” including “The Orphan, Venice Preserv’d, Alexander the Great, Theodosius, All for Love, Oedipus, Oroonoko, Othello …[and] King Lear” (Addison I: 169-70). Dennis responds, “there are not two of those which [the Spectator] commends, whose principal Characters can be said to be innocent” (21). By re-interpreting “innocent” characters as guilty, Dennis argues that the representation of the suffering of the supposedly “virtuous” still accords with ideal justice.

In Spectator 548 (1712), Addison reformulates his objection to “poetic justice,” signaling his agreement that playwrights should punish vice and that all dramatic depictions of punishments should be merited. From Addison’s perspective, no one is ultimately virtuous:

71 In the part of the chapter which Dennis does not quote, Aristotle writes that “the pleasure [derived from a happy ending] … is not the true tragic pleasure. It is proper rather to Comedy” (Aristotle 77).
Our Goodness being of a comparative, and not an absolute Nature, there is none who in strictness can be called a Virtuous Man…. This might probably be one reason why the SPECTATOR … took notice … of Poetical Justice …. The most perfect Man has Vices enough to draw down Punishments upon his Head, and to justify Providence … [I do] not say that ill Men may go off unpunish’d…. the best of Men may deserve Punishment, but the worst of Men cannot deserve happiness. (VII: 277)

Both Charles Gildon and Joseph Addison thus agree that even the virtuous deserve punishment. Indeed, Addison could claim Scriptural support for his theology: Romans 3:23 states that “all have sinned,” and Romans 6:23, “the wages of sin is death” (King James Version). On the other hand, Job suffered despite his virtue, and Jesus declared said that a blind man’s blindness had resulted neither from his own sin nor his parents. Regardless of Addison’s Biblical support, our concern here is with the effect of this argument. Both the proponent and the critic of poetic justice appeal to the artistic necessity of punishing the criminal. Both argue that if virtuous characters suffer, their suffering must result from a flaw in their character or from an improper action they commit. As Job’s comforters contended, if one sees a seemingly virtuous man suffering, it must be because of sin.

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72 Job’s friends attribute his suffering to personal flaws: “Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? Or is it gain to him, that thou makest thy ways perfect?... Is not thy wickedness great? And thine iniquities infinite?... Therefore snares are round about thee, and sudden fear troubleth thee” (Job 22:3-10). God eventually rebukes Job’s comforters, “My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath” (ibid. 42:7).

73 “And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him” (John 9:1-3).

74 These similarities offer some support to Richard H. Tyre’s contention in his influential article, “Versions of Poetic Justice in the Early Eighteenth Century” (1957) that “there is nothing contrary in Dennis’ and Addison’s respective positions, that they were, in fact, in close agreement on the fundamental necessity of poetic justice in tragedy” (29). Tyre argues that their argument was governed by two different senses of poetic justice—“literal poetic justice,” which emphasized didactic-ethical concerns and sought a
In his “Postscript” to Clarissa, Samuel Richardson, another critic of “poetic justice,” addresses the challenge that this traditional dramatic convention offers to his novel. After citing Addison’s criticisms in Spectator 40, Richardson as author/commentator claims that Clarissa does in fact accord with poetic justice: all villains are “exemplarily punished” and Clarissa is rewarded with heaven. Richardson affirms his observance of poetic justice by re-defining death as a reward rather than a punishment.

Ironically, Richardson’s most substantial challenge to “poetic justice” may occur in a novel where he never explicitly mentions the theory. As my chapter on Pamela II will show, despite external pressure from readers and from a competing sequel, Richardson refuses to “exemplarily punish” the worst criminals in Pamela II. Readers might be able to approve of mercy and forgiveness when it is extended to the rich, attractive, and powerful, such as when Pamela forgives Mr. B. (and is adequately compensated with marriage). However, it is decidedly inconvenient for an audience’s sensibilities when Pamela wishes to extend this spirit of charity to the ugly, low-born Mrs. Jewkes. As John Gay suggests in The Beggar’s Opera, “poetic justice” inevitably privileges some parties—e.g., the wealthy or the handsome—over others. When John Kelly writes the competing sequel Pamela’s Conduct in High Life, he punishes Mrs. Jewkes by giving her a husband who beats her; by contrast, Richardson depicts Mrs.

 proportionality of rewards, and “liberal poetic justice,” which emphasized aesthetic satisfaction and so necessitated no exact proportionality (30, 35).

Richardson remarks in his “Postscript” to Clarissa, “the notion of poetical justice, founded on the modern rules, has hardly ever been more strictly observed in works of this nature, than in the present performance” (1498), i.e., the novel Clarissa.
Jewkes as a person who deserves care and is given a second chance. It is perhaps the case that *Pamela II* is a more radical text than *Clarissa* is, because *Pamela II* challenges an audience’s predisposition to punish the characters they dislike.

In writing a sequel, Richardson hints at an aesthetic that values what I call “poetic mercy.” In contrast to “poetic justice,” “poetic mercy” puts forward the possibility that characters should not be given “justice” or “punishment,” but second chances instead. It involves Richardson giving the wicked Mrs. Jewkes a chance to prove herself not so immutably wicked. While “poetic mercy” invites second chances (and often “second parts”), the punishments executed by “poetic justice” suggest no take backs: Gildon’s heroine who told a lie to save her husband remains dead, and Shakespeare’s heroine Lavinia cannot reattach her tongue.

This survey of the theorization of “poetic justice” suggests that both the proponents and the most visible critics of “poetic justice” (e.g., Addison in *Spectator* 548 and Richardson in *Clarissa*) shared a predisposition to punish characters at the conclusion of a fictional work. Sequels repeatedly contest not simply the artificial endings of “poetic justice” but the finality of harsh punishments and the opposition to second chances. In the principle of “poetic mercy,” authors revisit former “wicked” characters and treat them more sympathetically. The principle of “poetic mercy” goes hand in hand with the tendency of sequel-writers to devote more time and manifest more sympathy toward perspectives that were marginalized or absent in their earlier novels.

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0.8 Outline

In the first chapter, I connect Daniel Defoe’s “Crusoe Trilogy” to issues of religious tolerance, themes of “justice” and “mercy,” British colonialism, and the limitations of narrative. Critical models which place Daniel Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe in the train of Protestant religious autobiography are inadequate for evaluating Defoe’s sequel, Farther Adventures, because it features the positive portrayal of a French Catholic priest. Influenced by the contemporary controversy over Jansenism in France, Farther Adventures returns to Crusoe’s story to counter prevailing religious and national prejudices against French Catholics. Even though Crusoe befriends a French Catholic priest who prompts him to value religious charity and to re-examine British colonial prejudices, his subsequent Asiatic journey causes him to revert to bigotry and religiously-motivated violence. I argue that this alteration in Crusoe’s attitudes is a consequence of the tendency of narrative to require conflict and action, which subverts Defoe’s ideal of charity and harmony. In Serious Reflections, Defoe consciously rejects narrative form for that of the essay so that he can avoid narrative’s drive to represent conflict and violence.

In my second chapter, I consider how Samuel Richardson’s sequel to Pamela (designated in the eighteenth century as Pamela vols. 3-4), now commonly referred to as Pamela II (1741), dialogically interacts with John Kelly’s competing sequel, Pamela’s Conduct in High-Life. Richardson was both fascinated and repelled by the recognition that a later work can subvert or even erase an artistic work’s meaning through a “double-entendre” or “engraftment.” Richardson’s ambivalence arises partly from the fact that Pamela is itself an “engraftment” upon earlier works (e.g., Psalm 137) which Richardson builds upon yet modifies. I argue that the plots of Richardson’s and Kelly’s competing...
sequels offer radically opposed moral visions: Kelly’s sequel conforms to the readers’ desire to penalize the villains left unpunished in the first novel, while Richardson’s sequel insists on the importance of mercy and charity, even for the wicked.

In the third chapter, I explore Sarah Fielding’s epistolary form in *David Simple*. Even though recent editions of Sarah Fielding’s *The Adventures of David Simple* (1744) customarily include the darker sequel, *Volume the Last* (1753), contemporary editors and critics have virtually ignored Fielding’s earlier sequel, *Familiar Letters Between the Principal Characters of David Simple* (1747). The epistolary form of *Familiar Letters* allows Fielding to challenge the conventional “happy ending” of *The Adventures* by providing multiple stories in which no single character or ending (happy or sad) dominates the work. Modern editions obscure the way *Volume the Last* responds to both of the earlier novels and complicates epistolary form. In *Volume the Last*, Fielding shows how the various episodes in *Familiar Letters* fit into the sequence of David’s life and displays the ways in which villains mimic the friendly candor of epistolary correspondence in order to manipulate and do harm to others.

The fourth chapter examines Frances Sheridan’s *Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph* (1761) and *Conclusion of the Memoirs* (1767). In *Memoirs*, Sheridan explicitly challenges the dramatic theory of “poetic justice,” arguing that the theory encourages spectators to interpret suffering as providential punishment and to make superficial, negative evaluations of characters because they suffer. Sheridan is especially concerned with the theory’s potential effect on the stage, since all dramatic works require governmental approval before performance. Because the novel is not compelled to observe “unity of time,” narrative form is uniquely suited to challenge premature
judgment by offering “more last words.” The first novel uses the prolongation of narrative to expose the flaws of female partiality and rigidity in judgment, while the sequel prolongs the story further to expose the first novel’s failure to condemn male partiality and flexibility in judgment.
CHAPTER 1:

“THERE IS NO HERESY IN TOO MUCH CHARITY”: THE CRUSOE TRILOGY, RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE, AND THE LIMITATIONS OF NARRATIVE

Critical models which read Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) through the lens of Protestant autobiography are inadequate for reading Defoe’s sequel, *Farther Adventures* (1719). Since G. A. Starr’s *Defoe & Spiritual Autobiography* (1965) and J. Paul Hunter’s *The Reluctant Pilgrim* (1966), the influence of Protestant religious autobiography on the composition of Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* has seemed incontestable. Even when economic critics such as Ian Watt and Michael McKeon have disputed the *centrality* of Protestant religious experience in the novel, the distinctively Protestant character of Crusoe’s religious experience remains relatively unquestioned. Crusoe’s religious identity is also often seen as inextricably tied to his British national identity, as in the work of postcolonial critics such as Edward Said. This chapter

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76 Hunter focuses on Defoe’s “Puritan thought patterns” (Hunter xi), and even though Starr examines the influences of Anglicanism and a broader “English Protestant tradition” (Starr xi), he does not discuss any non-Protestant Christian influences on Defoe. In “The Secular Crusoe” (2001), John Richetti describes Starr’s and Hunter’s thesis as “instructive and indeed inescapable” (58).

77 For Watt, the narrative structure of *Robinson Crusoe* “embodied the struggle between Puritanism and the tendency to secularization which was rooted in material progress” (83). McKeon also considers the novel as a “Protestant narrative” which incorporates secular materialism (319).

78 Said writes that Crusoe is “the founder of a new world, which he rules and reclaims for Christianity and England” (Culture and Imperialism 83). This pairing of “Christianity” and “England”
examines Crusoe’s story in the context of religious controversy surrounding the papal bull *Unigenitus*, which complicates the British nation’s understanding of Protestant/Catholic differences and of national identity.

Defoe’s sequel, *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719), calls into question the habitual identification of Crusoe’s religious experience with Protestant spirituality and British nationalism. In *Farther Adventures*, a French Catholic priest teaches Crusoe “how far … have I been from understanding [that] the most Essential Part of a Christian” is “to love the Interest of the Christian Church, and the good of other Mens Souls” (141), and Crusoe learns the importance of religious charity. Crusoe’s recognition of Catholic spirituality is hardly characteristic of standard Puritan autobiography,⁷⁹ and the French Catholic priest defies the first novel’s oppositional categories of Protestant/Pagan and British/Cannibal. The sequel even makes the radical claim that in the first novel, staked out by Hunter and Starr as the province of religious autobiography, Crusoe did not know what it really meant to be a Christian!

Since the sequel raises important questions about the quality of Crusoe’s religious state in the first novel, it should be surprising that critics have largely ignored both

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⁷⁹ While critics such as Michael Seidel have read the years of Crusoe’s exile on the island as a political/religious allegory mirroring the religious “exile” of Dissenters, dating from the restoration of Charles II to the start of the Glorious Revolution with William III (Seidel 366), such an allegory fails to account for *Farther Adventures*. Defoe’s sequel certainly calls for more tolerance than anything advocated in William III’s Act of Toleration, which explicitly excludes Catholic recusants from benefiting by the Act: “neither this act, nor any clause, article, or thing herein contained, shall extend or be construed to extend to give any ease, benefit or advantage to any papist or popish recusant whatsoever …” (403)
Farther Adventures and Defoe’s subsequent sequel, Serious Reflections (1720). 80

Farther Adventures includes a description of Crusoe’s return to the island and his travels in the Far East, and Serious Reflections presents a series of essays on subjects such as solitude, rules for conversation, and the state of religion in the world. The initial commercial success of Farther Adventures is comparable to that of the first part, suggesting that most members of Defoe’s earliest audience were familiar with the sequel.81 The very fact that Serious Reflections had little commercial success from the beginning might cause us to question whether, as Ian Watt claims, Serious Reflections “was primarily put together to cash in on the great success of the first part” (89). 82 In Serious Reflections, Crusoe makes the startling claim that his third work is “not merely the Product of the two first Volumes, but the two first Volumes may rather be called the Product of this:” (A2) If Defoe’s own claims are to be taken at all seriously, his second sequel is not simply an appendage tacked onto the end of an earlier great work; Defoe upsets chronological thinking, claiming that the “sequel” has in fact produced the text that preceded it. Arguably, Coetzee’s critique of Crusoe’s colonial project in Foe has

80 In The Reluctant Pilgrim, J. Paul Hunter consciously excludes Farther Adventures from his study of Crusoe and religious autobiography because the sequel was “separately conceived” (x). Since Robinson Crusoe concludes by giving a partial outline of the sequel’s plot structure (“All these things, with some very surprising Incidents in some new Adventures of my own … I may perhaps give a farther Account of hereafter,” p. 220), Hunter’s claim is somewhat suspect.

81 Defoe’s first sequel, Farther Adventures (1719), had an initial commercial success comparable to the first part, going through seven editions by 1747 (Robinson Crusoe had gone through nine).

82 No single editions of Serious Reflections appeared after 1720 (Hopes 313). As Pat Rogers notes, Serious Reflections was preserved primarily through abridged editions of the entire work (9). Given Defoe’s normal commercial savvy, it would be surprising that he would not choose a more commercial subject if his purpose for writing the work was simply to make money.
received more critical attention than Defoe’s own critique of the first novel in *Farther Adventures*.

While recent critics such as Hans Turley and Robert Markley have argued for the importance of Defoe’s sequels in interpreting *Robinson Crusoe*, they have obscured Crusoe’s concerns with religious toleration and charity. Robert Markley argues that the first half of *Farther Adventures* is largely uninteresting in the classroom because of its “long colloquies about the necessity of religious toleration” and focuses attention on Crusoe’s tense relations to the religious culture of the Far East (30). Markley describes the sequel as lapsing into “nearly hysterical assertions of European—specifically British and Protestant—superiority” (28). Hans Turley represents the later Crusoe primarily as a myopic Puritan who ignores other religious traditions. The analyses of Markley and Turley represent the sequels as reifying Crusoe’s “Protestant” and British identity, while (as I argue) this is precisely what the sequels call into question.

While it is important not to ignore or fail to critique the negative and sometimes violent component of Crusoe’s faith, we do an injustice to the text if we ignore its positive portrayal of religion that advocates charity over violence. Further, we obscure an important development in Defoe as a writer, where he has moved away from the tendency in his earlier writings to depict Catholicism primarily as a common foe to Anglicans and Dissenters. In the sequels, Crusoe’s examination of past religious prejudices prompts him to reconsider his cultural prejudices. It also suggests Defoe

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83 In *Imperial Desire*, Turley generalizes that in the “Crusoe Trilogy,” Crusoe “advocates violence against all those who do not profess his own vision of Christianity” (Turley 4). Turley further claims that Crusoe’s “Christian zealotry is motivated by a radical, dissenting Puritanism that is in complete opposition to the elaborately hierarchical Anglican and Roman Catholic churches” (4). Turley’s generalizations do not account for Crusoe’s positive depiction of Catholicism.
expected and encouraged his readers to observe weaknesses and inconsistencies in
Crusoe’s religious character.

In this chapter, I make two primary arguments. First, I contend that Defoe’s
positive portrayal of Catholicism in the delineation of the French priest becomes
explicable in its broader European religious context, when the French Catholic clergy and
the Vatican were in a polemical debate over the anti-Jansenist papal bull *Unigenitus*. The
French Catholic clergy’s support of Jansenism and opposition to Rome suggested to
many Protestants the possibility of a broader Christian unity that could include both
Protestants and Jansenist Catholics and, for Defoe, an end to denominational hostilities.
An emphasis on religious charity and mercy causes Crusoe in *Farther Adventures* to
reflect on God as a deity that values mercy and charity over “justice” and punishment.

Second, I contend that Defoe’s sequels expose the limitations of narrative form.
Narrative must usually rely upon opposition and action in order to sustain readers’
interest. The first volume of *Robinson Crusoe* linked Crusoe’s embrace of Protestantism
with his new-found appreciation for the “Middle State” (an ideal state of moderation
between two opposing extremes), thus connecting his physical adventures and social
status to a spiritual state. In *Farther Adventures*, Crusoe’s engagement with a new
oppositional force (the perceived threat of Catholicism against Protestantism) allows for
the possibility of the critique of the religious assumptions present in the first narrative.
While the first volume may appear to leave us with an idealized “middle state” and an
idealized religious condition (Crusoe’s Puritan conversion experience on the island),
sequels endlessly contest whether Crusoe has found the *true* middle between extremes
and accurately discerned the workings of Providence. While the prolongation of
narrative may valuably encourage the critical re-examination of earlier assumptions, narrative can be dissatisfying because it seems to demand “variety” and change rather than the “middle state” of moderation, even if that change represents degeneration rather than growth. In narrative, characters’ perspectives on what happens to them are often limited because they cannot see the consequences of their actions. *Serious Reflections* makes the startling claim that the first two volumes of Crusoe’s “narrative” can be completed only by something that is not narrative at all and is not impinged upon by the limited perspective that narrative imposes on characters’ understandings.

In order to address these two concerns of religious experience and narrative form, I will begin with an analysis of the first volume, *The Life and Surprizing Adventures*, arguing that the valorization of the “Middle State” raises special obstacles for narrative, since narrative typically demands action and adventure rather than balance and stability. This idealized “Middle State” is also problematic when applied to religious faith, since Defoe (as a marginalized Dissenter) had suffered persecution from the supposedly “middle way” of Anglicanism. Next, I shall describe the contemporary European religious debate about French Catholicism and the papal bull *Unigenitus*. After that, I shall show how this context informs our understanding of *Farther Adventures*. I argue that Crusoe learns a new ideal of religious charity and moderation from a French Catholic priest, but this moral vision disintegrates as Crusoe feels increasingly culturally isolated. Crusoe’s disintegration helps to account for why Defoe completes the first two volumes of Crusoe’s “narrative” with something that is not narrative at all in the form of *Serious Reflections*. 
1.1 The Unending Search for a Middle: The First Volume of Robinson Crusoe

In the first few pages of *Robinson Crusoe*, Crusoe signals his preoccupation with the “middle State,” not simply as a social rank but as an Aristotelian mean. This middle state is the “Middle of the two Extremes, between the Mean and the Great” (5). According to Crusoe’s father, “the middle Station had the fewest disasters,” and “the middle Station of Life was calculated for all kind of Vertues,” for acquiring the peace of “a middle Fortune” and receiving “the Blessings attending the middle Station of Life” (5). Ironically, the moderate “middle,” because it is middle, offers the final objective word on what constitutes the ideal life, avoiding all extremes. The “middle” is also the “end,” in the sense of a *telos*; it represents an ideal state of completion and affords an ideal perspective on the world around it.

When Crusoe first invokes “the middle state,” it is that which is opposed to fiction as we know it—it is neither the realm of “the Miseries and Hardships, the Labour and Sufferings of the mechanick Part” nor of “the Pride, Luxury, Ambition, and Envy of the upper Part” (5). It is a happiness devoid of struggle (struggle which we might associate with tragic flaws or comic triumphs) and of vanity (the objects of satire). Narrative, in its very form, seems drawn to rely upon extreme conditions and antagonistic force to arouse a reader’s interest—as Arabella in *The Female Quixote* (1752) is counseled that proper ladies do not have “adventures” (327), Crusoe is counseled by his father that only those with “desperate Fortunes” or “superior Fortunes” ever “went abroad upon Adventures” (5). Crusoe seeks to elevate in narrative that which is, by its very nature, averse to narrative—contentment and the opposition to adventure.
Robinson Crusoe must ultimately rely upon oppositional forces in order to elevate the middle way. It is because the young Crusoe disobeys his father—it is because he adventurously departs from “the middle state”—that Crusoe’s private life can take the form of a publicly relevant narrative: “If ever the story of any private Man’s Adventures in the World were worth making Public … the Editor of this Account thinks this will be so. The wonders of this Man’s life exceed all that (he thinks) is to be found extant” (3, italics mine). Without excess, without extremes, there is no novel.84

In order for the first Crusoe novel to give rise to action, the “middle state” must initially serve not simply as a balance between two opposing perspectives and patterns of living (which Crusoe associates with specific social classes); rather, the “middle state” must become an opposing perspective and pattern. At the beginning of the novel, Crusoe has defined himself in struggle with the voice of moderation expressed by his father. Crusoe views this rebellion against his father as his “ORIGINAL SIN” (141), a rebellion against Providence. The “middle state” is Crusoe’s beginning state, which he loses (as Adam lost his prelapsarian state) but learns to value after being marooned on his island.

The value of the “middle state” relies upon experience of extremes in order to validate itself. As Crusoe reflects during his captivity, “we never see the true State of our Condition, till it is illustrated to us by its Contraries; nor know how to value what we enjoy, but by the want of it” (102). The way in which Crusoe discovers his “true State,” however, is not simply by defining that state in contrast to a state at the opposite extreme; the “true State” is in fact composed of two opposing extremes, good and evil.

84 Defoe’s work might call to mind William Blake’s observations in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell that “without Contraries is no progression” (86) and “the road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom” (89).
When Crusoe takes up writing “to deliver my Thoughts from daily poring upon them, and afflicting my Mind” (49), he divides his writing into two separate columns, “like Debtor and Creditor,” listing “EVIL” (e.g., “I am cast upon a horrible desolate Island, void of all Hope of Recovery”) and “GOOD” (“But I am alive, and not drown’d as all my Ship’s Company was”). Where the two-faced Janus can see beginning and end at the same time, Crusoe’s two columns enable him to view good and bad aspects of the same state at the same time.

By separating his list into two columns, Crusoe ultimately creates two separate texts within one. Crusoe employs what I have termed an “intertextual dialogue” in which two texts, juxtaposed together, are mutually informing. The twin columns offer a dual perspective that prevents the oversimplification and reduction of experience—neither the label “good” nor the label “evil” can adequately express the complexity of Crusoe’s true state. By having the two texts juxtaposed to each other (rather than having one follow another, as in the case of The Adventures of Robinson Crusoe and its sequels), neither perspective is privileged above the other. We are reminded by the “good” column that God has treated Crusoe with mercy, but we are also reminded by the “evil” column that Crusoe awaits further deliverance. The island offers its own “middle state” between heaven and hell, between God’s reward and God’s punishment, between Crusoe’s “reign, or my Captivity, which you please” (100)—it is a “middle state,” not in the sense that Crusoe realizes his ultimate telos, but that he exists in a temporary state of transition.

To survive on the island, Crusoe learns he must be capable of avoiding extreme perspectives, or perhaps instead, of viewing the world from two opposing perspectives. As Shaftesbury insists that the best thinker is a “thorough-paced dialogist,” Crusoe
becomes a literal dialogist, repeatedly engaging in audible disputation with himself:

“How canst thou be such a Hypocrite, (said I, even audibly) to pretend to be thankful for a Condition, which however thou may’st endeavour to be contented with, thou would’st rather pray heartily to be delivered from” (83). Crusoe in fact endangers himself when he curtails such dialogue, as when he designs a boat so that he can escape the island: “I pleas’d my self with the Design [of the boat] … not but that the Difficulty of launching my Boat came often into my Head; but I put a stop to my own Enquiries into it” (92). Shutting up this voice of opposition is what almost causes Crusoe’s physical destruction in an accident on the sea. These concerns with dialogism dovetail with the sequel Farther Adventures and the prominence it grants to other religious voices. On the island, Crusoe must learn how to balance competing voices and avoid extremes.

Despite the danger of going to an extreme, the extreme is sometimes necessary for progression. While feverish, Crusoe undergoes a radical conversion experience that is prerequisite to a right understanding of God and the interpretation of his experience. Upon his conversion, Crusoe learns not to blame God but to accept his own responsibility. Yet this religious extreme still poses a danger. In his newfound identification with God, he identifies himself no longer in opposition to his father or to God, but to the godless pagan cannibals: Crusoe “gave God Thanks that … I was distinguish’d from such dreadful Creatures as these” (120). Such thoughts lead Crusoe to thoughts of violence, as “night and day, I could think of nothing but how I might destroy some of these Monsters in their cruel bloody entertainment” (122). In Crusoe’s mind, the cannibals are not even men, but “Monsters,” the unnatural. The more Crusoe identifies himself with one side of a polarized extreme—the more he prays and reads his Bible and
identifies himself with God’s side—the more he may be tempted to distinguish himself from the “non-Christian” and vilify him, turning his fellow men into monsters.

In identifying himself with the opposing perspective offered by the Christian faith, he must necessarily reduce that perspective of its internal complexity. The bloodthirsty Crusoe imagines a God not of mercy toward others but solely of justice and “revenge”: “my Mind was thus fill’d with Thoughts of Revenge, and of a bloody putting twenty or thirty of them to the sword” (123). Crusoe eventually discovers that he has no right to “revenge”: “What Authority, or Call I had, to pretend to be Judge and Executioner upon these Men as Criminals, whom Heaven had thought fit for so many Ages to suffer unpunish’d…. How do I know what God himself judges in this particular Case;… these People were not Murtherers, in the Sense that I had before condemn’d them” (124). Crusoe moves from the close identification of himself with God (through his personal relationship) to a sense of God’s transcendence: God and His ways are unsearchable. Further, despite his solitary confinement, he remembers to judge his actions on the basis of a wider spectrum and consensus of Christian belief, not just Protestantism, remembering that “all other Christian Nations of Europe” and people “of Christian Compassion” have condemned the Spanish for similar barbarous treatment of the natives in America (124-5). Crusoe eventually determines that he was “call’d plainly by Providence” not to execute punishment on the cannibals but to free their prisoner Friday (146).

As the novel continues, Crusoe discovers that the “secret hand of Providence” (197) uses him for multiple deliverances—after rescuing Friday and converting him, Crusoe rescues Friday’s father, a group of Spanish sailors, and an English captain
attacked by a mutinous crew. When Crusoe helps the English captain retake his ship, the captain promises to spare the surrendering sailors, except for Will Atkins, whom he intends to hang (193). Crusoe and the captain finally decide to spare Atkins and leave him, along with the two other worst mutineers, to live with the Spanish sailors on the island. Finally, Crusoe returns home.

At the end of the first volume of *Robinson Crusoe*, Crusoe has decided not to return to Brazil because he entertain’d some Doubts about the Roman Religion … especially in my State of Solitude; so I knew there was no going to the Brasils for me … unless I resolv’d to embrace the Roman Catholic Religion, without any Reserve; unless on the other hand, I resolv’d to be a Sacrifice to my Principles, be a Martyr for Religion, and die in the Inquisition. (218.)

Catholicism represents two threats to Crusoe: a sacrifice of his principles, or a sacrifice of his life. Crusoe chooses the third alternative, to “stay at home” (218). Crusoe’s literal spatial location at the end of this first novel may seem to indicate Crusoe’s own final spiritual state: he has found himself a home in Protestant England. Staying at home seems to protect him from the danger both of religious apathy and of religious violence from an opposing religious community. The novel seems to suggest religious harmony is found through religious isolation. While Jane Barker’s metaphor of a patchwork screen suggests the juxtaposition and integration of different religious voices, *Robinson Crusoe* seems to demand the triumph of one denomination. If not for the challenging existence of the sequel, we might think that Crusoe’s spiritual journey ended in England.

At the end of the first volume, it is clear that while Crusoe’s spiritual journey may have been completed, the depiction of his physical journey has not. Crusoe provides over
a full page sketching his future travels, including his later decision to return to the island and a description of the island’s history during his absence. Crusoe reveals that he did not merely stay at home: after his wife died, his nephew persuaded him to make another journey. In this first novel, Crusoe’s later decision to renew his oceanic adventures seems primarily a result of his nephew’s urgings and his own irrepressible love of adventure: Crusoe was “inur’d to a wandring Life,” and his nephew “drew [him] in … to farther Adventures” (219). At the first novel’s end, Crusoe teases his readers that “All these Things, with some very surprising Incidents … I may perhaps give a farther Account of hereafter” (220).

At the same time that the end of the novel suggests the possibility of a sequel, it offers significant obstacles to Defoe in composing an additional narrative. Since the first novel has already outlined the basic plot of *Farther Adventures*, Defoe has less freedom to change the details of the new story’s plot. At the same time, in order to sustain readers’ interest, Defoe needed to find room within the outline to surprise his readers. Further, Defoe had to make more explicable why Crusoe, after all he had learned, would again leave the “middle state”—the ideal state—to commence wandering again. Writing a sequel demanded that Defoe re-examine the “middle state” and moderation and possibly expose its flaws.

Defoe’s own religious affiliations may have made him especially conscious of the need to distinguish true “middles” or moderation from their counterfeit forms. As a Presbyterian Dissenter outside the established church, Defoe had ample reason to be suspicious of appeals to a “middle” position as it extended to religious beliefs. Anglicanism called itself the *via media*, or “middle way,” claiming to moderate the
perceived extremism of Catholic ritualism and Calvinistic crudity. Nevertheless, the legislative penalization of Dissenters by the Church of England made clear to a Dissenter like Defoe that the truly moderate “middle” was not to be found in the Anglican via media. The very term “moderation” becomes contestable as Presbyterians and high church Anglicans offered competing definitions.85

One particular incident in the first novel seems to have drawn Defoe’s attention in composing his sequel. In the first novel, after Crusoe has converted Friday to Protestantism, rescued Friday’s cannibal father, and rescued the Spaniard, he muses that his island nation “had but three Subjects, and they were of three different Religions. My Man Friday was a Protestant, his Father was a Pagan and a Cannibal, and the Spaniard was a Papist: However, I allow’d Liberty of Conscience throughout my Dominions: But this by the way” (174). Although Crusoe mentions the interaction of Protestant, Catholic, and pagan here merely in passing (“but this by the way”), the interaction of these three types of groups upon the island becomes of critical importance in Farther Adventures. Rather than merely presenting the oppositions of “Protestant” and “Pagan,” the first novel gestures toward a complexity that upsets this simplistic binary opposition. Defoe’s choice to make a Catholic a likable proponent of toleration also provides Defoe with a way to make moderation surprising and to sustain interest through exposing religious tensions.

85 In his sermon On Brotherly Love, Jonathan Swift laments that “Fanatics” (such as Dissenters) have used the term “moderation” to commend people “indifferent enough to all Religion” and “who dislike the Clergy” (142). Swift tells his audience that they must “beware of that word, moderation” (144) and describes the “truly moderate” man as one who is “steady in the doctrine and discipline of the Church” (145).
Elsewhere in his writing, Defoe has indicated his heightened awareness that the espousal of moderation or peace faces significant obstacles if it is expressed in novelistic form. Two years before *Robinson Crusoe*, Defoe wrote a sequel to *The Family Instructor* in which he theorized on the nature of narrative and on sequels. In his “Preface,” he writes the following:

The modern readers of books having a general opinion, which they entertain like a fundamental principle in reading, that second parts never come up to the spirit of the first;…This was the fate of that excellent poem of Mr. Milton’s, called Paradise Regained; which, by the error of common fame, could never obtain to be named with the first.

Mr. Milton himself differed from the world upon the question, and affirmed the latter was the better poem; adding this reason for the general dislike, viz., that the people had a general sense of the loss of paradise, but not an equal gust for the regaining of it; but his judgment, however good, could not prevail. (vii)

As if his manifesto bore repeating, one of Defoe’s characters later makes the similar claim:

It is a more blessed work to tell of the mercies of God to families and persons, than of their breaches and crimes; I think Milton’s Paradise Regained a pleasanter work, though it may not have so much variety in it, than his Paradise Lost, at least there is a greater beauty in the subject….Do you know the reason he gave why the world liked the first part better than the last?… because they had a sense of the loss, but no taste of the recovery. But this by the way. (231)

These “by the way” comments reveal a great deal of Defoe’s insight into the human response to reading. While it might be easy to discount Defoe’s defense of Milton’s sequel as simply a commercial ploy to defend his own, Defoe’s repeated
mention of the instance suggests the example merits further analysis. While it is a “more blessed work” to tell of “mercies” rather than “breaches,” Defoe admits that such a narrative lacks commercial appeal. Readers want to see crime and punishment, not God’s forgiveness and mercy. My later analysis will suggest that Defoe employed his insights into readers’ violent interests in the earlier pamphlets he wrote during the reign of Queen Anne, when Defoe tried to interest his audience in healing the religious breach between Anglican and Dissenter only through worsening the antagonistic breach between Protestant and Catholic.

Defoe’s analysis of human motivation has important implications for the idea of the nature of narrative. Rather than conceiving of popular narrative as the search for the discovery or recovery of paradise or an ideal, popular works offer a prolonged exploration of a loss of perfection. From Defoe’s description, it seems the popular writer’s goal is to thwart consummation, or at least not to represent happiness long enough to become dull. As D. A. Miller suggests in *Narrative and its Discontents* (1981), “Narrative proceeds toward, or regresses from, what it seeks or seems most to prize, but it is never identical with it…. The presence of what is sought or prized …

\[86\] In Volume VIII of Defoe’s *Review*, a similar passage on Milton’s *Paradise Regain’d* is printed in the August 18, 1711 issue. (I am indebted to Edward G. Fletcher’s “Defoe on Milton” for calling attention to this passage.) Defoe writes, “The Famous Mr. Milton wrote two Poems, *Paradise lost*, and *Paradise regain’d*, which tho’ form’d in the same Mould, the Work of the same bright Genius, yet have met with a most differing Reception in the World; the first passes with a general Reputation for the greatest, best, and most sublime Work now in the English Tongue…. The other is call’d a Dull Thing, infinitely short of the former, nothing to compare with it, and not like the same Author, and this is the Universal Opinion of the Age about these two Books: Mr. Milton [answered]… I see the Reason plainly, why this Book is not liked so well as the other, for I am sure It is the better Poem of the two, but People have not the same Gust of Pleasure at the regaining Paradise, as they have Concern at the loss of it, and therefore they do not relish this so well as they did the other, tho’ it be without Comparison the best Performance.” Since Defoe repeats this observation in two separate works spanning several years (the 1711 *Review* issue and the 1717 *The Family Instructor* volume), the idea seems to have been important to Defoe.
signal[s] the termination of narrative” (3). The power of narrative is in its ability to show us struggle rather than perfection.

Defoe’s comments make substantial claims about the evaluation of art. Despite the superiority Defoe perceives in Milton’s sequel, the critics and the common readers have both disliked it. Art may thrill readers with its description of alienation and loss, but the best art may alienate its readers specifically because it moves beyond alienation to recovery, because the hero of Milton’s novel is not the flawed Adam (or Satan, as some readers prefer) but the flawless Christ. By focusing on mercy and recovery, Milton has placed his own judgment in tension with that of “the world.” Defoe, whom some treat simply as a “hack” writer, admits the artistic superiority of the unpopular and seems to manifest in his prose-writing the desire to move beyond loss and violence.

In the first novel, Defoe seems to have negotiated this balance between the artistic ideal of representing God’s “mercies” while satisfying his readers’ cravings for “breaches and crimes.” In Robinson Crusoe, Defoe apparently fulfills his desire to celebrate the moderation of the “Middle State” and his novelistic need to provide excitement to his readers through the use of extreme conditions (e.g., Crusoe’s sense of isolation on the uninhabited island), extreme experiences (e.g., the shipwreck and Crusoe’s conversion), and oppositional relationships (e.g., Crusoe’s rebellion against his father and God and his later hatred of the cannibals). In Farther Adventures, facing a similar artistic dilemma between the representation of “mercies” and of “breaches,” Defoe seems to find a solution in the character of the French Catholic priest. While popular prejudice might consider the priest a threat to the security of Protestant England, the novel represents him as the ideal manifestation of charity and mercy. This Catholic protagonist can thus
function both as an adversarial extreme and a moderate center to exemplify charity. A sustained description of the major religious controversies in France and England during the time Defoe composed *Robinson Crusoe* helps illuminate Defoe’s narrative choices and positive portrayal of Catholicism.

1.2 European Religious Context and Influences on Farther Adventures

At the time Defoe was writing *Robinson Crusoe*, England was in the throes of religious and political controversy. Despite the replacement of the Catholic monarch James II by the Protestants William and Mary in the “Glorious Revolution” of 1688, England feared a Jacobite rebellion when Queen Anne’s crown passed to the unpopular German Hanoverian George I. In a bid to reclaim the throne, James II’s son and Catholic heir, James Stuart, sent expeditionary forces to invade Scotland in 1715. Catholicism represented a palpable threat to England’s political and religious identity.\(^{87}\)

In his earlier work, composed during the reign of Queen Anne, Defoe uses the image of the Catholic menace to argue for healing the breach between Anglicans and Dissenters and gaining Dissenters civil rights. Following his *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters* (1702) in its polarized opposition between Dissenter and Anglican, Defoe writes several follow-up pamphlets to unite these two categories by introducing a more-menacing third party, Catholicism. This category disruption anticipates Defoe’s later

\(^{87}\) Gordon Rupp notes that rumors of Catholic-spurred rebellions arose in 1696, 1700, 1706, 1715, and 1722 (Rupp 185). Expeditionary forces in support of the exiled Stuart king even landed in Scotland in 1708 and 1715 (Colley 24). As Colin Haydon notes, from 1717-1724, there were multiple reports of Catholic plots on a local and multinational scale, including groups such as the Swedish-Jacobites and the Spanish-Jacobites (118-124).
choice in *Robinson Crusoe* to upset the oppositional categories of Protestant English Christian and pagan cannibal with a third category, French Catholic.

In *The Shortest Way to Peace and Union* (1704), Defoe emphasizes the need for “a temper of Charity and Love” to bring together Anglicans and Dissenters (3). Repeatedly, Defoe unites Anglicans and Dissenters not under a common English or Christian identity but an explicitly Protestant identity: Defoe repeatedly upholds “the General Protestant Interest” (3), “a General Union of Protestants” (4), and “the prosperity of the Protestant Interest” (4). In *The Paralel: [sic] Or, Persecution of Protestants the Shortest Way to Prevent the Growth of Popery in Ireland* (1705), Defoe escapes the categorical opposition between the Established church and Non-Conformists by emphasizing the need to distinguish between two kinds of Non-Conformists: Irish Papists and Irish Dissenters. The danger of Catholicism places the dissenting tradition into a positive light.

A further role of Catholicism in Defoe’s pamphlets is to question Anglican’s self-representation and sense of identity. According to Defoe, rather than serving as a middle course between the two extremes of Catholicism and Presbyterianism, Anglicanism has become more extreme and bloodthirsty than even Catholicism. In *More Short Ways with the Dissenters* (1704), Defoe describes his high-church enemies as “so empty of Charity, that we [Dissenters] are under *Diabolical Prejudices*, and consequently *cannot be sav’d out of your Church*, this is Popery in its Exalted Extreams” (13). Defoe thus represents anti-dissenter prejudice as participating in the same spirit of intolerance as exhibited in the contention that there is no salvation outside the Catholic church. The Anglican “Episcopal Tyranny” in Scotland has martyred more Christians than in “the Bloody
Reign of [the Catholic] Queen Mary” (17). Rather than challenging Catholicism’s established reputation of persecution, Defoe’s intent is to identify high-church Anglicanism and Catholicism in a shared spirit of hostility toward nonconformity and individual religious conscience. The *via media* thus becomes the very extreme of Catholicism that it claimed to avoid.

At the same time that Defoe exposes high-church Anglicanism’s failure to avoid extremes, Defoe is under the rhetorical necessity of demonstrating that moderation is not Christian lukewarmness: paradoxically, ideal religion must be both “moderate” (i.e., charitable) and extreme (i.e., zealous). In More Short-Ways (1704), Defoe answers the objection that the low-church “Men of Moderation” have actually “cast the [Anglican] church into a dead Sleep” (18). Defoe answers that the “Men of Moderation” are in fact a model of vibrant activity, preferring to be imprisoned for upholding the law rather than falling back on excuses such as “passive obedience” and “non resistance” (19). When true Christianity is “reduce’d to the last extremity” (18), principled moderation necessarily expresses a positive extreme and undergoes persecution.

Defoe’s rhetorical strategy as implemented in these pamphlets is to resolve the opposition between these two religious communities by focusing on a third party that is even more foreign and threatening. The integration of Dissenters and Anglicans ultimately depends upon exclusion. Defoe pressures Anglicanism to re-define itself as distinct from Catholicism by giving up the extreme spirit of persecution characteristic of the Catholic spirit. At the same time that Defoe advocates avoidance of extremism, his religious vision paradoxically embraces a positive form of extremism found in
“moderation” and suffering persecution. By employing such strategies, Defoe seeks to unite Anglican and Dissenter against the Catholic threat to Protestant English identity.

It is surprising that, twenty years after writing such pamphlets, Defoe was attacking the widespread national fear of Catholicism. In *The Great Law of Subordination Consider’d* (1724), Defoe writes,

> there is a kind of national Aversion among them [Englishmen] to Popery; ’tis the universal Scare-crow, the Hobgoblin, the Spectre with which the Nurses fright the Children, and entertain the old Women all over the Country … that I believe there are an 100000 stout Fellows, who would spend the last Drop of their Blood against Popery, that do not know whether it be a Man or a horse. (20.)

Even if we may take for granted that Britain’s national identity became deeply intertwined with its Protestant religious identity (as described in Linda Colley’s historical work *Britons*), many Protestants came to examine the possibility of religious unity with Catholic France following the Catholic controversy over the bull *Unigenitus*. In 1685, when Louis XIV revoked the 1598 Edict of Nantes (an edict which had ended the religious wars in France by granting the Huguenots religious liberties) and allowed increased persecution of French Protestants, France seemed an implacable foe to Protestantism and an agent of religious oppression. However, with the publication of the 1713 Latin papal bull *Unigenitus Dei Filius* (which derives its names from the bull’s first words), Catholic France became an apparent victim of religious persecution by the Vatican. *Unigenitus* offers a condemnation of 101 propositions found in the Jansenist Pasquier Quesnel’s translation and Biblical commentary in *The New Testament with Moral Reflections upon every Verse*. The bull declares (in the 1713 published English/Latin bilingual edition) that the propositions are
seditious, wicked, blasphemous, suspected of Heresie, and favouring of Heresie, and also favouring Hereticks, Heresies and Schism too, erroneous, bordering on Heresie, often condemn’d, and in fine, also Heretical, and notoriously reviving several Heresies, and chiefly those which are contained in the infamous Propositions of Jansenius. (37.)

Before the condemnation by Unigenitus, Jansenism had permeated French culture, influencing the work of major French writers such as Jean Racine and Blaise Pascal. Jansenius was the Catholic author of the religious treatise *Augustinus de Gratia* (1640), which claimed to explicate Augustine’s predestinarian theology and teaching on grace. Jansenists espoused religious tenets comparable to many within Protestant Calvinist theology, stressing human depravity, complete dependence upon God’s grace, and personal piety. (Defoe’s own roots were in Presbyterianism, which affirmed the Westminster standards, a product of Calvinism.) Informed by Jansenism, Pascal insists in *The Penseés* (1670) that true orthodoxy lies in perceiving “the agreement between two opposite truths” (271), such as that human nature is composed of both “greatness” and “wretchedness.” Jansenism was perceived as reconciling the excesses of both contemporary Catholicism (as represented by the Jesuits) and Protestantism.

The harshness of the Vatican’s condemnation of Jansenism ultimately proved its undoing. Cardinal de Noailles, the archbishop of Paris, insisted that the Pope’s censure appeared to “condemn many Truths of Religion, and the Ordinary Language of Piety” (*The Act of Appeal* 4). When Noailles refused to allow his priests to accept Unigenitus without further explanation from the Vatican, he was met (in his words) with “Decrees of

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88 In Latin: “...seditiosas, impias, blasphemas, suspectas de heresi, ac heresim ipsam sapientes, nec non hereticis, et heresibus, ac etiam schismati faveant, erroneas, heresi proximas, plurias damnatas, ac demum etiam hereticas, variasque hereses, et potissimum illas, quae in famosis [sic] Jansenii propositionibus” (36).
the Inquisition” from the Vatican (ibid. 7). When Noailles submitted The Act of Appeal against a papal threat of excommunication, he received nearly unanimous support from his fellow French bishops. His appeal received substantial attention in the English popular press, and because of the nearly unanimous consensus of the French clergy on the appeal, France became identified with Jansenism. In its conflict with the Vatican, Jansenists were quickly identified as victims of religious oppression and as champions of religious tolerance.

The Jansenist controversy came at an extremely meaningful moment in England’s own search to define what it means to be a Christian. At the time, England was undergoing the “Bangorian controversy” (named after Benjamin Hoadly, the Erastian Bishop of Bangor) in which theologians debated whether the Anglican Church had the power to discipline Dissenters as heretics. English writers repeatedly interpreted their own controversy through comparison with the Pope’s attempt in Unigenitus to discipline

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89 A French-English edition of Noailles’s The Mandate of His Eminence ... for the Publishing the Appeal (1718) and an English translation of Noailles’s The Act of Appeal (1717) appeared in separate publications and were substantially excerpted in the popular press and other works. Annals of King George, Year the Sixth (1720) publish the Mandate in its entirety, and The Evening Post and The Post-Man included generous excerpts from The Mandate. The Daily Courant has reproduced The Act of Appeal virtually in its entirety.

90 The dean and Chapter of the Metropolitan Church of Paris adopted Noailles’s Act of Appeal twenty-seven to one. The same day, forty-one parish priests of Paris, the university, and the suburb voted unanimously to support the cardinal’s appeal. The London Gazette observes that the bishops “agreed unanimously, except one only out of twenty eight Person.”

91 The controversy originated with Hoadly’s tract, A Preservative against the Principles and Practices of the Non-Jurors (1716), which responds to George Hickes’s harsh non-juror attack on Anglicanism in the posthumously published work, The Constitution of the Catholic Church and the Nature and Consequences of Schism (1716). However, the controversy becomes more vocal in response to a 1717 sermon, The Nature of the Kingdom, in which Hoadly argues that “all [Christ’s] subjects are equally his Subjects; and, as such, equally without Authority … to interpret his Laws so, as to claim the absolute Submission of Others, to such Interpretation” (30). To many observers, Hoadly’s argument undermined the authority of the Anglican Church and implied that Dissenters deserved greater civil rights.
the Jansenists. Sympathy with Jansenists led many English Protestants to appropriate Jansenist spirituality for Protestant use, and many believed the *Unigenitus* controversy suggested a future religious unity between Protestant England and Catholic France: the title page of the English translation of the bull called Quesnel “the Present Luther of France,” associating him with the Protestant Reformation. As a “Luther of France,” Quesnel in his Jansenism represented the possibility of a broader unity across national and present denominational differences.

Defoe himself explicitly engaged in the *Unigenitus* controversy. In 1717 (two years before the publication of *Robinson Crusoe* and *Farther Adventures*), Defoe translated *A Curious Little Oration, Deliver’d by Father Andrew, concerning the present great quarrels that divide the clergy of France*. In the story of *A Curious Little Oration*, the Jansenist Father Andrew promises to recant his Jansenist errors after his

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92 For example, *A Reply to the Remarks upon the Lord Bishop of Bangor’s Treatment of the Clergy and Convocation* (1717) declares that the Bangorian controversy is “like the Affair of the Constitution Unigenitus” (4). *An Answer to Mr. Stebbing’s Miscellaneous Observations upon Some Passages in the Bishop of Bangor’s ANSWER to the REPRESENTATION* (1719) notes that the term “heresy” in England “may signify either a Bangorian or a Committee-man; and, in France, either an Imposter or an Opposer of the Constitution Unigenitus” (7).

93 For example, Richard Russel’s translation of Quesnel’s *New Testament with Moral Reflections Upon Every Verse* (1719-1725) has a subscriber list spanning fourteen pages, suggesting substantial support of his project. In his preface, Russel remarks that he has edited the work to remove “popish errors” for his Protestant audience (x).

94 See also *A Short History of the Famous Constitution, or Bull Unigenitus* (1720), which declares that Jansenism in France “opens the First Scene of a probable Reformation in France” (2). Similarly, in *The Destiny of Rome* (1718), John Toland foretells the doom of the papacy primarily on the basis of “the divisions about the Constitution Unigenitus … [which] have led me into a strong persuasion, that the Papacy cannot stand long, or rather that it will be destroy’d in a very short time” (18-19).

95 P. N. Furbank and W. R. Owen have discovered that the work really does appear to be a translation, since the Bodleian Library possesses a tract entitled *Extrait D’un Ecri’t intitulé: Les Bons Mots du petit pere André* which in some places corresponds word for word with *Curious Little Oration* (328). “Father Andrew” refers to the preacher André Boulanger, a well-known Jansenist and member of the Reformed Augustinians (*ibid*).
Jesuit enemies give him the “Paper” (i.e., *Unigenitus*) listing his heresies (9). In his following Sunday sermon, Father Andrew recounts a dream in which Jesus appeared before him to accuse him of heretical beliefs. After interrogating Father Andrew, Jesus traced back the sources of Andrew’s heresy: it can be traced back through Thomas Aquinas, St. Bernard, St. Augustine, to St. Paul, who learned it from the Holy Spirit. Upon this discovery, Jesus exonerates the Jansenist and condemns the Jesuits.

*A Curious Little Oration* not only argues for the pedigree of Jansenist doctrines but includes extensive footnotes to document the presence of proto-Jansenist doctrines within the church fathers. For English readers, these footnotes make Catholic “church fathers” not a mere abstract body but real individuals marked by personal piety and humility. There is a striking irony in the curious fact that, two years before Defoe would define the archetypal Protestant hero in *Robinson Crusoe*, his time was spent footnoting Catholic theologians.

Given Noailles’s reception in the English press and Defoe’s own references to *Unigenitus* in *Little Oration*, we have reason to believe that Defoe was personally acquainted with *Unigenitus*. The document lists 101 objectionable propositions made by Quesnel, and a number of these propositions hold thematic relevance for *Farther Adventures*. The condemned proposition 12 insists that “When God will save a Soul, the undoubted Effect follows the Will of God, in whatsoever time, in whatsoever place” (*Unigenitus* 13), and Noaille insisted in *The Act of Appeal* that by censoring this proposition, nothing less is at stake than the “Omnipotence of the Will of God upon the Heart of Man” (9). Like Crusoe, Jansenism emphasizes the power of Providence to fulfill its decrees and transform the heart. The Jansenist propositions 45-58 repeatedly state the
importance of “charity,” or “love,” as when proposition 58 states, “there is neither God nor religion, where there is no charity” (Unigenitus 23). The condemned proposition 100 insists,

in vain does a Person flatter himself with the purity of his Intentions, and a certain Zeal for Religion, by persecuting good People with Fire and Sword, if he’s blinded with his own Passions, or carry’d away with those of others, because he’ll examine nothing. We often think to sacrifice a wicked Man to God, and we sacrifice a Servant of God to the Devil. (Unigenitus 35.)

For Protestants, such claims marked Jansenists as a symbol of tolerance in a way that separates them from Catholicism in general. The condemned propositions’ insistence on the importance of religious charity and tolerance also concern Defoe’s sequel.

This brief survey of Jansenism demonstrates that the Unigenitus controversy led to further examination of the religious differences separating Protestants from Catholics. It seems that this atmosphere occasioned a radical shift in Defoe’s rhetorical strategy: earlier, Defoe had attempted to coax tolerance by uniting Anglicans and Dissenters against a Catholic menace. After the Unigenitus controversy, Defoe suggests that religious charity could unite all of Christendom. Farther Adventures further suggests that this transformed perspective on religious difference will lead to the love, rather than

96 Even if Jansenists may have intended “charity” to refer primarily to the “love of God” rather than “brotherly love,” many English readers interpreted Jansenist references to “charity” in the latter sense. For example, in Some Accounts of the Late Inclinations to Popery (1717), B. Grosvenor writes, “I am persuaded, there is always the least Schism, where there is the most Brotherly-love and Moderation;... For that reason I do not believe Father Quesnel of so schismatical a Spirit, who understood Christianity so well, as to assert ... there is no God, nor Religion, where there is no Charity” (19-20).

97 For a more complete overview of the Jansenist controversy in France, see McManners, pp. 345-422.
fear, of the island cannibals and an emphasis upon God as a God of love rather than of hatred.

1.3 *The Farther Adventures*: Punishment and Charity

In *Farther Adventures*, Crusoe’s motivation for undertaking new adventures takes on a richer psychological and religious complexity than is suggested at the end of the first novel. After seven years of living in “middle Life,” Crusoe dreams of the three mutineer sailors still on the island: acting as judge, Crusoe “brought them to Justice … and order’d them all three to be hanged” (4). Crusoe’s impulse to travel arises not simply from wanderlust but bloodlust, the desire to execute justice and punishments upon the men left on the island. Like Milton’s readers, Crusoe is more interested in conflict than in mercy.

Determining Crusoe’s motivation for travel is crucial for understanding the story. The critic Markley writes that Crusoe’s dreams “reveal little about what Crusoe wants to do when he returns to the island or what the moral significance of his obsession might be” (30). To the contrary, *Farther Adventures* hints that Crusoe’s first intended order of business will be to execute the wicked sailors left there.\(^98\) Crusoe’s dream of “justice” is essentially a search for “poetic justice,” through the deliverance of the oppressed Spaniards and the punishment of the wicked British sailors.

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\(^98\) Markley describes the novel as “theologically coercive” because, once Crusoe lands on his island, he insists “that administrative and juridical control depends on reclaiming sinners, notably the hell-raising Will Atkins” (30). Nevertheless, it seems that Crusoe’s concern with the reclamation of sinners acts as a decisive condemnation of religious violence and the punitive measures which Crusoe had initially desired. This eventual “theological coercion” is in fact a radical critique of Crusoe’s initial impulse to fulfill his dreams by killing the sailors.
Far from seeing the dreams as a manifestation of his own desires, Crusoe interprets the dreams as a communication from Providence. Crusoe’s wife counsels him to interpret the dreams as a message from God: “If Heaven makes it your Duty to go, he will also make it mine to go with you, or otherwise dispose of me, that I may not obstruct it” (5). Providence literally disposes of her, and with “one Blow from unforeseen Providence,” Crusoe’s wife is dead (7). In the earlier novel, God punished Crusoe’s rebellious desires to take to the sea rather than stay at home; now, it appears that God is punishing Crusoe for staying at home rather than going to the sea.

Crusoe’s decision to accept his nephew’s offer has a religious motivation that was never suggested in the first novel: Crusoe resolves “it would be a Kind of resisting Providence” to stay at home (12). At this point in the novel, it seems that Crusoe has really received a mandate from heaven to return to his island and to fight the depraved sailors whom he should have killed, especially Will Atkins, whom he had planned to kill in the first novel (Crusoe 193). We seem to be reminded that the first novel ends unsatisfactorily because it has left the wicked unpunished. Even if the “Middle State” is an ideal, it is incomplete if it isolates itself from an outside world that still needs justice.

Having raised readers’ expectations of justice and punishment, the novel proceeds to challenge these assumptions. During Crusoe’s actual voyage to the island, his assumptions about justice and Providence’s purposes for his visit are called into question. En route to his island, his ship rescues a French ship in distress. Crusoe begins to wonder if “perhaps [we] were directed by Heaven on Purpose for their Deliverance” (24). A perceived duty to implement punishment becomes momentarily eclipsed in the desire to relieve human misery, even if it is for foreigners.
Crusoe finds that the incident complicates his opinions of the French. Initially, the rescued French appear to confirm his national and religious prejudices about undisciplined Catholics. Crusoe moralizes that their exuberant gratitude for their rescue is a negative characteristic: “[I]f an Excess of Joy can carry Men out to such a Length beyond … Reason, what will not the Extravagances of Anger, Rage, and a provok’d Mind, carry us to?” (22) Nevertheless, Crusoe finds his national and religious expectations challenged in his meeting with a French Catholic priest he rescues. In a comic misunderstanding, Crusoe mistakes the priest’s falling to the ground as a swoon and tries to help him up. Crusoe is surprised that the priest responds calmly, explaining to Crusoe that he has fallen to the ground in thanksgiving to God, and he needs a few more minutes of prayer before he can thank his human deliverer. Crusoe indicates a curious attentiveness to the duration of the priest’s prayer in observing, “he continued in that Posture about three Minutes, or little more” before expressing his gratitude to Crusoe (22). Failing to conform to stereotype, the priest surprisingly integrates excess with measured control.

After befriending the priest, Crusoe brings him along to the island. Crusoe describes the religious quandary that the Catholic priest poses for himself and for his readers:

It is true, this Man was a Roman, and perhaps it may give Offence to some hereafter, if I leave any thing extraordinary upon Record, of a Man, whom, before I begin, I must, (to set him out in just Colours) represent in Terms very much to his Disadvantage, in the Account of Protestants; as first, that he was a Papist; secondly, a Popish Priest; and thirdly, a French Popish priest. (130)
Crusoe’s overtly ambivalent feelings toward the priest may be especially surprising given the contemporary support of some elements of French Catholicism in the news. It should be remembered that, despite increased Protestant acceptance of French Catholicism, many popular prejudices remained. Even after presenting Crusoe’s disclaimer, Defoe received harsh criticism for his positive depiction of Catholicism. In his satire *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Mr. D—de F—of London* (1719), Charles Gildon presents a mock dialogue between Defoe and his creation Crusoe. Crusoe complains to Defoe, “you all along made me very fond of Popish Priests and the Popish religion” (viii). In the satire, Gildon depicts the religiously naïve Defoe as resolving, “tho’ I am now pass’d sixty five, I am just setting out for a Ramble thro’ all Religions, and therefore liquor my Boots first with *Holy Water* and the Sacred Unctions of Popery; and next, I don’t know but I may step to *Mahometism*” (xiv). Defoe’s tolerance of Catholicism could make him a laughingstock if he were not sufficiently guarded in his approbation.

Another reason accounting for Crusoe’s compunctions about the priest’s religious and national affiliations is that the events Crusoe describes takes place before the *Unigenitus* controversy. Crusoe begins his journey in 1694 (*Robinson Crusoe* 219), when England was at war with France, and France supported the Catholic Stuart line for the English throne. For readers who were conscious of the *Unigenitus* controversy, Crusoe’s apology serves as the ironic reminder that, twenty-five years before the *Unigenitus* controversy, many good Protestants had given up on France as a possible ally. The categories of “friend” and “enemy” are ultimately unreliable because nations (and individuals) are capable of change. Crusoe’s deference to the categories and his
apologetic preface (“perhaps it may give Offence”) prepare for Defoe’s eventual subversion of the use of such categories as “French,” “Papist,” “Pagan,” and “enemy.”

Crusoe repeatedly manifests unease at how positively he is compelled to portray the priest. “Justice demands” he represent the priest as a “most religious Person; exact in his Life, extensive in his Charity, and exemplary in almost every thing he did” (131). Crusoe defends his choice to call him a “zealous Priest”: “I must call him so; for, be his Opinion what it will, he had certainly a most singular Affection for the Good of other Mens Souls; and it would be hard to think he had not the like for his own” (153). Crusoe is torn between fidelity to his earlier categories and fidelity to truth in the accuracy of description. “Charity” and godly “zeal” are not the sole province of Protestantism.

In Farther Adventures, the most charitable and moderate characters are rarely Protestant or British. On the island, Crusoe not only praises the Spanish Catholics, but substantially criticizes the English sailors. “In Justice to these [shipwrecked] Spaniards” on the island, Crusoe observes that they “were so universally Modest, Temperate, Virtuous, so very Good-humor’d, and so Corteous,” despite the “unsufferable Usage of the three English Men” (89). Although Edward Said describes Crusoe as ruling his island “for Christianity and England” (83), in the sequel, Crusoe is clearly suspicious of claims to British national superiority.

In his earlier pamphlets, Defoe had typically introduced Catholicism to resolve Anglican/Dissenter differences in their mutual focus on the threat of a third party. By contrast, in Farther Adventures, a representative of Catholicism becomes a positive guide. Rather than emphasizing the “Protestant interest,” Farther Adventures emphasizes the “general Principles” and “general Rules” all Christians share (135). Crusoe learns
“how far … I have I been from understanding [that] the most Essential Part of a Christian” is “to love the Interest of the Christian Church, and the good of other Mens Souls” (141). The “Church” is here understood not as Anglicanism or even more broadly as Protestantism, but a more inclusive religious community.

At the end of the first novel, Crusoe anticipated that a return to Catholic Brazil would result in either his own apostasy or suffering of persecution. Now on his own mission to exercise violence against criminals, Crusoe reassesses his own beliefs when confronted with a model Christian who emphasizes mercy. Crusoe struggles with his disbelief that the priest could be so charitable; almost comically, Crusoe insists to the priest that he must believe Crusoe is going to hell. Crusoe tells him, Protestants “are in your Account out of the Pale of the Catholick Church, without which you believe there is no Salvation; so that you esteem these but Hereticks” (158-159). The priest responds,

I embrace all the Principles of the Roman faith:…nevertheless, I do not look upon you, who call your selves Reform’d, without some Charity:… I say, I dare not say, that you cannot be sav’d: I will by no means limit the Mercy of Christ so far, as to think that he cannot receive you into the Bosom of his Church in a Manner to us unperceivable … and I hope you have the same charity for us…. In the mean time, sure you will allow it to consist with me, as a Roman, to distinguish far between a Protestant and a pagan. (159)

While the beginning of the sequel seemed to emphasize the uncompromising demands of God’s justice, the priest insists that it is the “Mercy of Christ” which is truly limitless. This emphasis corresponds to the principle of “poetic mercy,” a characteristic I have identified in connection with sequels. Christ’s mercy can save both Protestant and Catholic regardless of their differences and bring them together “in a Manner to us unperceivable.” The priest’s emphasis on charity toward others also echoes the
condemned Jansenist proposition that “there is neither God nor religion, where there is no charity” (*Unigenitus* 23). Marveling at the priest’s charitable spirit, Crusoe remarks, “I must tell you, that if you should preach such Doctrine in *Spain or Italy*, they would put you into the *Inquisition*” (161). (Since English newspapers had already reported the French Jansenist Cardinal de Noailles’s references to the Inquisition, Crusoe’s remark has specific historical relevance.) The priest makes the bold claim, “I know not what they might do in *Spain or Italy*, but I will not say they would be the better Christians for that Severity, for I am sure there is no Heresy in too much Charity” (161).

Crusoe’s interaction with the Catholic priest transforms not only his attitudes toward Catholics, but to the oppositional categories of “civilized” and “savage.” In the first volume of Crusoe, Crusoe finds comfort that “I was distinguished from such dreadful Creatures” as the cannibals (120). In the sequel, distinctions are harder to maintain. Will Atkins is notoriously the worst of the English sailors and the best candidate for Crusoe’s crusade for justice, earning for himself not the title of “Englishman” but “Savage” (158). Nevertheless, the priest’s zeal for Atkins’s future leads not to his death, but his conversion. Will Atkins’s name may carry an allegorical resonance, suggesting that no human “will” is so depraved that an individual is incapable of reformation, and that he is “kin” to the other English. (Rather than seeming anomalous, Will Atkins’s brutality would remind Defoe’s readers of what the English are easily capable of becoming.) Atkins’s conversion offers a further manifestation of the limitlessness of Christ’s mercy and what the Jansenist Noailles calls the “Omnipotence of the Will of God upon the Heart of Man” (*Act of Appeal* 9). Where Crusoe’s impulse was to kill the body, Christianity’s goal was to liberate the heart.
Atkins’s conversion also destabilizes Crusoe’s confidence in his own righteousness. When Atkins repents that he has “murdered” his father, he explains to a confused Crusoe that he did not physically kill him; he killed him in his heart, through a spirit of rebellion. Conversion calls for an extreme re-evaluation of what constitutes violence. Crusoe sees in Atkins a mirror of his own life as a prodigal son, and Crusoe is so moved by the sincerity of Atkins’s conversion that he must “retire” (163).

Atkins shakes Crusoe’s confidence not only in his own superiority, but in that of English culture. Crusoe expresses his doubts to Atkins whether Atkins’s “savage” wife can understand the need for marriage because of their culture: the cannibals “marry any how, without Regard to Relation, Consanguinity, or Family, Brother and Sister; nay, as I have been told, even the Father and Daughter, and the Son and Mother” (164). Atkins corrects Crusoe, “I believe, Sir, you are misinform’d, and my Wife assures me to the contrary, and that they abhor it” (164). Even though Crusoe has been living many years with his faithful Friday, he is still prone to make sweeping and even absurd generalizations about cannibals and their culture.

There are some limitations within the priest’s model of ideal Christian charity. The conception of “mercy” does not really encourage “Christian” and “pagan” to coexist peacefully. Instead, its purpose is to allow for the transformation or conversion of an individual from the “pagan” category into the “Christian” category. Nevertheless, the emphasis on the boundlessness of mercy radically transforms how justice and charity are conceived. It promotes openness to revising one’s prejudices about a person and his/her group and talking to people instead of killing them. Crusoe moves beyond his solitary religious conversations with God on his island to ecumenical dialogue.
After Crusoe has seen the fruit of the French priest’s labors end in conversion, Crusoe leaves the island to continue his voyage. From this point, conflict and hatred come increasingly to dominate Crusoe’s narrative. Crusoe explicitly regrets the loss of the priest’s stabilizing influence as he recommences his wandering: “How happy had it been for me, if I had gone with him [the priest]! But it was too late now…. I must leave here the fruitless examining at my self, and go on with my Voyage” (203). Much as Defoe’s audiences preferred “breaches and crimes” to God’s mercy, so Crusoe finds his voyage increasingly driven by his own violent desires.

At the beginning of this new voyage, Crusoe wrestles with the role of religious moderation as his voyage takes him to non-Christian cultures. After amicable trade with Indians under a banner of truce, the Indians inexplicably engage in a surprise attack and carry off the sailor Thomas Jeffrey. Crusoe discovers that the attack was provoked by Jeffrey’s having earlier abducted and raped a young Indian woman who had been selling herbs. A number of the sailors resolve to loot the Indian town in retaliation for the attack.

When the plundering sailors arrive, they are horrified to discover Jeffrey’s body hanging naked with his throat cut, and they seek revenge by massacring the village. Crusoe comes to retrieve the men and is horrified by the devastation they wrought:

I had heard of Oliver Cromwell’s, taking Drogheda in Ireland, and killing Man, Woman, and Child. And I had read of Count Tilly’s sacking of the City of Magdeburg, and cutting the Throats of 22000 of all Sexes. But I never had an Idea of the Thing it self before, nor is it possible to describe it. (217)

It is hardly accidental that Defoe has Crusoe compare the massacre of a non-Christian people with the casualties of religious massacres, committed both by Protestants and Catholics. Where the priest cannot limit the “Mercy of Christ,” Crusoe
cannot capture in language the seemingly limitless scope of human rage. Even though Crusoe claims he “never had an Idea of the Thing it self before,” it was on his island that he gratified his imagination “with Thoughts of Revenge, and of bloody putting twenty or thirty” natives to the sword (Robinson Crusoe 123). Crusoe sees his own twisted fantasies of revenge on the island now mirrored by the sailors and carried out upon the Madagascar natives on a massive scale. Crusoe had finally asked himself in the first novel, “What Authority, or Call I had, to pretend to be Judge and Executioner upon these [cannibals] as Criminals” (124), and now we see that human arrogance in arrogating a divine prerogative makes people monstrous: Crusoe sees “such Instances of a Rage altogether barbarous, and of a Fury, something beyond what was human” (217). The true monsters are not the cannibals, who may observe the flag of truce, but the sailors driven by the force of hatred.

Disturbingly, even as Crusoe recoils in horror at the massacre, he admits after seeing Jeffrey’s throat cut that “I confess, I was urged then my self, and at another Time would have been forward enough” to attack the natives too (220). Crusoe is tempted to violence at the very moment he sees its dreadful results. These contradictory impulses highlight the fascination that conflict and hatred holds for someone who ought to know better and who has experienced the power of mercy and love.

Crusoe’s attraction to violence enables Defoe to sustain readers’ interests while elevating religious charity and mercy as a response not simply to other Christians, but to non-Christian nations. The spirit of charity and mercy stand in dramatic tension with the spirit of hatred and punishment. The result of Crusoe’s condemnation of the massacre is to make him an outcast, much perhaps as Defoe’s Protestant “Men of Moderation” were
penalized for taking their own dramatic stand for their faith. Crusoe’s criticism of the massacre angers the men so much that Crusoe’s own nephew puts him off the ship. Crusoe’s insistence on mercy has caused him to break with his own countrymen and family.

Finding himself abandoned in a remote location, Crusoe meets with an English merchant who suggests they travel to the Far East. After they purchase a ship and set sail, they are mistaken for the pirates (the ship they bought had apparently been stolen), and English and Dutch ships pursue them. Crusoe fears that his pursuers, intent on revenge, will “act the Murderers to punish Robbers” (258), killing him first and asking questions later. The tendency toward suspicion and the desire to punish endangers not just the natives of Madagascar in the massacre, but the “honest” Englishman abroad.

In his reflections on the incident, Crusoe manifests his own tendency toward fear and suspicion. Crusoe writes,

as I often said, I know not but I should have been apt to have taken those Circumstances [of the stolen ship] for Evidence, if the Tables were turn’d, and my Case was theirs, and have made no Scruple of cutting all the Crew to Pieces, without believing, or perhaps considering, what they might have to offer in their Defence. (264.)

Charity is necessary not simply in one’s response toward religious difference but toward any situation of conflict, and Crusoe observes that he might have been just as prone to violence if the situation were reversed. Defoe is able to dramatize tolerance by representing Crusoe and the men on his ship as victims of misplaced rage and the desire for “justice.”
As Crusoe moves farther into the Far East, he becomes increasingly less charitable. He repeatedly makes himself “merry” by ridiculing Chinese culture and when he hears “incredible Things of their Performance in Crockery Ware,” he knows intuitively that “it could not be true” (290). He insults the great wall of China as “this mighty Nothing call’d a Wall” (292). The earlier sympathies Crusoe expressed toward religious and cultural differences have given way to ridicule of Asian culture. Crusoe seems to lose the concerns with charity that were central to his friend the French priest.

This tendency toward ridicule becomes exacerbated to the point of violence when Crusoe discovers an idol in the Muscovite dominion. Crusoe finds himself “turn’d to Rage” by the image (308). Resolving to destroy the idol in order to show the natives it holds no power, he receives the advice of his friend, a Scottish merchant, who asks,

But how will it vindicate the Honour of God?... while the People will not be able to know what you mean by it, unless you could speak to them and tell them so, and then they will fight you, and beat you too, I’ll assure you, for they are desperate Fellows, and that especially in Defence of their Idolatry. Can we not, said I, do it in the Night, and then leave them the Reasons and Causes in Writing in their own Language? Writing! said he, why there is not a Man in five Nations of them that know any thing of a Letter…. Wretched Ignorant! Said I to him; however … perhaps Nature may draw Inferences from it to them, to let them see how brutish they are. (309.)

Where the French Catholic priest would have encouraged the love of the natives to seek their conversion, Crusoe is absorbed with the possibility of destruction. Crusoe’s frustration becomes almost comically temperamental, as Crusoe complains that he cannot simply destroy the idol in secret and leave behind a note of theological explanation. Crusoe is so intent on an act of destruction that he will look for any way to justify the action, no matter how absurdly meaningless the action becomes.
Crusoe’s hatred for the idol extends to the worshippers. After the Scottish merchant decides to join Crusoe in his act of destruction, he warns Crusoe that a Russian Christian had once affronted an idol worship ceremony and was consequently killed. Crusoe responds,

Well … I’ll tell you a Story; so I related the Story of our Men at Madagascar, and how they burnt and sack’d the Village there, and kill’d Man, Woman and Child, for their murdering one of our Men … and when I had done, I added, that I thought we ought to do so to this village. (311.)

Crusoe, once horrified by the Madagascar massacre, now recommends it!

Crusoe’s inconsistency in recommending the very action that had earlier horrified him is hardly accidental on Defoe’s part. Plunged into a civilization he knows nothing of, Crusoe responds to religious and cultural tensions not with the desire to convert but to annihilate. Farther Adventures shows a Crusoe who, on his island, learns more about Christian love than he had ever known, as well as a Crusoe who, off his island, has become consumed with hatred. Crusoe moves from the apparent extreme of the Catholic priest’s moderation to the extreme of religious intolerance.99

Crusoe carries out his plan to destroy the idol, preferring not to kill the villagers “if it was possible to be avoided” (313), but still willing. He sets fire to the idol, binding several men and women to witness the idol’s failure to save them, and runs away. The next day, Crusoe complains that the people, “in a most outrageous Manner, demanded

99 I am indebted to discussions with Christopher Fox and with Benjamin Fischer, who have both observed that Crusoe’s vitriolic response to the pagan idol may indirectly represent Defoe’s misgivings concerning Catholicism’s use of statues in worship. Despite Defoe’s sympathies with Jansenist theology, Catholic iconography and the role of the saints would probably have been quite troubling to him as a Presbyterian.
Satisfaction” of the governor of the region for the destruction (315). Crusoe’s condemnation of other people’s “outrageous manner” is hardly convincing given his own act of vandalism at night. Because Crusoe and his companions keep silent about their activity, they succeed in leaving the region, and Crusoe returns to England on January 10, 1705. 100

*Farther Adventures* is a complex novel. While it begins with Crusoe’s apparent calling by Providence to punish and kill criminals on an island, it offers characters mercy and transformation. It initially seemed that the Catholic priest, because of his foreignness, might offer the possibility of representing God’s “mercies” while it satisfies the desires of Defoe’s readers for “variety,” but by the novel’s end, Crusoe himself becomes obsessed with enacting religiously motivated violence. If the critic Robert Markley is right in saying that Crusoe’s tense interaction with the Far East is the most interesting part of *Farther Adventures*, it is because the work pictures the monstrous, not the ideal. While the first half of *Farther Adventures* represents the artistic ideal of *Paradise Regained*, the second half represents the degeneration of *Paradise Lost*. *Farther Adventures* exposes the limitations of narrative by showing that, just as action and conflict may lead to Crusoe’s growth in compassion, further conflict can lead to disintegration and blind hatred. As I shall show, *Serious Reflections* provides Defoe with a model that seems capable of countering these weaknesses in narrative.

100 The year 1705 is also an important date for Jansenism. Before *Unigenitus* (1713), the 1705 bull *Vineam Domini* imposed a formulary against the five Jansenist propositions.
1.4 *Serious Reflections* and the Transcendence of Narrative

*Serious Reflections* offers a marked departure from *Robinson Crusoe* and the *Farther Adventures* in its shift from adventurous narrative to a collection of essays. It includes essays on solitude, honesty, immoral conversation, the state of religion, the voice of Providence, the interaction of Christianity and paganism, and a vision of the angelic world. As the critic Jeffrey Hopes argues, it is unlikely that Defoe would write this third volume simply to “cash in” on the popularity of the originals, given the work’s laborious character and low commercial appeal (314). Hopes argues that Defoe seeks to reassert authorial control in response to critics such as Charles Gildon who attacked Defoe’s apparent Catholic sympathies and the narrative’s improbability.

While the third volume can be seen primarily as a self-defensive maneuver by Defoe, it can also be seen as offering a critique of narrative form and of human activity. In chapter 4, the narrator Crusoe specifies what distinguishes this third volume from the earlier volumes:

> In the Part of my Work, which may be called History, I have frequently mention’d the unconquerable Impressions which dwelt upon my Mind … which push’d me continually on, from one Adventure to another…. There is an inconsiderate Temper which reigns in our Minds, that hurries us down the Stream of our Affections, by a kind of involuntary Agency, and makes us do a thousand things … even without the Concurrence of our Understandings…. You may now suppose me to be arriv’d … to the Scene of Life, we call Old Age; and that I am writing these Sheets in a Season of my time, when (if ever) a Man may be supposed capable of making just Reflections upon things past, a true Judgement of things present, and tolerable Conclusions of things to come. (119-120)

In *Robinson Crusoe* and *Farther Adventures*, Crusoe continually strives for a “middle state” and an ideal moderation that continually eludes him. So often does he mistakenly interpret the purposes of Providence that, rather than being the active hero of adventure,
he becomes an automaton with “involuntary Agency” that must obey his passions.\textsuperscript{101} The form of an essay grants Crusoe an emancipation from the impotence he experienced in his earlier “History.” We could say that the essay form makes Crusoe almost godlike: the etymology of the term “Providence” refers to God’s ability to “see things before they happen,” to know past, present, and future in their entirety. Crusoe’s vision employs the old Christian motif of imagined flight above the petty concerns of the world; it is the perspective of Chaucer’s Troilus, whose death enables him to escape an earthly perspective to embrace a heavenly one.\textsuperscript{102} Crusoe’s imagined heavenly perspective suggests that the narrative form of the first two novels in fact obscures the Christian message and biases moral judgment. By writing from the perspective of old age, Crusoe insists that it is the closest he can come rightly to making “just Reflections” upon past, present, and future. The form of this third volume permits Crusoe to find the middle between the different excesses of his youth. Where the French Catholic priest represented an ideal charity that Crusoe lost, old age represents the possibility of its recovery. It is only in old age—in the defiance of narrative—that Crusoe can experience true freedom from passion.

In choosing essay form, Crusoe discovers a form of novelty that realistic narrative cannot provide. Essay form enables the writer to escape from the constraints of

\textsuperscript{101} We might consider Johnson’s thoughts on fiction and narrative in \textit{Rambler} \textit{4}: “if the power of example is so great, as to take possession of the memory by a kind of violence, and produce effects almost without the intervention of the will, care ought to be taken that, when the choice is unrestrained, the best examples only should be exhibited” (14). Just as Crusoe is carried along powerlessly by his passions, there is the danger that the power of Crusoe’s example will render the reader incapable of restraint and “the intervention of the will.” The urge to use essay form rather than narrative can be seen as the attempt to offer an alternative to the power of example for a more abstracted perspective.

\textsuperscript{102} Chaucer describes Troilus’s soul floating to heaven: “And ther he saugh with ful avysement/The erratic sterres, herkenyng armonye/With sownes ful of hevenyssh melodie” (V.1811-1813).
probability. In “A Vision of the Angelick World,” Crusoe imagines himself liberated from the world and gravity itself: “my Imagination, always given to wander, took a Flight of its own; and as I have told you that I had an invincible Inclination to travel, so I think I traveled … over all the Mazes and Wastes of infinite Space” (26) into the air. Raised up “in the Confines of this vast Abyss,” Crusoe sees “how little, how mean, how despicable every Thing look’d” (26). Crusoe continues musing,

Could a Man subsist without a supply of Food, and live but one Mile in perpendicular Height from the Surface, he would despise Life and the World at such a Rate, that he would hardly come down to have it be all his own;… could we always look upon the Things of Life with the same Eyes, as we shall do when we come to the Edge of Time, when one Eye can as it were look back on the World, and the other look forward into Eternity, we should save ourselves the Trouble of much Repentance … we shall see more with half an Eye then, and judge better at first Glance, than we can now … (27)

On the literal level, the “perpendicular” height is Crusoe’s imaginative ascent from earth into outer space, but on the symbolic level, it is the transcendence of Crusoe’s finite perspective. It is more than simply seeing into the future (“one eye on eternity”) because it ultimately gestures toward the transcendence of time (both “one eye on eternity” and one on “the world”). This perspective can take in the entire world at once because its vantage point is outside the world. Crusoe desires to wander not simply the horizontal plane, but the vertical plane that connects to the spiritual “invisible world,” to move from the horizontal to the perpendicular. In doing so, he undermines the desire for the linearity of narrative. This world—the world of strife and activity, of desert islands and shipwrecks and cannibals—is ultimately too confining and closed off.

103 Although included in Serious Reflections, this essay has separate pagination.
In Defoe’s earlier narrative, the vertical/spiritual plane intersects with this world in the form of violence, as when in *Farther Adventures*, Providence intervenes to strike down Crusoe’s wife. The linearity of narrative may in fact depend upon such vertical interventions—seeming accidents, chance encounters, and unanticipated events. Such accidents may not so much reveal providential relief (e.g., a *deus ex machina*) as human impotence and caprice: Crusoe has no power to save his wife, and once he is separated from the priest, he cannot control his hatred. When Crusoe lacks positive interventions, he becomes a slave to “unconquerable Impressions” and cannot control the direction his story (119). Yet in Crusoe’s wandering imagination, rather than Providence descending in a brutal insertion in this world (through his wife’s death) or simply leaving him in his ignorance, Crusoe *ascends* the perpendicular: no longer does the vertical intrude, but elevate.

This invisible world offers Crusoe a picture of peace that is impossible in the present world and in tension with alternate models of envisioning the future. The picture of Christ’s coming offered in the Book of Revelation represents a Christ “clothed with a vesture dripped in blood … dressed in a robe dipped in blood …. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with he should smite the nations … and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God” (Rev. 19:13-15). Crusoe offers a far different picture of Judgment Day in “An Essay on the Present State of Religion in the World”:

There all our unkind, unchristian, unneighbourly, unbrotherly Differences will end….There we shall see, that there have been other Flocks than those of our Fold, other Paths to Heaven than those we shut Men out from;…no Divisions, no Differences, no charging sincere Minds with Hypocrisy, or embracing painted
Hypocrites for Saints; every thing to be seen, and to be known, as it really is, and by a clear Light. (176)

This ideal picture of religious reconciliation undermines the critic Hans Turley’s generalization that in the “Crusoe Trilogy,” Crusoe “advocates violence against all those who do not profess his own vision of Christianity” (Turley 4). Crusoe does not “scruple to call the Greek Church Christian” (240) and insists that both Catholics and Protestants are guilty of using persecution as a practice (171). While Crusoe may privilege Protestantism over other segments of Christianity,104 he offers a remarkable critique of uncharitable tendencies within all divisions of Christianity.

Crusoe offers a great deal of criticism directed at his own country. After criticizing the religious state of other countries, Crusoe describes his reaction to a public proclamation of general thanksgiving to God for a victory over the French. At first, Crusoe is excited at the people’s apparent piety: “I began to call myself a thousand Fools, that I had not sav’d myself all this Labour [of looking for true religion], and look’d at home first” (162). Yet upon further reflection, Crusoe ponders whether the English people are only grateful to God on occasions when he grants them a military victory (162-63). When Crusoe attends the religious celebration, hoping to see “some strange Seriousness, and religious Thankfulness” (163), he watches the crowds “treading upon one another, and stifling one another, at such a rate … it looke’d something like a Battle, where the wounded were retir’d to die … for there lay Heaps of Women and Children

104 For instance, despite calling the Greek Church “Christian,” Crusoe is critical of the church because it is “in some Places so blended with Superstition, and barbarous Customs” (241).
…” (164) Rather than exhibiting love or kindness, the people crowd and push each other. Crusoe’s dream of true religion is utopia in its etymological sense of being no place.

Crusoe’s frustration with the religious state of all nations may make him more sympathetic even toward pagan practices. In reflecting on cannibalism, Crusoe notes that cannibals eat only select groups, i.e., prisoners of war: “I see little Difference between that and our Way, which in the War is frequent in Heat of Action, viz. refusing Quarter; for as to the Difference between Eating and Killing those that offer to yield, it matters not much…. in their other Conduct, those Savages were as human, as mild, and gentle, as most I have met with in the World” (132). “Savages” may be kindlier than their European counterparts.

Despite Crusoe’s remarkable tolerance for non-Christian practices, Crusoe still believes that the “Gospel of Peace” (252) necessitates some violence in the present world. Crusoe’s Christian commitments cause him to advocate an equivocally martial position in relation to non-Christian nations. Crusoe writes, “I am not much of the Opinion indeed, that Religion should be planted by the Sword: But as the Christian Princes of Europe … are yet so superior to all the rest of the World in martial Experience … they are able to beat Paganism out of the world” (250). Without being of the opinion that “Religion should be planted by the Sword,” Crusoe seems to advocate just that. For several pages, Crusoe describes a plan that seems impossible in the present world: Crusoe advocates a “bloodless Conquest” (252), a “War not with Men, but with the Devil” (254). Crusoe’s desire to see the present world reflect Christian morality leads him to adopt a confusing stance that supports the “gospel of Peace” through the violence of religious jihad. He seeks a war only with the Devil, but a war which involves the killing of fellow men.
Crusoe sees that his “propos’d war” and his Christian beliefs are in some tension. Crusoe emphasizes that, although Christians should mandate the abolishing of pagan temples, they should not punish pagans for refusing to believe in Christ: “For if we believe that Faith … is the Gift of God, how can we upon any Christian Foundation, punish or persecute the Man for not exercising that which God had not given him” (256). Crusoe is caught in a tension between his ideal—a world full of Christians who love each other and love their pagan brother as God’s creature—and the present situation, a world with religious hatred not only between Christian and pagan, but between Christian and Christian. Crusoe seeks for a war that is not a war (a “bloodless Conquest,” perhaps recalling the peaceful “Glorious Revolution”), a war that can be consistent with Christian charity but materialize Christianity on a world-wide scale.

We should not neglect the dangerous religious violence implicit in Crusoe’s rhetoric. Crusoe would hardly be permitting pagans to choose Christianity freely if he were to destroy all their temples and outlaw idolatry. There is the danger that Crusoe can discover Christian unity only by marshalling Christian princes against a common, non-Christian threat. Nevertheless, what is perhaps most interesting about this passage is not its implicit religious violence so much as Crusoe’s implicit idealism. He dreams of a world in which all Christians achieve unity, and pagans freely convert. This is why Crusoe’s depiction of Judgment Day is not concerned with martial violence, but with peace and unity, with seeing “other Paths to Heaven than those we shut Men out from” (176). Crusoe’s advocacy of a war that is not a war is impractical, a desire for a world of peace which, for Crusoe the Christian, is only achievable in the future. It is only at Christ’s coming that everything will be seen “as it really is, and by a clear Light” (176).
While the future may offer complete clarity and reconciliation, the present is characterized by obscurity and prejudice. Crusoe presents the case of the Christian who “thinks verily he has found out [a Christian] Mystery effectually” so that he reads Scripture simply to confirm himself “immoveably in his receiv’d Construction,” finding the matter to be “so clear” that anyone who disagrees becomes an enemy (169). In the earlier novels, Crusoe had appreciated the “plain instruction” in Scripture (Robinson Crusoe 160), yet here Crusoe in principle calls any claim of certainty into question, even his own. Interpretation of Scripture, like the interpretation of Providence, must be ever subject to challenge. Even if Crusoe is repulsed by the “wandring travelling Life” that has caused him to fluctuate between extremes (119), he also sees the danger in immobility and confirmed prejudice. It seems that Crusoe’s only solution to this tension between blind wandering and blind immobility is through an escape from the confines of history and ascending in his “perpendicular” height.

Even from this vantage point, Crusoe expresses his frustration that he can see no peaceful possibility of reconciliation before Christ’s return. Crusoe remarks that reconciliation between different sects of Christianity “’Tis impossible to be done,” or perhaps possible only through external persecution, the “very great Reconciler of religious Differences” (177-8). Without persecution, Christians are often incapable of the humility and spirit of charity that unity requires. This bleak prognosis for Christian unity corresponds with Defoe’s understanding of his readers’ response to his writing. In his earlier writing, Defoe had tried to encourage charity between Anglicans and Dissenters by emphasizing the external threat of Catholicism. In The Family Instructor, Defoe lamented his readers’ inability to remain interested in God’s “mercies” and paradise.
regained. If Christians are not persecuted by an outside force, they will just persecute each other. At the same time that Crusoe envisions a future world of perfection, he becomes more convinced that such a world cannot exist in the present. Crusoe’s ideal of a “bloodless Conquest” must inevitably compromise the Christian convictions it was intended to propagate.

The commercial failure of *Serious Reflections*, far from reflecting negatively on Defoe’s judgment, validates his apparent cynicism about his readers’ interests and the possibility of Christian unity. The *Unigenitus* controversy did not ultimately lead to a broader Christian unity between English Protestantism and French Catholicism, and England’s religious and national identity become more interconnected in the decades that follow. Both *Farther Adventures* and *Serious Reflections* risk the danger of falling into the espousal of the very religious violence that they sought to critique. Even if “the Fable is always made for the Moral” (A2), the explication of the “Moral” in *Serious Reflections* is today largely unread, while the “Fable” of the first volume is mass-produced. As is the case with his predecessor Milton, Defoe’s audience is more interested in breaches and the loss of paradise than peace and paradise. Although in the third volume, Crusoe may have made his perpendicular ascent into a world of striking clarity and imagination that sees beyond narrative, this act has launched him into contemporary obscurity and the neglect of his readership.
CHAPTER 2:

SECOND TEXTS AND SECOND CHANCES: *PAMELA II* AND THE FRIGHTFUL ALLURE OF THE DOUBLE-ENTENDRE

Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela II* seems to offer a clear instance in which a sequel arises as a defensive maneuver in re-asserting authorial control. As Richardson himself claims in his “Preface” to *Pamela II*, he would have written no sequel if he were not “provoked into a Necessity” of doing so by John Kelly’s competing sequel, *Pamela’s Conduct in High-Life* (iii). In “The Life of Samuel Richardson” (1804), Anna Barbauld describes Richardson’s sequel as “less a continuation than the author’s defense of himself” (lxxvi). Elizabeth Brophy writes that many incidents in the sequel were “designed to counter criticism of the original novel” (42), and Kinkead-Weekes remarks that sequel-writing allowed Richardson “to some extent to defend himself” (72). As Keymer and Sabor note in *Pamela in the Marketplace* (2005), Richardson’s sequel partly arises as a defense of his “right of property” to Pamela’s story and against competing sequels, notably John Kelly’s *Pamela’s Conduct in High-Life* (59).\(^\text{105}\) *Pamela II* seems to

\(^{105}\) Richardson’s advertisements against John Kelly’s sequel frequently appeal to Richardson’s “rights”: In two advertisements in *The Daily Gazetteer* (dated May 30, 1741, and June 1, 1741), *The London Evening Post* (dated June 23-25, 1741), two issues of *The Daily Post* (dated June 1, 1741, and June 2, 1741), Richardson “assert[s] his Right to his own Plan.”
spring largely from Richardson’s desire to defend his authority against others’
“Ingraffments,” and it is often viewed as an artistic failure.\footnote{As Terry Castle generalizes, “Literary historians have had only disparaging words for the second Pamela” (131). Eaves and Kimpel describe Pamela II as “Richardson at his worst—pompous, proper, proud of himself, and above all dull” (153). In A Natural Passion (1974), Margaret Doody’s sympathetic description of the composition of Pamela II still identifies the work as “The Sequel that Failed” (71).}

In this chapter, I argue that Richardson’s response to engraftments and to “double-entendres” (or “double-meanings”) is less antagonistic and more ambivalent than it might initially appear. Richardson in fact employs the language of “engrafting” to describe how Pamela transforms and improves upon the texts she reads. According to Terry Castle, Pamela II attempts to “erase [the audience’s] memory” of ambiguities within the earlier work Pamela: Richardson seeks to remove all linguistic confusion and “double-entendres,” and any remaining double-meanings are largely accidental (137). I argue instead that Richardson was both fascinated and repulsed by the double-entendre, not because it allows for a “double meaning” but because it often seems to erase prior meanings. In the interaction between Pamela and Sir Simon Darnford in Pamela II, Richardson finds a way for “good” and “dirty” interpretations of language to coexist.\footnote{As Kinkead-Weekes remarks, Richardson employs a “modulation between the saucy and the serious” (84).}

Second, I argue that “testing” provides a helpful frame for understanding the relation between the sequel and its seemingly dull subject matter (i.e., domestic life). In The Tested Woman Plot (2001), Lois Bueller describes how the sequel allows for “a test of [Pamela’s] ability to defuse B’s jealousy” (147), and Kinkead-Weekes notes that the sequel “allows [Richardson] to test his heroine again” (72). The sequel’s concern with whether Pamela can pass Mr. B.’s tests—whether she can continue to please him \textit{after}
marriage—is a reflection of Richardson’s own preoccupations with whether *Pamela II* can continue to please his critics and pass the test of artistic merit. As Samuel Richardson remarks to his brother-in-law James Leake, “Second Parts are generally received with Prejudice” (44), and as Florian Stuber suggests in “*Pamela II*: ‘Written in Imitation of the Manner of Cervantes,’” Richardson was extremely self-conscious of the social stigma attached to sequels.108 Pamela as a character and *Pamela II* as a sequel are both preoccupied with whether spectators (either husbands or readers) can continue to value merit when the excitement is gone.109 As Pamela is in danger of being replaced in Mr. B.’s affections by a high-born countess, Richardson the author is in danger of being replaced in his audience’s affections “by a Gentleman more conversant in High Life.”110

While critics presume that the sequel is the work being tested, it is in fact the sequel that tests the reader. Pamela’s virtue under duress implicates Mr. B. for his failure properly to value her, and the sequel’s lack of action is intended as a critique on readers’ own predilections for excitement. Toni Bowers suggests that “the problem is not that

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108 In describing the possible influences of Cervantes’s *Don Quixote* on the composition of *Pamela II*, Stuber highlights how both authors were preoccupied with issues of “intellectual ownership” in the face of a competing sequel (55). Both Pamela and Quixote face similar dilemmas in the construction of identity because most of the characters they meet (in their respective sequels) have already read the previous narrative of their lives: both Pamela and Quixote must determine, “How is one’s private life to relate to his or her public image?” (56) My own work expands on Stuber’s insights into private/public relations by showing how Richardson’s own concerns with what we might term the “public infidelity” of Richardson’s audience informs his representation of private infidelity by Pamela’s husband.

109 According to *The Universal Magazine*, LXXVIII, Richardson’s daughters confirmed that “it is thought that [Samuel Richardson] held *Pamela II* in much higher estimation” than the first two volumes (qtd. in Eaves and Kimpel 149). Richardson thus seems confident of the artistic merit of his sequel. In arguing for the importance of *Pamela II*, Florian Stuber claims that, “in terms of its content, the sequel is perhaps the most influential novel written in the century” (66).

110 The June 3, 1741 issue of *The Daily Post* advertises *Pamela’s Conduct in High Life* by describing the author in those terms. It further describes Richardson as “the vain Author of *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded*.” I have been unable to verify whether this advertisement was written by Kelly, his publisher Chandler, or a third party.
nothing happens so much as that what happens does not conform to traditional critical standards” (153). According to Betty A. Schellenberg in “Enclosing the Immovable” (2001), Richardson’s sequel structures its narrative “upon a model other than one of conflict” (76). As Defoe’s *Farther Adventures* and *Serious Reflections* challenges narrative’s tendency toward conflict and punishment, so too does Richardson consciously challenge readers’ desires for more action. Even though Richardson had earlier recommended the punishments of “poetic justice,” the sequel advocates the vision of “poetic mercy” and the possibility of second chances for seemingly incorrigible villains.

### 2.1 Engraftments

In the pamphlet war against John Kelly’s *Pamela’s Conduct in High-Life* (1741), Richardson refers disparagingly to Kelly’s work as an “engraftment.” After Richardson had learned that the publisher Chandler was hiring John Kelly to write a continuation of *Pamela*, Richardson remonstrated with him. In a letter written in August, 1741 to his brother-in-law James Leake, Richardson describes the conversation:

Chandler … told me that he understood I had said, I had neither Leisure nor Inclination to pursue the Story [i.e., write a sequel]. I told him it was true … but that was upon a Supposition no one would offer to meddle with it, in which case I had resolved … to do it myself; rather than my Plan should be basely Ravished out of my hands, and, probably, my Characters deprecated and debased, by those who knew nothing of the Story, nor the Delicacy required in the Continuation of the Piece…. and I urg’d … the Baseness as well as Hardship it was, that a Writer could not be permitted to end his own Work, when and how he pleased, without such scandalous Attempts of Ingrafting upon his Plan…. I saw all my Characters were likely to be debased, and my whole Purpose inverted;… *(Selected Letters* 43-44, italics mine.)
In describing his “plan” as “basely Ravished,” Richardson employs the sexually
connotative language of rape to describe his own sense of violation. While Pamela may
have escaped rape by Mr. B. once and for all, Richardson’s own plan can never
definitively escape the possibility of future ravishment. The language of engraftment
and addition becomes linked to the discourse of theft and tearing (or “ravishing”). Rather
than existing as an emendation, Kelly’s novel ruptures Richardson’s completed “Plan.”

Richardson’s invocation of a “plan” is in tension with how he later describes his
writing process. In a letter to Lady Bradshaigh (probably written in spring of 1751),
Richardson writes the following:

I am a very irregular writer; can form no plan; nor write after what I have
preconceived…. I have not therefore that encouragement to proceed, that those
have, who, forming an agreeable plan, write within its circle, and go on step by
step with delight, knowing what they drive at…. But I often compare myself to a
poor old woman, who, having no bellows, lays down on her hearth, and with her
mouth endeavours to blow up into a faint blaze a little handful of sticks, half
green, half dry, in order to warm a mess of pottage, that, after all her pains, hardly
keeps life and soul together. (Selected Letters 182.)

Even if we ought to make allowance for Richardson’s hyperbole (he might write
with more of a “plan” than he suggests), his words suggest that his “plan” is not as stable
as he has earlier implied. While Henry James described an author as writing within a
“circle,” Richardson pointedly describes his manner of composition as writing without a
self-enclosed circle. Richardson asserts that his “plan” allows for detours and deviations.
Even though he does not employ the language of “ingraftment,” this openness toward
moving outside the circle suggests an implicit resistance to closure. It seems as if

111 As Keymer and Sabor remark, “one senses the novelist’s deep inward identification with his
embattled heroine” (57).
Richardson is torn between two different self-representations—the confident author who executes a plan and “write[s] within its circle,” and the hapless follower who traces characters through labyrinths. Rather than the master formalist (as perhaps represented in Fielding’s *Tom Jones*), we see Richardson the “poor old woman,” trying desperately to make her work cohere.

These two different representations of Richardson—the master planner and the desperate cook—expose the tensions in Richardson’s engagement with continuations of his own work written by other writers. Because Richardson and his characters are so vulnerable to later change (the story’s ending can always be “basely ravished” by another writer), Richardson must claim a greater authority and sense of control than he himself might actually feel. Richardson is pressured to deny his own engrafting tendencies and claim to observe the self-enclosed narrative circle.

Richardson’s fears that engrafting would subvert his artistic purposes were seemingly confirmed by the passages he had seen of Kelly’s manuscript. In an attempt to win Richardson over to his continuation, John Kelly gave Richardson four half-sheets (forty-eight pages) of *Pamela’s Conduct* in manuscript form (Keymer and Sabor 58). In the June 4, 1741 issue of *The Daily Gazeteer*, Richardson prints an extended excerpt “*In order to convince the Publick how well the Volume call’d Pamela in HIGH-LIFE, deserves that Title,*” such as Pamela’s drinking “a whole Bottle of Burgundy at Dinner and two at Supper.” Richardson’s fears of ravishment are based not on the fear of what Kelly might have written but upon what Richardson had actually seen.

Richardson returns to the language of “engraftment” in attacks on other writers’ continuations of his works. In an advertisement printed in *The Daily Gazeteer* on May
30, June 1, and June 12, 1741, Richardson refers sarcastically to *Pamela’s Conduct* as “this worthy Ingraftment.” Richardson later describes *Joseph Andrews* as a “lewd and ungenerous engraftment” (qtd. in Keymer 65). As Alan McKillop remarks in *Samuel Richardson: Printer and Novelist* (1960), “ingraftments” is “a favorite word of Richardson’s” (73). One might think that, in Richardson’s mind, engraftments are synonymous with invasion and intrusion.112

Given Richardson’s aversion to “ingraftments,” it is striking that he employs similar language to describe his own heroine, Pamela. Richardson writes the following scene in *Pamela II*, in which Pamela’s sister-in-law Lady Davers describes Pamela’s writing practices:

… [by] reading constantly, and thus using yourself to write … every thing you heard or read became your own; and not only so, but improved by passing thro’ more salubrious Ducts and Vehicles; like some fine Fruit *grafted* upon a common Free-stock, whose more exuberant Juices serve to bring to quicker and greater Perfection the downy Peach, or the smooth Nectarine with its crimson Blush. (III: 54, italics mine.)

While Lady Davers’ language might be somewhat ambiguous—“common Free-stock” is not the most complimentary of comparisons—the passage suggests that Pamela’s own writings are implicitly tied to the practice of engraftment. As Richardson was horrified when others “basely ravished” his plan, he here recognizes that whatever Pamela reads becomes her “own”—*Pamela* may be ravished by Kelly, but Pamela herself ravishes other writers’ works and makes them better.

112 In his advertisements against Kelly, Richardson refers repeatedly to continuations as conducting “an Invasion of his Plan.”
Given Richardson’s repeated attacks on Kelly’s “worthy Ingraftment,” employing the image of grafting in this context can hardly be coincidental. In *Pamela II*, Richardson’s fear that others will subvert his own work is in tension with the recognition that he may be guilty of similar behavior. Sarcasm aside, Richardson really wants to determine what a “worthy” engraftment should look like. In this regard, it is helpful to look at one of Pamela’s more famous engraftments: the re-writing of Psalm 137.

In *Pamela*, Mr. B.’s efforts to seduce his servant girl, Pamela, have led to her kidnapping and imprisonment. Having been denied access to church, Pamela is surprised when Mrs. Jewkes, Mr. B.’s cruel servant and Pamela’s overseer, “wanted me sadly to sing her a Psalm” (140). This request reminds Pamela of Psalm 137, in which foreign captors demand of their Jewish slaves, “Sing us one of the songs of Zion!” (Ps. 137:3) However, rather than simply singing Psalm 137, Pamela re-writes the psalm to more accurately reflect her own situation.

*Pamela* reproduces this re-writing twice; once, at the time of Pamela’s original composition, and second, at the time of a public recitation following Mr. B.’s repentance. In the public recitation, Mr. B. reads aloud the Psalter’s version of Psalm 137 side-by-side with Pamela’s, while listeners present their own commentary. Mr. B. appears to be reading from a recent edition of *The Whole Book of Psalms, Collected into English Metre* (first published in 1562), or as it is sometimes called, “the Sternhold and Hopkins Psalter.” The most striking feature to the listeners is that, whereas the Prayer-book ends with an explicit curse on the psalmist’s captors, Pamela’s ends instead with hope for Mr. B.’s deliverance. The Psalter reads,

\[
\text{Yea, blessed shall that man be called,} \\
\text{That takes thy little ones,} \\
\text{Ps. 137:3}
\]
And dasheth them in pieces small
Against the very Stones. (321)

Pamela instead writes:

Yea, blessed shall the Man be call’d,
That shames thee of thy Evil,
And saves me from thy vile Attempts,
And thee, too, from the D—l. (ibid.)

Pamela has thus made a significant alteration to her original text. In the Psalter, deliverance and violence are inseparably linked: the suffering Israelites in Babylonian exile are delivered and vindicated by the brutal destruction of their enemy’s babies. In the original Psalm, the nationalist hope of return to Zion is realized by the destruction of their national enemies. Such destruction is represented as excusable in the Biblical psalm because foreign dominion prevents the Israelites from singing “the Praises of our loving God” (318) in a foreign land. Foreign dominion thus represents both a moral evil and a rebellion against God, and God’s people will be vindicated by their complete destruction. The psalm concludes with the punishment of the morally wicked through the brutal destruction of their children, a common practice in warfare.

Pamela’s revision conceives of deliverance not in terms of violence, but as transformative shame.113 Deliverance is not simply deliverance from an enemy (Mr. B.) but deliverance of an enemy (Mr. B. from the Devil’s power). Pamela is able to make this separation because, rather than equating Mr. B. with pure evil in the form of the Devil, she sees Mr. B. as his victim. Pamela does not only refuse to find an equivalent to

113 In The Power of Satire (1960), Robert C. Elliott notes that in a shame-oriented culture, shame is itself a kind of torment and even death (see pp. 30, 67). However, such “shame” here is not oriented toward “killing” Mr. B. but toward effecting a rebirth—he is not “dashed,” but delivered.
dashing Babylonian “little ones”; she later is even willing to accept Mr. B.’s illegitimate child, Miss Goodwin (478). Pamela echoes the psalmist’s voice of lament while detaching its violent aspects.

Pamela detaches the strand of violence partly through her re-envisioning of space.

Mr. B.’s Psalter begins:

When we did sit in Babylon,  
The Rivers round about:  
Then in Remembrance of Sion,  
The Tears for Grief burst out. (317)

Pamela re-writes the metrical version of the psalm:

When sad I sat in B—n-hall,  
All watched round about;  
And thought of every absent Friend,  
The Tears for Grief burst out. (ibid.)

Thomas Keymer notes that the 1801 posthumous edition substitutes “Brandon-Hall,” implying Mr. B.’s surname may be Brandon (qtd. in Pamela 529). The phrase “B—n-hall” invites the identification of Mr. B.’s home with a Biblical analogue: B—n-hall is ultimately Babylon Hall. “Babylon” carries multiple resonances and potential analogues. “Babylon” could be the great whore of the book of Revelation, a symbol for rebellion against God and imitator of Babel. It could also be the physical locale of the Israelites exiled for their sin, where presence in Babylon means absence from Zion—and vice versa.

Pamela’s love for Mr. B. shapes how she conceives of “Babylon-hall.” It is a literal geographical space, and if there is any “whore,” the status is transferred not to Mr. B. but to Mrs. Jewkes, who cries, “Down with her [Pamela’s] Chastity!” (320) Although
both Psalmist and Pamela see B—n as a geographical space, the Psalmist longs to be absent from Babylon and present in “Sion”; Pamela nowhere in her revision of the Psalm states a desire to return “home.” (Later, when Mr. B. finally does let her leave, she returns.) She longs to have her “absent Friends” present with her, but she does not express the desire to be absent from B—n-hall. For the psalmist, religious identity is intertwined with geographical space, and Babylon is the realm of oppression. For Pamela, it is the realm of potential transformation.

Pamela’s appropriation of the Psalm is complicated by the fact that she does view B—n-hall as a literal geographical space of physical threat, but her solution does not lie in removing herself from that space. Rather, it is in bringing a new type of space with her. The Psalter writer begins the self-malediction, “But yet, if I Jerusalem/Out of my Heart let slide,” but Pamela re-writes the verses, “But yet, if from my Innocence/I, ev’n in Thought, should slide” (319). “Innocence” is itself a type of space Pamela can inhabit, and though the Psalmist could not be in Jerusalem and Babylon at once, Pamela can in principle inhabit both her spaces (“B—n-hall” and “innocence”) at the same time because one is geographical while the other is moral. Though the corrupt Hall may act in opposition to innocence, Pamela has re-structured space so that antithesis does not necessitate annihilation. Although B—n-hall may encroach upon “Innocence,” “Innocence” is also, in a real sense, a threat to B—n-hall. This “threat” does not end in the Hall’s destruction, but in its eventual deliverance from the D---l. Mr. B., like Brandon-Hall, is capable of conversion and change. The virtuous and the wicked are not reified categories.
Pamela’s revision of Psalm 137 is, quite literally, an engraftment. On the printed page, Pamela’s version immediately follows the Psalter’s version, thereby transforming (or perhaps even subverting) the “original” psalm. (One can imagine the Old Testament psalmist’s ire at seeing his/her own “Purpose inverted” and Pamela’s “Invasion of his Plan.”) From Pamela’s perspective, her work in fact supports rather than undermines the message of Scripture. Her idealized conversion of Mr. B., rather than contradicting a Biblical text, advocates the power of Christian transformation and charity.

Pamela’s work is not simply an engraftment on “Psalm 137,” but an engraftment upon another engraftment: the English psalter-writer’s. Pamela is not engaging with a pure Hebrew text but one that has been first translated into English (e.g., the King James Version) and subsequently fixed according to English meter. Translation becomes a kind of engraftment as authors choose how to represent and mediate the violence present in a Hebrew text. In A New Version of the Psalms of David (1696), Nicholas Brady and Nahum Tate compose the metrical psalm using even darker language than the version Mr. B. had quoted: “Thrice blest, who with Just Rage possest,/And deaf to all the Parents Moans/Shall snatch the Infants from the Breast/And dash their Heads against the Stones” (216). This translation dramatizes the reward (“thrice blest”) and the pitilessness of the godly warrior (“deaf to all the Parents Moans” and ripping a child from its mother’s breast). Where Mr. B.’s translation left some of the violence abstract (“dasheth them in pieces small”), A New Version uses more descriptive and concrete language (“dash their Heads”). Pamela’s writing can thus be seen as a kind of counter-engraftment, competing over which voice most accurately communicates the message of Scripture.
Pamela’s own transformation of what she reads exposes Richardson’s own ambivalence about engraftments. In an effort to encourage the values she associates with Biblical Christianity, Pamela must in fact radically alter her Biblically-based text, the English metrical psalm. In promulgating values such as mercy rather than destruction, Richardson and Pamela are themselves implicated in the practice of engrafting. In fact, Pamela’s later remarks on Ambrose Philips’ *The Distress’d Mother* in *Pamela II* serve as paratextual engraftments in which Pamela seeks to shape and control how the reader responds to the play. Richardson thus seems simultaneously fascinated and repulsed by engraftments as additions which may either improve or subvert the purposes of an earlier work. In *Pamela II*, when Richardson reflects on how an epilogue may alter a reception of a text, he ultimately dramatizes his own preoccupation with the preservation and transformation of earlier meanings through the vehicle of a sequel.

2.2 Double-entendres

Richardson’s simultaneous fascination and fear of engraftments express itself in his writings on the double-entendre. In *Pamela II*, Pamela describes an evening at the playhouse where she sees a performance of Ambrose Philips’ *The Distress’d Mother*. After seeing this play with “a great many beautiful Things … in it” (IV:82-83), Pamela is horrified by the effect of the play’s epilogue. In the play, the widow Andromache resolves she will commit suicide after her planned marriage to Pyrrhus rather than be

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114 Another instance of the literal engraftment is when Mr. B. presents his “articles” for Pamela as a kept mistress. The articles and Pamela’s response are placed in two separate columns (much as Robinson Crusoe divides the description of his own experience into “good” and “bad” columns). Much as Mr. B. is hopelessly fascinated by Pamela’s shameless engrafting and subversion of his own text, so too is Richardson frustrated by the success of Kelly’s efforts.
unfaithful to the memory of her murdered husband, Hector. In the epilogue, Mrs. Oldfield/Andromache ponders, “To dye by ones own Hand, and fly the Charms/Of Love and Life in a young Monarch’s Arms!/’Twere an hard Fate—e’er I had undergone it/I might have took one night—to think upon it” (n.p.)\textsuperscript{115} In this hint that she might wait until after the wedding night to perform her suicide, Mrs. Oldfield/Andromache undercuts Andromache’s resolve throughout the play and reminds her audience of her sexuality. Pamela’s horror might be understandable when she writes to Lady Davers,

But judge, my dear Lady, what, after the Play was over, I must think of the Epilogue, and indeed of the Audience, who call’d out for it: An Epilogue spoken by Mrs. OLDFIELD in the Character of Andromache, that was more shocking to me, than the most terrible Parts of the Play; as by lewd, and even senseless Double-
entendre, it could be calculated only to efface all the tender, all the virtuous Sentiments, which the Tragedy was design’d to raise. (IV: 98)

Pamela expresses such horror at the epilogue not simply because of its message, but because of the epilogue’s relation to the play as an engraftment. Rather than offering a conclusion to the play, the epilogue offers its contradiction. The epilogue, far from simply leaving a few last words, carries the potential power to obliterate the entire effect of the artistic work, to “efface” all the sentiments that the play has already raised. The epilogue reverses the forward momentum of the play itself, obscuring the trajectories of the play’s plot and moral. Terry Castle is right to see Pamela’s concerns about “double-entendres” as thematically linked to the production of a sequel, which produces its own kind of “textual doubling.” However, while Castle understands Pamela’s concerns about “double-entendres” to result from her desire to close off meanings, Pamela’s concern is

\textsuperscript{115} The play has been spelled in different ways: although Pamela prefers the spelling “The Distress’d Mother,” in the earliest publication of the play, the title is spelled “The Distrest Mother.”
the opposite. Pamela worries that the “double-entendre” does not so much allow double-meanings as allow for only one meaning: the lewd one.

Pamela is concerned with the effect of the epilogue not only on the meaning of the play but on the character of the audience. Pamela comments on Mrs. Oldfield (who had played the character of Andromache), “See you not … that noble Andromache, inverting the Design of the whole Play … but indeed most of all ridiculing and shaming, in my Mind, that Part of the Audience, who can call for this vile Epilogue, and those who can be delighted with it, after such Scenes of Horror and Distress?” (99) Pamela’s references to “inverting the Design of the whole Play” echo Richardson’s claims that, in Kelly’s sequel, Richardson would see his “whole Purpose inverted.” The epilogue causes the audience to become its own opposite, to shift from sympathizing with virtue toward delighting in vice. While such an alteration should consciously shame members of an audience, most of them clearly feel no strong sense of embarrassment: for Pamela, the shame is recognized only “in my Mind,” not in the audience’s. Because of the epilogue, the audience may unconsciously repudiate the moral of the play.

Pamela’s response to the play’s performance also seems to be an intentional response to a discussion taking place in The Spectator three decades earlier. In

116 Terry Castle argues that Pamela II attempts a project of decarnalization and removal of “double-meanings,” which accounts for Pamela’s offense at double-entendres. See Masquerade and Civilization, p. 157 (including its footnote).

117 For a more comprehensive survey of the debate concerning The Distress’d Mother’s epilogue, see Diana Solomon’s “Tragic Play, Bawdy Epilogue?” (2007)

118 Pamela expresses familiarity with The Spectator: she refers to the “very good Method which the ingenious Authors of the Spectators took” in writing of serious subjects on Sunday (III:249).
Spectator 338 (1712), a guest-writer describes how the epilogue in *The Distress’d Mother* shapes the response to the performance as a whole:

… I was so dissatisfied, that I was sorry the Poet had sav’d Andromache, and could heartily have wish’d that he had left her stone-dead upon the Stage…. At the End of the Play I found my Soul uniform, and all of a Piece; but at the End of the Epilogue it was so jumbled together, and divided between Jest and Earnest … (III: 252-53.)

It is important to consider how such arguments compare with Pamela’s (and perhaps Richardson’s) reflections on the epilogue. While the writer finds his emotions “jumbled together” and in conflict, Pamela’s fear is that the humor will completely “efface” and exclude the possibility of the virtuous response. Even though Andromache is not left “stone-dead,” the epilogue initiates a kind of death, or something worse than death: Andromache the virtuous, somber widow passes away, and the sexualized Mrs. Oldfield takes her place. As a critic responds in *Spectator* 341, “The Moment the Play ends, Mrs. Oldfield is no more Andromache, but Mrs. Oldfield” (III: 266). This metamorphosis from Andromache to Mrs. Oldfield resembles Pamela’s own metamorphosis at the hands of other writers. Richardson elsewhere describes his “Imitators” who “have murder’d that excellent Lady” (148) Pamela by representing her in a manner inconsistent with who she is. Epilogues and engraftments have the potential of “murdering” the very characters they purport to admire.

With the addition of the epilogue, Andromache’s character, and the play itself, become unstable. The “Prologue” to *The Distress’d Mother* (1712), attributed to Sir Richard Steele, insists that the playwright “Not only Rules of Time and Place preserves,/But strives to keep his Characters intire” (n.p.). The claim that the playwright “keep[s] his Characters intire” is absurd if one includes Andromache’s metamorphosis in
the epilogue. This supposed “unity of time” and “unity of place” in the body of the play matter little if the epilogue disrupts the spectator’s own sense of unity, of a “Soul uniform” (Spectator 338).

In Spectator 341, a respondent offers a thorough refutation of the earlier writer’s criticisms of the epilogue:

I can by no Means allow … that the new Epilogue is unnatural, because it is gay…. Every one knows that on the British Stage [epilogues] are distinct Performances by themselves, Pieces intirely detached from the Play…. The Gayety of it [the epilogue] may be still the more proper, as it is at the End of a French Play;… that Nation … always close their Tragic Entertainments with what they call a Petite Piece, which is purposely design’d to raise Mirth. (III: 266-67.)

The epilogue is thus simultaneously an engraftment and a “distinct” performance “intirely detached” from what preceded it. Much like a sequel, the epilogue is simultaneously a part of the performance and is that which is outside of it. It is thus free of prescriptions such as “consistency of character.” The reference to the “Petite Piece” (or afterpiece) is a fitting one: Shaftesbury employs the analogy of the afterpiece to describe the relationship between his sequel Miscellanies with the two earlier volumes of Characteristics. Afterpieces and sequels easily participate in a similar subversive project because they are free to challenge the work that has come before.

It seems that The Distress’d Mother incident in Pamela II is itself a reworking of a similar passage by Richardson criticizing afterpieces. In Familiar Letters on Important Occasions (1741), Richardson presents the thoughts of a letter-writer who visits the London playhouse. The correspondent writes on the effects of viewing the afterpiece:

I was greatly moved with the play [Hamlet], and pleased with the action. But the low scenes of Harelequinery that were exhibited afterwards, fill’d me with high disgust …. We had just seen Hamlet, as I have said: My heart was full of
Ophelia’s distress, and the prince’s fate had shaken my soul: In this state of mind to sit two hours to see people run after one another as if they were bewitched, only to cuckold a poor simple-looking husband, put me so much out of patience, that I shall not bear the sight of the stage for some time. (Letter 159, pp. 215-217)

Richardson’s letter-writer is troubled by the immediate juxtaposition of the tragic and the indecently comic. The intrusion of “harelequinery” renders it impossible to have a serious aesthetic and moral response: “Ophelia’s distress” and “the prince’s fate” are displaced by buffoonery. The playhouse does not allow the spectator to view Hamlet in isolation from competing artistic productions, and the striking dissonance between Hamlet and the harlequin farce is so disturbing that the spectator resolves to avoid the theater in the future.

The presence of the afterpiece on the French and English stage is a challenge to Aristotle’s presumption that an artistic work is composed of “a beginning, a middle, and an end,” which has a single, uniform aesthetic response on a spectator. Richardson is concerned with what takes place after the performance has supposedly ended and whether subsequent events might “murder” his heroine by debasing her. Even though the first four editions of Pamela concludes, “Here end the Letters of the incomparable PAMELA,” Richardson was compelled to modify the text, “Here end, at present, the Letters of Pamela” (qtd. in Eaves and Kimpel 135). Endings are always provisional, because conclusions can be subverted.

At the same time that we note Samuel Richardson’s fear of this double-voicedness, it is important to note its allure for him as author. Ultimately, Pamela does not want The Distress’d Mother to stand alone as a single aesthetic experience: she is driven to critique the play, asking, “[C]ould not a Distress have been formed in this Story from more laudable and proper Motives?” (87) Just as the epilogue-writer undermines
the message of *The Distress’d Mother*, Pamela herself must tinker with the play’s original premises and supplement it with her own reflections. For example, Pamela speculates on how the playwright could revise his portrayal of characters: “‘Tis … good .. to shew, that Persons in Distress ought never to despond, be their Affliction what they will; and [the writer] ought to have weigh’d with *Andromache* herself, to make her avoid the Crime of Suicide …” (IV: 97). Pamela is not merely reiterating what the playwright intended but imagining how the story could (or should) have been written.

It is easy to read these remarks on *The Distress’d Mother* and on harlequin farce simply as Richardson’s distrust of engraftments and double-meanings. However, as I am suggesting, Richardson response to double-meanings is far more ambivalent than it first appears. Richardson’s purpose is not to “erase” double-meanings but to find a way to *preserve* virtuous meanings. Keymer and Sabor note that many of the charges urged by Pamela’s critics are in fact urged within the novel itself: Pamela is arraigned as “a mercenary adventuress, a devious hypocrite, a sanctimonious rhetorician, and more besides” (14). *Pamela* thus manifests a double-voicedness in which Pamela and her critics (such as Lady Davers) can present mutually exclusive interpretations of her actions. In *Pamela II*, double-voicedness must take place not so much within the work, as between this text and its competitors. In engaging in an “intertextual dialogue” between *Pamela II* and rival continuations, Richardson seeks a way to preserve the earlier virtuous “meaning” from erasure and to negotiate the place of the double-meaning.

In *Pamela II*, Richardson accommodates the double-entendre to *Pamela II* in the character of Mr. B.’s friend, Sir Simon Darnford. As a proponent of “that dear polite *Double Entendre*” (III: 130), Darnford’s presence allows for the virtuous and lewd to
coexist. While Andromache horrifies Pamela, the lewd Sir Simon presents a more ambiguous figure. As Polly Darnford, Sir Simon’s daughter, corresponds with Pamela by letter, she reveals that her father, suffering from rheumatism, had once thrown a book at her head. Pamela offers to inscribe the book for Polly:

I will write in it … ‘This Book, instead of subduing the Reader’s Passions, (I take it for granted, you see, Miss, it was Seneca’s Morals, or some such good Book) had like to have been the Cause of a violent and peevish Evil. Henceforth, be thou condemned, unavailing Teacher, to stand by thyself, on a lone Shelf, in my Closet; a Shelf most out of mine or any other Person’s Reach … (III: 109)

Despite Pamela’s noted disapproval of throwing books at daughters, Pamela enjoys her own little double-entendre: by “tak[ing] it for granted” that the book’s author was Seneca, Pamela plays off of the ambiguity inherent in the book’s namelessness: as an undisclosed signifier, it exists simultaneously as potentially “virtuous” and “dirty.” Pamela thus can choose to read the virtuous meaning, all the while she conveys her knowledge of the book’s true character. Pamela’s later discovery that the book is authored by Rabelais strengthens the ambiguity of the “dirty”/“virtuous” ambiguity: in “The Author’s Prologue” to *Gargantua*, Rabelais likens his work to a Silenus, a little box that is mirthful on the outside but contains precious materials within. Richardson thus experiments with whether double-meanings can coexist, whether the unnamed book can simultaneously be understood both as “Seneca’s Morals” and as something lewd.

Violence itself is interpreted more ambiguously in Pamela’s response to Sir Simon. In *Pamela*, violence is almost always menacing, whether in Mr. B.’s threats of rape, or Lady Davers’s merciless assault on Pamela for her recent marriage. In her use of hyperbolic or mock-formal language (e.g., “Henceforth, be thou condemned, unavailing Teacher”), Sir Simon’s “violent and peevish Evil” becomes more an object of fun than
horror: Pamela’s warning to keep the book out of “reach” leaves ambiguous whether the
danger lies in the content of the book or in its physicality.\footnote{119}

In playing off of the double-meanings allowed in Sir Simon’s unnamed book,
Pamela opens herself up to “doubled” interpretations of her own actions. In a letter to
Mr. B., Sir Simon interprets Pamela’s offer to inscribe his book as an invitation to initiate
an affair:

Then, pray, Sir, do you allow your Lady to beg Presents from Gentlemen?—This
is a tender point to touch upon: But you shall know all, I am resolved. For here
she sends to desire to make me a Present of this very Book, and promises to send
me another as good…. is it not a sad thing to think, that Ladies, let them be young
or old, well-marry’d or ill-marry’d, cannot live without Intrigue? And here, if I
were not a very honest Man, and your Friend, and resolv’d to be a virtuous Man
too, in spite of Temptation … (III: 130)

Sir Simon thus reinterprets Pamela’s chastisement of his behavior as a sexual
proposition. In fact, much of Sir Simon’s letter is absorbed with transforming Pamela’s
interpretation of events into their opposite: Sir Simon justifies his book-throwing with
the rationale, “what better Use can an offended Father make of the best Books, than to
correct a rebellious Child with them” (III: 129). Sir Simon’s playful tone invites the
reader to play with different meanings, even the ribald ones. Perhaps because Sir Simon
does not take his arguments seriously, it is possible for Richardson to allow lewd
readings of his heroine’s actions without erasing virtuous readings: Sir Simon could
never convince Richardson’s readers (or Mr. B.) that Pamela is actually an adulteress.

\footnote{119 For further analysis of this scene and its links to the physicality of the book (especially in
relation to print culture and Pamela II illustrations), see Janet E. Aikins’s “Re-presenting the Body in
Pamela II” (1993).}
Through adopting Sir Simon’s perspective, Richardson can allow for Pamela simultaneously to stay in character and seem to step out of character.

This analysis illuminates what Richardson finds so frustrating in Oldfield’s performance. In the epilogue, the virtuous Andromache is erased, and all that remains is the lewd Mrs. Oldfield. If Richardson’s contention is correct, it can be argued that Richardson is in fact more amenable to “double-meanings” than the “Epilogue” of The Distress’d Mother, in the sense of seeking to allow a place for both voices. In evaluating the apparent flaws of Pamela II, we should not presume that the privileging of a lewd meaning is artistically superior to the privileging of a virtuous one. Even if Richardson may ultimately be unsuccessful in balancing these twin meanings, his treatment of Sir Simon suggest that Pamela II is not as univocal as it might appear.

2.3 The Untimed Test

In writing Pamela II, Richardson is concerned not only with the double-meanings of lewdness and virtue, but on the surface level of story and allegory. An anonymous reader counsels Richardson to avoid mention of Pamela’s Conduct: “no Allusion, nor the most distant Hint relating to the Imitation, can be admitted in Pamela’s story of herself, without being a Blemish” (qtd. in Keymer and Sabor 81). Nevertheless, Richardson’s own personal circumstances and anxieties about his sequel (and others’ continuations) implicitly shape the contours of his own sequel. Some of the most moving passages of Pamela II—those in which Pamela fears her inability to satisfy Mr. B. and keep their child—correspond to Richardson’s own fears about satisfying the public and keeping his
literary offspring. Richardson’s own testing as an author becomes manifest in the testing Pamela must undergo as a wife.

_Pamela II_ is concerned with the nature of allegory and of symbolism. Pamela’s last letter, in fact, ends with Pamela’s recounting the allegorical story of Prudentia, a noble girl who was loved by her uncle and aunt (her parents had died at a young age) and is guided by prudence and virtue. Despite differences between Prudentia’s life and Pamela’s—Pamela’s parents did not die “almost in her Infancy” (IV: 466), as Prudentia’s did—Miss Goodwin proclaims, “O Madam! Madam;… PRUDENTIA is YOU!—Is YOU indeed!—It _can_ be nobody else!” (468) Even if this is a particularly transparent allegory in which the symbolism is explained for the audience, it encourages the reader, like a dutiful Miss Goodwin, to search for meanings and referents beneath the surface level. Miss Goodwin’s example encourages readers to overlook details in the allegory that do not correspond to the reality (e.g., the early death of Prudentia’s parents).

Pamela is often a crafty story-teller, much like Richardson. When Mr. B. encourages Pamela to read John Locke’s _Some Thoughts Concerning Education_ (1693) for raising their baby Billy, Pamela suggests she might better care for Billy by taking in “some little Master of three or four Years old, or Miss of five or six,” so she might read “a Chapter in the Child, and now a Chapter in the _Book_” (IV: 154). Real life and reading are meant to be placed in dialogue with each other (much like _Pamela II_ and Richardson’s own circumstances), and Pamela does not initially indicate which child they should take in.
After Mr. B. conveys his approval, Pamela reveals that she has a definite child in mind: Mr. B.’s illegitimate daughter, Miss Godwin. After Mr. B. erupts in anger at Pamela’s arguing through indirection, Pamela defends herself:

If I have dealt artfully with you, impute it to my Fear of offending you, thro’ the Nature of my Petition, and not thro’ Design. And that I took the Example of the Prophet, to King David, in the Parable of the Ewe-Lamb. (III: 157)

In this reference to “the prophet,” Pamela refers to Nathan the Prophet’s revealing David’s sin of adultery with Bathsheba through misdirection. In the Biblical story, Nathan the prophet presents a parable in which a rich man takes and slaughters a poor man’s sheep. After arousing David’s anger at the villain, Nathan reveals, “Thou art the man!” because David had taken another man’s wife. Through a parable, Nathan is able to cause David to distance himself from personal biases to view his own behavior more critically. Pamela’s allusion to the story is especially pointed because David’s and Mr. B.’s situation both result from sexual misconduct.¹²⁰

Pamela’s craftiness points us to the ambiguities within Richardson’s own text. The reader cannot know when the surface level of Pamela II exists as a story in its own right, or as a parable representing something else. Much as Pamela deals artfully to avoid offense, Richardson has been counseled to avoid all visible allusions to Kelly’s continuation. Richardson can only speak concerning his pressing concerns through misdirection, as does Pamela. Even though Mr. B. is the character guilty of sexual misconduct, it is Pamela who is placed in the defensive position. To preserve his heroine,

¹²⁰ Richardson returns to this incident in Clarissa, where Lovelace accompanies Clarissa to a worship service in which the pastor preaches on the text: “Nathan … cried out … Thou art the man!—By my soul I thought the parson looked directly at me” (540).
Richardson must write a sequel, despite readers’ “prejudice” against sequels. Pamela the character and *Pamela II* must both undergo testing.

For the purposes of my argument, it is not necessary to postulate that Richardson consciously intended the dramatization of Pamela’s troubles to resemble his own. Instead, my concern is to argue that Richardson’s own circumstances, whether conscious or not, contribute to the structure and description of Pamela’s own trials in *Pamela II*. This reading promotes not simply the identification of Richardson with Pamela, but implicitly the reader’s identification with Mr. B. and the “love of Intrigue” that he represents.

In *Pamela II*, Pamela discovers that “virtue rewarded” is not as final as she might have hoped. Lady Davers, Pamela’s sister-in-law, attempts to encourage Pamela about her future life with Mr. B. Davers writes, “never fear but you’ll hold him, if you can go on thus to act, and outdo your Sex” (III: 101). Such language is hardly calculated to place Pamela at ease. So long as—and only as long as—Pamela can outperform all women everywhere for the rest of her life, can she be assured that she will “hold” Mr. B.’s attention and fidelity. Catching Mr. B. is not enough; Pamela must hold him. Pamela’s testing has no time limit.

Richardson faces similar pressures in writing *Pamela II*. Richardson learns that it is not enough to gain the favor of his readership; he must continue not simply to perform but to outperform (or “outdo”) all other continuators. When Richardson writes to James Leake in August 1741, “all Readers were not Judges,” he is imprecise (*Selected Letters* 44). Even if readers fail rightly to judge or discriminate, readers inevitably function as judges, much as Mr. B. unjustly functions as “judge” when he has Parson Williams
thrown in jail. Richardson and Pamela may both have their actions scrutinized by those ill-equipped properly to judge their performances.

We can also note a discrepancy between the ways in which Richardson and Pamela behave in their defensive postures. As noted earlier, Richardson frequently does appeal to his “rights” and claims of ownership in his advertisements against Kelly. While Richardson boldly proclaims his authorial rights, Pamela, in her response to Mr. B., must be more diffident and indirect. In writing *Pamela II*, Richardson, the representative of paternal authority and ownership, merges with Pamela, the victim of patriarchal power.

Pamela’s fears over Mr. B.’s fidelity take on urgency after a visit to a masquerade. Dressed as a Quaker, Pamela watches as Mr. B. is “singled out by a bold Nun” (115) with whom he appears to flirt. Pamela describes her sense of alienation: “Instantly the Nun … join’d us, and spoke in Italian something very free, as it seem’d by her Manner, and Mr. B.’s smiling Answer; but … [I did not understand] that Language, and Mr. B. would not explain it …” (IV: 117)

Pamela’s exclusion from the conversation reflects Richardson’s own displacement as author. Despite a mastery of language in *Pamela*, Pamela is reminded of her own linguistic and educational limitations: she is an outsider to Italian discourse just as Richardson is an outsider to high-life. The countess’s high-born lineage and education exacerbate Pamela’s sense of inadequacy, much as the title Pamela’s conduct “in high life” is a reminder that it is a world in which Richardson does not belong.121

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121 The similarities in Pamela’s and Richardson’s class and educational backgrounds may help account for why Richardson does not alter Pamela’s lineage. In Kelly’s *Pamela’s Conduct in High-Life*, Pamela discovers that she is descended from nobility: “‘tis evident that *Pamela* ... is a Gentlewoman, by many Kings Reigns of more ancient Descent, from more noble Blood, than the imperious Lady Davers, the
The possibility that Mr. B. may be having an affair places Pamela on the defensive. While Pamela is receiving anonymous warnings that Mr. B. is conducting an affair (warnings which she keeps secret from Mr. B.), Mr. B. criticizes Pamela for her lack of happiness: “You give yourself strange melancholy Airs of late, my Dear!... All that Cheerfulness which used to delight me whenever I saw you, I’m sorry for it, is quite vanish’d of late” (IV: 178). When Mr. B. exclaims, “your Eyes have lost that Brilliance that used to strike me with a Lustre, much surpassing that of the finest Diamonds” (III: 179), Pamela retorts, “I am sorry for it, Sir.—But ... I should be too happy ... if the Failure be not rather in your Eyes than my own” (IV: 179).

In this retort, Pamela upsets the relation between observer and the observed. Mr. B. begins by viewing Pamela’s eyes as an object to be assessed, tested, and measured against its previous performance. Pamela suggests instead that it is the eyes of Mr. B. that should be tested: we are reminded that Pamela’s eyes are not merely an object of the male gaze but an instrument for gazing and testing. Pamela’s behavior never takes place in a vacuum—as a viewer rather than mere spectacle, she modifies her action on the basis of what she sees. Mr. B.’s wandering eye not only makes Pamela appear less cheerful to him but indeed causes her to become less cheerful: her fear of losing Mr. B.’s heart renders her incapable of behaving as if nothing has happened. *Pamela II* must be silent about the real circumstances of composition, just as Pamela cannot express her real concerns to Mr. B.

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*haughty Viscountess, the furious Peeress*” (I:215). For Richardson, Pamela’s lack of “blue blood” heightens the similarities between their own ancestries.
Pamela’s own maternal instincts toward her son Billy may illuminate Richardson’s own attitudes toward *Pamela*. Mr. B., unaware that Pamela suspects an affair, invites the countess to his home to meet Pamela. Pamela fears that the countess will not simply replace her in Mr. B.’s affections, but in the case of a separation, take her baby Billy away from her. Pamela asks for their nurse to bring “*my Billy down*—*My, said I, with an Emphasis*” (181). Pamela describes her reaction to seeing the baby in the countess’s arms:

> I *yielded* it [the baby] to her: I thought she would have stifled it with her warm Kisses! Sweet Boy! Charming Creature! And press’d it to her too lovely Bosom, with such Emotion, looking on the Child, and on Mr. B. that I liked it not by any means. (181)

The countess quite literally grafts herself onto Pamela’s baby. Pamela fears that the fervency of the countess’s “warm Kisses” will in some sense suffocate Billy. As Kelly’s enthusiasm threatens to subsume both Richardson’s readers and *Pamela* itself, the countess’s exuberance threatens to devour both Billy and Mr. B. Pamela becomes ostracized from both husband and child as the charming countess’s “warm Kisses” perform a kind of seduction on both child and father. While Billy might be unaware of the loveliness of the countess’s “too lovely” bosom, Pamela recognizes that Mr. B. is not.

As Pamela is forced to be observer rather than participant, she reflects on Billy’s response to the countess’s act of usurpation: “I wonder’d the dear Baby was so quiet; tho’ he is generally so: But *he* might surely, if but by Sympathy, have complained for his poor Mamma, tho’ she durst not for herself….” (181-2) Here, Pamela laments that her baby does not express her own feelings or speak up on her behalf. Despite Pamela’s implicit claims to ownership of “*my*” Billy, possession can quickly change hands:
Pamela interprets the countess’s picking up the baby as an implicit claim of ownership. Even if Pamela is gifted in making every text she reads her “own” (III: 54), she is horrified by the countess’s similar ability in seamlessly appropriating Pamela’s baby.

Pamela’s frustration mirrors Richardson’s own powerlessness to control the dissemination of rival sequels. Like the quiet baby Billy, Richardson’s *Pamela* seems to allow itself to be passed around from continuator to continuator. The fact that *Pamela* seems a finished work is paradoxically what enables it to be so easily continued: it cannot protest against future alterations. The text does not seem to speak for Richardson nor even for itself: Billy is unaware that his behavior seems tacitly to approve of his mother’s replacement, and *Pamela* seems tacitly to allow Kelly’s act of engrafting.

Pamela’s relationship with Mr. B. becomes eventually so fraught with marital tension that Pamela decides to confront him. In her closet, Pamela arranges the seats in the room to represent a courtroom for her “trial.” Pamela declares to Mr. B., “You are the Judge, Sir; it is I that am to be try’d” (IV: 202). Even though it is Mr. B.’s fidelity which is in question, Pamela puts herself in the position of defendant. In fact, Pamela must take the part of her own prosecutor. Pamela gives the reasons why Mr. B. might wish to rid himself of her for a more attractive mistress:

> The Countess is a charming Lady. She excels your poor Girl in all those outward Graces of Form, that your kind Fancy … had made you attribute to me. And she has all those additional Advantages, as Nobleness of Birth, of Alliance, and Deportment, which I want …. (IV: 208)

Pamela’s impassioned assertion of her love eventually breaks down Mr. B.’s hardness. Mr. B. proclaims, “Let no Bar be put between us Henceforth! No Wonder … that thy fuller Day should thus irresistibly dazzle such weak Eyes as mine…. I have been
inconsiderately led on by blind Passion …” (IV: 213). Mr. B. returns to the language of ocular description: where it had earlier seemed that Pamela’s eyes lacked in brilliance, the object of his gaze shifts from Pamela’s eyes to himself and his own “blind” passion. Mr. B. later corrects himself in referring to “your, or rather my Trial” (217). In *Pamela II*, the “trial” is turned on its head, and Mr. B. becomes the accused.

*Pamela II* thus ultimately places Mr. B. on trial rather than Pamela. Polly Darnford seems to anticipate Mr. B.’s trial when she reflects on all of the reasons which Mr. B. has *not* to revert to his rakish beginnings:

> Such good Tenants, such a good Wife, such Blessings from Heaven following him, nobody, I tell Mr. B. has so much Incouragement to be good, as he has; and if hereafter he should swerve, he would not have the least Excuse, and would be the ungratefulest Man breathing. (IV: 142)

Of course, it is precisely because Mr. B. has so much “Incouragement to be good” that he is encouraged to be the opposite. The fiery Pamela who had earlier excited him has now become the dutiful wife. Mr. B.’s test is time itself: whether he can cope with the lack of excitement and intrigue. Readers themselves certainly have little incentive to read about “such a good Wife”: as Terry Castle remarks, despite the laborious task of reading *Pamela II*, “one scene in the sequel … does gratify us after all … as a moment of excitement” (132): the masquerade, and the troubles that follow. Like Mr. B., readers need a break from the monotony of the sequel.

In his “plan” for the sequel, Richardson consciously rejects the depiction of exciting events. In a letter written to Stephen Duck (dated 1741), Richardson writes the following:
An excellent Physician was so good as to give me a Plan to break Legs and Arms and to fire Mansion Houses to create Distresses [in *Pamela II*]; but my Business and View was to aim at Instruction in a genteel and usual Married Life…. I hate so much the French Marvellous and all unnatural Machinery…. I am very sensible that there cannot, *naturally*, be the room for Plots, Stratagem and Intrigue in the present Volumes as in the first. And *Nature* is my whole View, and such a Conduct in such a Life, as may generally happen, and be of Use…. When the four Volumes [the first part of *Pamela*, and the two volume sequel] shall appear together, it will then be a piece of natural Life, wth. the *ups* and *downs*, the *Stormy* and the *Sedate*, that we generally find it, or (as to *Sedate*) hope to find it. (*Selected Letters* 52-53)

To George Cheyne in 1742, Richardson writes,

The four Volumes were to be consider’d as one Work. The two First were to include the Storms, the Stratagems, and all that could indanger Virtue, and ingage the Attention of the Reader, for its Distresses---The succeeding of course were to be more calm, serene, and instructive … For I always had it in View, I have the Vanity to repeat, to make the Story rather *useful* than diverting. (*ibid.* 54.)

Richardson intends to avoid precisely what he knows his readers desire: excitement and trials.

While it is easy to read the episodes of the masquerade and the intrigue with the countess as deviations from Richardson’s “plan,” these incidents may in fact be its natural result. The “sedate” life may suit Pamela, but not the impetuous Mr. B. Despite Richardson’s desire to balance serenity with distress, the love of novelty upsets such an ideal balance. If there is no excitement created by external circumstances (e.g., a mansion on fire), a character must create excitement (e.g., going to a masquerade). By showing Mr. B.’s relapse into his old ways, Richardson subverts his earlier text’s ending and becomes, in a sense, his own “engrafter.” In *The Relapse* (1696), a sequel to Colley Cibber’s *Love’s Last Shift* (1696), Sir John Vanbrugh returns to Cibber’s story to show how the repentant rake Lovelace returns to sexual intrigue. Given that Vanbrugh seems
to have intended this sequel to subvert the artificiality of Cibber’s earlier happy ending, it is strange that Richardson would perform a similar textual subversion for his own text. *Pamela II* is ultimately concerned not simply with whether Mr. B. can be permanently reclaimed from his persistent love of intrigue, but whether Richardson’s audience an be reclaimed from the love of reading about intrigue. As Pamela might tell the reader (in the words of Nathan the prophet), “Thou art the Man!”

*Pamela II* thus exemplifies preoccupations similar to those in Defoe’s *Farther Adventures* and *Serious Reflections*. Readers share a critical predisposition to censure works which fail to reward them with conflict and excitement. Although Richardson announces his rejection of “Plots, Stratagem and Intrigue” in the sequel, “plotlessness” is still lodged as one of the most common objections to *Pamela II*. Defoe’s lament that readers prefer *Paradise Lost* to *Paradise Regained* is confirmed in critics’ preference for Mr. B.’s intrigue. *Pamela II* exposes not so much Richardson’s failure to pass the test of artistic merit as readers’ failure to appreciate narrative without intrigue. While Pamela might have reclaimed Mr. B. from his love of intrigue, *Pamela II*’s readers remain unabashed lovers of action and drama.

2.4 Poetic Mercy

*Pamela II* is almost calculated to disappoint the reader in its treatment of “villains” from the earlier novel. As I shall suggest, in the treatment of characters such as Mrs. Jewkes and Parson Peters, John Kelly’s *Pamela’s Conduct in High-Life* satisfies the readers’ desire for action and “justice” by punishing characters left unscathed in the earlier novel. Richardson’s novel is notable in its refusal to punish such characters,
marking them as objects of mercy capable of change. In comparing Richardson’s *Pamela II* with Kelly’s popular sequel, we can see how the two works offer competing visions of what ideal justice is. Richardson’s insistence on the importance of mercy and forgiveness tests readers’ predisposition toward conflict and punishment.

Although the “Postscript” to *Clarissa* is usually seen as Richardson’s most thorough response to the theory of “poetic justice,” Richardson had already written about the theory in *The Apprentice’s Vade Mecum* (1734). In this work, Richardson discourages apprentices from attending the theater because theatrical dramas often reward vice and fail to observe “poetic justice.” Richardson writes that playwrights depict their villainous characters too sympathetically:

… from every Rogue that has made a Noise in the World by his superlative Wickedness, has yielded the principal Characters exhibited, and that not for the Sake of Poetical Justice, in their Execution, but to divert the Audience by their Tricks and Escapes; and if they have been brought to Justice at last, it has been in such a Manner, as to move the Pity of the Audience for them. (12-13)

Richardson’s objection to the majority of theatrical works is that they lead audiences to identify with wicked characters. Even if such characters are “brought to Justice at last,” their punishment arouses sympathy rather than satisfaction. From such reflections, we might imagine that Richardson’s artistic ideal is one in which audiences watch approvingly as villainous characters suffer for their actions.

In *Pamela*, the villainous Jewkes arouses little sympathy. Pamela describes her as “a broad, squat, pursy, fat Thing, quite ugly, if any thing God made can be ugly;… a dead, spiteful, grey, goggling Eye, to be sure, she has…. With a Heart more ugly than her Face” (114). It is easy for an audience to sympathize with Pamela’s desire to forgive the villainous Mr. B., whose handsome figure, impressive riches, and genuine affection for
Pamela, seem to compensate for his persecutions and attempted rape. Such sympathy is not easily extended to lowborn and grotesque figures such as Mrs. Jewkes. There is something uncomfortable about Christian charity when it is directed toward the ugly and wretched, which perhaps inclined John Kelly to punish Jewkes in the sequel.

In Kelly’s *Pamela’s Conduct in High Life*, Jewkes’s punishment is occasioned by a discussion between Mr. B. and his nephew Jackey. Jackey describes a meeting with some calumniators of Pamela’s virtue, recounting that one woman remarked that Jewkes “is a thorough-paced Bawd; did all she could to gratify her Master’s Passion, and would … be as industrious to debauch his Wife … yet … the Fool [Mr. B.], the Oaf keeps her in his service” (III: 243). In her letter to Mrs. Jervis, Pamela describes her emotions: “Really, dear Mrs. Jervis, I could have kissed Jackey Tell-Truth, for what he said” (III: 243-4). Pamela welcomes these calumniators’ words because they express the sense of resentment that Pamela is not permitted to verbalize. Angered at being considered an “oaf,” Mr. B. announces his decision to discharge Jewkes, at which Pamela joyfully cries out, “every thing you say or do is an additional Obligation lain on me” (III: 244). In Kelly’s sequel, only Pamela’s reticence, her wish not to offend Mr. B., has prevented her urging the discharge of his wicked servant.

Like Kelly, Richardson addresses the seeming impropriety of Jewkes remaining at B—n-hall. Kelly had hinted that Pamela’s suffering Jewkes’s presence was due to concerns about her husband’s wishes. In Richardson’s sequel, Pamela defends her actions by similar pragmatic considerations. Unlike Kelly’s Pamela, these are not her *only* reasons: “I not only forgave the poor Wretch, in regard to *his Commands*, but from *my own Inclination*” (66). In the first novel, Pamela attributes more of the fault for her
situation to Mrs. Jewkes than Mr. B.: Pamela writes, “I need not rail against Men so much; for my Master, bad as I have thought him, is not half so bad as this Woman!” (246). In <i>Pamela II</i>, Pamela views Jewkes more sympathetically. Pamela defends her decision to forgive Jewkes by writing, “to me, who always was taught to distinguish between the Person and the Action, I could not hold my Resentment against the poor passive Machine of Mischief” (67). The wicked Jewkes is not an instigator of vice, but a “passive Machine.” Ironically, this machine-like quality is what humanizes Jewkes: one must hate the sin, but love the sinner.

Richardson’s sequel amplifies the strain of mercy in Pamela’s re-written psalm. Although Pamela’s revision of Psalm 137 pleads for Mr. B.’s deliverance from the Devil, it offers no such plea for Jewkes. When Mr. B. reads Pamela’s revision aloud for their guests, Mr. B. notes that Pamela’s words contain a “little bit of a Curse indeed,” when she writes the following:

And thou, Almighty! Recompense The Evils I endure, From those who seek my sad Disgrace, So causeless! To procure….
Remember, Lord, this Mrs. Jewkes, When with a mighty Sound, She cries, Down with her Chastity, Down to the very Ground! (320)

Rather than offering a “little bit of a Curse,” <i>Pamela II</i> makes clear that Jewkes, despite her flaws, merits care instead. Pamela satirizes her fellow Christians’ habit of saying, “I must forgive such an Action, but I will never forget it,” remarking that they “distinguish away their Christian Duties by a Word” (75). Pamela insists on the
importance of both forgiveness and “forgetfulness.” She affirms Jewkes’ value as a creature of God and someone capable of being converted by grace through mercy.

In speaking for herself, Jewkes becomes a much more pitiable character. In her repentant state, Jewkes writes to Pamela,

You have forgiven me, and GOD will, I hope; for the Creature cannot be more merciful than the Creator; that is all my Hope!—Yet sometimes, I dread, that I am forgiven here, at least not punish’d, in order to be punished the more hereafter!... But what I chiefly write for ... is, to beg your Ladyship’s Prayers for me. (III: 83)

Jewkes’s gratitude challenges the readers’ own assumptions about forgiveness. Jewkes’s “dread” that she is to be “punished the more hereafter” not only makes her an object of compassion but implicates the audience’s vengeful desire to see Jewkes punished “more hereafter” in Kelly’s sequel. It is, in fact, impossible for Pamela the creature to care more for the soul of “the wicked” than does God. As in the case of Defoe’s Farther Adventures, the author returns to his story not to punish the wicked, but to deliver them.

Kelly’s sequel treats grace and mercy quite differently. After Kelly’s Mr. B. dismisses the penniless Jewkes, she goes to her new husband, who “beats her much oftner than I fancy she could herself hope to be caressed” (III: 280). Mr. B. moralizes, “You see, my Pamela, Heaven revenges your Injuries, and the Woman who contributed all she could to your Ruin, is herself exposed to that and Shame” (281). The noble Pamela remarks (perhaps somewhat smugly), “I pray God forgive her … and may her present Punishment produce in her an unfeigned Penitence and secure her Future Happiness” (281). Jewkes’ suffering is thus interpreted as a result of God’s intervention in daily affairs and a kind of “poetic justice.”
We should not miss just how satisfying Kelly’s account of Jewkes’s fate might be to readers. In his Preface to *The Family Instructor*, Defoe remarked that readers were more interested in God’s punishments and in familial “breaches” than in mercy and reconciliation. While Richardson offers mercy toward Jewkes and depicts her eventual conversion, Kelly feeds the audience’s more vengeful desires by punishing Jewkes with beatings. Kelly’s depiction allows Pamela to wish for Jewkes’s reformation (“I pray God forgive her”) *without ever having to help her*. In fact, Kelly grounds Pamela’s hope for Jewkes’s reformation not in grace and mercy, but in the suffering of Jewkes’s “present Punishment.” Mr. B.’s remark that “Heaven revenges your Injuries” is particularly relevant in light of Pamela’s earlier revised psalm: where the Psalter offered the words, “happy shall that Man be call’d,/That our Revenge have Wrought,” Pamela intentionally removes the reference to “revenge.” Pamela’s psalm states, “And happy shall all those be call’d,/That my Deliv’rance wrought.” The God of deliverance in *Pamela* has become the God of revenge in *Pamela’s Conduct in High Life*.

As I have argued in my chapter on *Robinson Crusoe, Farther Adventures* depicts a Crusoe dealing with two competing identifications of God: the God who embraces charity and love, and the God who demands punishment and execution. Defoe sustains his action by playing both representations off of each other within the same work. In the case of *Pamela*’s competing sequels, we similarly have two competing identifications of God: Richardson’s God, and Kelly’s. *Pamela II* and *Pamela’s Conduct in High-Life* represent an “intertextual dialogue” in which we see two radically different visions of God. Defoe was able to use these two competing visions to advantage, since the ambiguity of God as punisher (e.g., Providence’s striking down Crusoe’s wife, his
dreams of executing the men) heightens the narrative excitement. Richardson operates at a disadvantage because this exciting vision is represented outside Richardson’s text, within *Pamela’s Conduct*. While Kelly can indulge in the excitement of a beaten Jewkes, Richardson represents the mild fare of a sinner redeemed through merciful treatment. The “double-entendre” is not so much two meanings of God competing for prominence within a single text, but a competition taking place between two different texts.

In *Pamela II*, Richardson more thoroughly undermines “poetic justice” than he does in *Clarissa*. In his “Postscript,” Richardson claims that all the villains are “exemplarily punished” (1498), noting that the prostitutes who mistreated Clarissa suffer for their wickedness. However, many of the prostitutes’ wicked acts may not be entirely their fault; their actions result directly from Lovelace’s instructions or indirectly from Lovelace’s ruining them. Even though Jewkes lacks some of the extenuating circumstances that might partially account for the prostitutes’ actions (e.g., their ruin by Lovelace), Pamela is able to find a degree of pity for “the Machine” Jewkes that *Clarissa* does not offer the punished prostitutes. It may be that the lesson that Richardson learned from writing *Pamela II* is that the violence and death of a heroic protagonist arouses far more interest than the peaceful conversion of a wicked woman. Clarissa’s death may be controversial, and the deaths of Clarissa’s persecutors may be satisfying, but Mrs. Jewkes’s nonviolent death is simply dull.

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122 Richardson writes on Sally Martin and Polly Horton, “Sally died of a fever and surfeit got by a debauch: and the other, about a month after, by a violent cold, occasioned through carelessness in a salivation” (1491). Richardson dramatizes the death of Mrs. Sinclair, the brothel-keeper who imprisoned Clarissa: after falling down the stairs while drunk, Belford writes that Mrs. Sinclair “lies foaming, raving, roaring, in a burning fever, that wants not any other fire to scorch her into a feeling more exquisite and durable than any thy vengeance could make her suffer” (1378). While “thy vengeance” refers most immediately to Lovelace (the recipient of the letter), it can just as well be taken to refer to the reader’s own desire for vengeance upon Sinclair for her treatment of Clarissa.
Kelly’s sequel allows Pamela to express her Christian sentiments while gratifying readers’ desire for observing punishment. In *Pamela’s Conduct*, the clergyman Mr. Peters, who had refused to assist Pamela in her attempt to escape from Mr. B., discovers that “his only Daughter, a Girl about Fifteen, is ruined by his Coachman, and is big with Child” (277). Pamela discusses the matter with Mr. B.:

> And is that an Affair, said I, to make Mr. Peters uneasy? How! Said he, could I have expected such a Question from the humane Pamela? Sir, replied I, what I said was to remind you how trifling a Matter the Ruin of a Child appeared to him, when it was the case of a poor Parent [Pamela’s father]…. Give me leave, my dear Sir, to shew you in how different a Light one and the same Misfortune appears when it is another’s, or our own. In doing this I entreat you to believe me that I have no manner of Resentment and far from exulting in this terrible Infliction on the poor Gentlemen, that from the Bottom of my Heart I pity him;… (277)

Kelly offers just the sort of retribution that Peters seems to deserve and that corresponds to poetic justice: a clergyman who cares more about his own security than Pamela’s ruin must suffer his own daughter’s ruin. In mock innocence, Pamela pretends surprise that Peters is “uneasy” at his unmarried daughter’s pregnancy. Pamela justifies her sarcastic treatment of Peters’ suffering (“Is Mr. Peters uneasy?”) because it fills a didactic purpose (“Give me leave, my dear sir”). While Pamela may express her distaste of “this terrible Infliction,” her sarcasm allows readers to enjoy Peters’ suffering as just recompense for his inactivity in relieving Pamela. Kelly’s Pamela can appear just as noble as readers might desire, while readers are still indulged with the display of the punishment they crave. Kelly is able to have his cake and eat it too.

It is important to recognize the complexity of Kelly’s depiction. Pamela’s mock innocent inquiry exhibits Pamela’s humanity: despite all of her Christian charity, there appears to be a side of her that appreciates Peters’ misfortune. Kelly’s Pamela may seem
more “human” to us than Richardson’s. Kelly’s Pamela fails to conform to the patterns of ideal conduct, and this is part of why her life sustains interest.

Although both Kelly’s Pamela and Richardson’s Pamela are flawed, their flaws arise from opposite impulses. In Kelly, Pamela’s weakness is her desire to punish others for her suffering. She is motivated by what, in its strongest forms, we would call hatred or the desire for revenge. In *Pamela II*, Pamela’s greatest weakness is not hatred, but love.\(^{123}\) It is her love for Mr. B. that prevents her from acting the part of the cheerful wife when she knows he is having an affair. It is only the violence of her grief that ultimately compels her to confront her husband. In Kelly’s *Pamela’s Conduct*, by contrast, Pamela maintains serene control over her emotions: after discovering proof of Mr. B.’s infidelity with Lady Frances, Pamela’s

Prudence was such that notwithstanding she had incontestable Proofs of the Hypocrisy and Levity of Lady Frances, she concealed the Knowledge of her Misfortune from her Husband, behaved in her usual Manner with Lady Frances, and endeavoured by her Observance and Tenderness to wean her Husband from her Rival and recover him to her self. (Kelly, II: 293-294)

Kelly and Richardson thus have radically divergent understandings of what motivates Pamela’s actions. For Kelly, Pamela loses her poise in the desire for revenge; for Richardson, Pamela loses control when she fears losing the people she loves. In

\(^{123}\) Richardson’s Pamela has some other failings, of course. For example, it seems that Pamela has failed to recognize that Mr. B. fears that their new baby will replace him in Pamela’s affections. Before the masquerade incident, the most significant quarrel between Mr. B. and Pamela is focused on whether Pamela will breast-feed. In his arguments against breast-feeding, Mr. B. notably refers to the Biblical character Reuben, who “committed an unpardonable crime” despite being breast-fed (IV: 36). Reuben’s “unpardonable crime” is the act of sleeping with his father’s wife (Genesis 35:22). In Mr. B.’s mind, breast-feeding seems to represent a sort of Oedipal sexual displacement of child with father. The medical understanding of breast-feeding would heighten Mr. B.’s sense of sexual displacement: doctors recommended that husbands not have sexual relations with nursing wives, since it might affect their milk production (Stone 270).
Pamela II, Pamela’s passionate concern for her family and friends—indeed, for all God’s creatures—serves as the chief cause of her action. It is her capacity for love and mercy that makes her most godlike (“the Creature cannot be more merciful than the Creator”) but also most vulnerable. Pamela’s spirit of charity and mercy risks alienating Richardson’s audience precisely because it values forgiveness and love over conflict and excitement.

Richardson’s concern with “poetic mercy” helps to account for his own drastic engraftment on Psalm 137, and his writing of a sequel. For Richardson, the heart of the Biblical message is charity and mercy, and he is willing to contradict the Psalter’s meaning to make that message clear. Despite a dread of engraftments, Richardson saw within them the possibility of crafting emendations, of making a text better than it was before. In writing a sequel, Richardson tried to employ double-entendres in such a way that two meanings were operative without the erasure of virtue. In Pamela II, Mr. B. mirrors the desires of Richardson’s readers for intrigue and excitement, and his cruel treatment of Pamela becomes a commentary on readers’ preoccupation with conflict over serenity and peace: ultimately, it is not Pamela II being tested, but the readers’ own systems of enjoyment. In “poetic mercy,” Richardson argues that the “wicked,” the ugly, and even the boring deserve our care and attention, and thus seems to reverse his earlier writings arguing against pity for criminals. As this survey suggests, we see that Mrs. Jewkes, double-entendres, and even Pamela II itself, may all deserve a second chance with readers.
CHAPTER 3:

“TOUCHED BY THE PENCIL, AND DAUBED WITH MUD”: RESISTANCE TOWARD CLOSURE IN SARAH FIELDING’S DAVID SIMPLE TRILOGY

Not all sequels are reputed to be failures. In the 1969 World’s Classics edition of Sarah Fielding’s The Adventures of David Simple (1744), Malcolm Kelsall hailed Fielding’s sequel Volume the Last as her “best work, tight in structure, ironic in conception, pathetic, sentimental, and grimly satirical” (54). Even though Volume the Last had not been in print since 1753, Kelsall recognized its artistic merit as undeniable. Subsequent editors have followed Kelsall’s practice of including the sequel in their editions of The Adventures. Peter Sabor, editor of the Eighteenth-Century Novels by Women edition of The Adventures (1998), praises Volume the Last for its “concentrated, single-volume form” (xxxi).124 The Penguin edition of The Adventures (2002) includes Linda Bree’s acclaim of the sequel’s “brilliantly incisive writing” and appreciation that “every last detail makes a direct contribution to the main narrative” (xxxi-xxxi). While there has been some critical contestation over which early printing of the text of The

124 Unless otherwise indicated, all citations from The Adventures of David Simple or Volume the Last are from the Sabor edition.
Adventures is preferable,\textsuperscript{125} no recent critic has contested the place of Volume the Last in the David Simple corpus.\textsuperscript{126}

Given the ease with which Volume the Last has been incorporated into modern editions of David Simple and into current criticism, it should be surprising that Sarah Fielding’s earlier sequel to David Simple, entitled Familiar Letters (1747), has been quickly dismissed. Malcolm Kelsall rejects Familiar Letters for inclusion in the World’s Classics edition of The Adventures because the work is “a collection of miscellaneous essays and short tales in letter form, having very little to do with The Adventures … [followed by] a true sequel … Volume the Last” (xi). Linda Bree’s Penguin edition suggests Familiar Letters was primarily a “money-making venture” and “does not carry their story forward in any significant way,” not a “true sequel” like Volume the Last (xxxi). While less overtly negative in his evaluation, Peter Sabor still rejects Familiar Letters because no edition has been published since 1759 and because “the work is only loosely connected to the Adventures of David Simple” (xii).\textsuperscript{127} Critics habitually ignore

\textsuperscript{125} The second edition of The Adventures (1744) includes the addition of a preface by Sarah’s brother Henry Fielding and includes numerous “corrections” made by Henry. Earlier critical consensus preferred Henry’s corrected edition: for example, Robert S. Hunting writes in “Fielding’s Revisions of David Simple” (1957) that Henry is an affectionate brother who reads through “the brave and bungling literary efforts of a loving, trusting sister” (121). Malcolm Kelsall chose to use the second (revised) edition for his World’s Classics edition (1969) but was criticized for his choice by Dale Spender in Mothers of the Novel (1986). Peter Sabor’s 1998 edition of The Adventures uses the text from Sarah Fielding’s first edition and includes appendices with Henry’s preface to the second edition and a list of Henry’s alterations.

\textsuperscript{126} For example, in The Sign of Angellica (1989), Janet Todd refers to Volume the Last simply as “part II of David Simple” (173). With few exceptions, contemporary essays on David Simple include attention to Volume the Last. (The only exceptions I have found are Hunting’s essay, mentioned above, and Gary Gautier’s article, “Henry and Sarah Fielding on Romance and Sensibility,” 1998. Gautier’s reason for omitting Volume the Last is that his article focuses on novels of the 1740s, and Volume the Last was published in 1753.)

\textsuperscript{127} Sabor’s argument from publication history is susceptible to the charge of special pleading. Familiar Letters was first published by subscription in 1747, had a Dublin edition in 1747, a second edition in 1752, and a German translation in 1759. Volume the Last—the sequel included in standard 20\textsuperscript{th}/21\textsuperscript{st}
Familiar Letters or dismiss the text from consideration.128 There are only two examples of sustained critical analysis of Familiar Letters, one of which designates it as a clearly inferior work.129

This critical disregard of Familiar Letters may partially stem from unquestioned assumptions about the nature of “the novel.” As G. A. Starr complains in “From Socrates to Sarah Fielding,” novel criticism is dominated by theorists who wrongfully privilege plot and action over analysis and feeling. According to Starr, “deeds matter no more [to Fielding] than thoughts or feelings” (108). Nevertheless, critics’ tendency to focus on plot has likely been a factor in the inclusion of Volume the Last: whether critics describe Volume the Last as “tight in structure” (Kelsall xi), as having a “concentrated, single-volume form” (Sabor xxxi), or making in “every last detail … a direct contribution to the main narrative” (Bree “Introduction” xxxi-xxxii), critical regard for Volume the Last consistently applauds the work for its unity of action and uniformity of purpose. Critics

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128 For example, see Richard Terry’s “David Simple and the Fallacy of Friendship” (1998). Terry writes that Familiar Letters “retained the cast of characters from the original work but little of its detail of plot and situation. It seems not to have been intended as a “sequel” as such to the Adventures, since in 1753 Fielding produced another work, presented to the public specifically under that guise” (525). Terry’s analysis obscures the fact that Familiar Letters was explicitly advertised as a “sequel” on the title page. Critics repeatedly argue that, since Volume the Last is a “sequel,” Familiar Letters cannot be one. See for example Sarah Fielding (1996), where Linda Bree writes that “it is probably most significant that arguments about the merits and demerits of sequels are rehearsed in the Preface to David Simple: Volume the Last (1753): evidently Fielding and her friends considered Volume the Last the true sequel to David Simple” (47); however, the fact that one work contains arguments about sequel-writing and another does not fails to make it “evident” that only one of them can be a “true” sequel. Many critics discredit Familiar Letters or fail to acknowledge the work at all in their criticism.

129 In Sarah Fielding (1996), Linda Bree’s opening pages largely downplay the artistic merits of Familiar Letters. Mika Suzuki’s essay, “‘The Words I in Fancy Say for you’: Sarah Fielding’s Letters and Epistolary Method” (1998), is more favorable. Although Suzuki offers valuable analysis of both Sarah Fielding’s “genuine” letters and the letters in Familiar Letters, she does not consider how Volume the Last modifies Fielding’s epistolary method in new and complex ways.
such as Betty A. Schellenberg and Alexander Pettit have called attention to the ways in which *The Adventures* challenges to assumptions about narrative and linearity, but they have largely ignored *Familiar Letters*, a work so disruptive of narrative that one critic has claimed it “has no plot” as a whole (Bree *Sarah Fielding* 47).\(^{130}\) It is important to consider whether *Familiar Letters* has been rejected not because of artistic inferiority, but because it fails to conform to critical assumptions about what a “sequel” should be or its rejection of Aristotelian principles such as “unity of action.”

Reading *Volume the Last* outside the context of *Familiar Letters* impoverishes our understanding of both texts and isolates *Volume the Last* from the conditions of its composition. There is little reason to believe that the publication of *Volume the Last* would cause readers to lose interest in *Familiar Letters*. Samuel Richardson certainly continued to find merit in the work: in a letter dated December 7, 1756 (*Familiar Letters* was published in 1747, *Volume the Last* was published in 1753), Samuel Richardson wrote to Sarah Fielding, “I have just gone through your two vols. Of Letters. Have re-perused them with great pleasure, and found many new beauties in them. What a knowledge of the human heart!” (*Correspondence of Samuel Richardson* II: 104)

Regardless of whether Richardson is representative of the majority of Fielding’s earliest

\(^{130}\) In *The Conversational Circle* (1996), Schellenberg writes that “the first portion of the novel in effect denies the power of linear form to lend any sort of progressive meaning to the social fragmentation of London society” (23); Schellenberg sees in the picaresque-like character of *The Adventures* a conscious rejection of the linear “hero-on-a-quest pattern for fiction both on the moral ground that it is inherently antisocial and on the representational ground that it falsely claims the individual can be improved through knowledge of the world” (25). Alexander Pettit argues in “*David Simple* and the Attenuation of ‘Phallic Power’” that, because “closure in the novel [is] an affirmation of the fantasies of phallocentric culture” (170), Sarah Fielding challenges linearity and the genre conventions of comedy and narrative by presenting a hero largely unmotivated by phallic desire. Both critics could develop their arguments more fully by discussing the sustained upsetting of linearity in *Familiar Letters*. 

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readers, he should provoke us to question whether critics should be so quick to dismiss *Familiar Letters* as an inferior work or unimportant for understanding *Volume the Last*.

This chapter makes two central contentions: first, I argue that *Familiar Letters* and *The Adventures* both work to undermine linearity and traditional treatment of narrative. Sarah Fielding repeatedly calls into question narrative’s tendency to privilege one ending as the “final ending” or one character as the “main character” and instead calls for an aesthetic that presents *multiple* endings and comparative lives within the same work. In doing so, she challenges the Aristotelian prescript of “unity of action” and develops what I term a “Plutarchian” model of narrative. In Plutarch’s *Lives*, a collection of comparative lives from prominent figures in Greece and Italy, Sarah Fielding finds an alternative to Aristotelian narrative and its emphasis on plot. Fielding’s use of epistolary form enables her both to express the contingency of David Simple’s earlier experiences and to place the letter-writers outside a world of linearity and time.

My second primary contention is that acquaintance with *Familiar Letters* is foundational for a full understanding of *Volume the Last*. In writing *Volume the Last*, Sarah Fielding postulates an ideal reader who is familiar with both *The Adventures* and *Familiar Letters* and who can recognize how the work is a response to both texts. While critics are quick to note how *Volume the Last* develops and complicates trajectories set forth in *The Adventures*, they pay little attention to how *Volume the Last* offers commentary on *Familiar Letters*. Notably, while *Familiar Letters* provide little personal detail or information surrounding the individual letters’ composition, in *Volume the Last*, Fielding shows where the various episodes fit into the sequence of David’s life. While *The Adventures* provides no example of epistolary correspondence, *Volume the Last*
incorporates and complicates examples of epistolary form partially in response to

*Familiar Letters.*

3.1 Sarah Fielding, Unity of Action, and Theories of Closure

It is easy to read *Volume the Last*’s pessimistic challenge to the happy ending of *The Adventures* solely as a result of Fielding’s own personal tragedies. Within the space of seven months in 1750-51, she lost three sisters and an eight-year-old nephew, much as David Simple loses his own loved ones in the 1753 *Volume the Last*.\(^\text{131}\) While personal bereavement certainly exerted a powerful influence on the composition of *Volume the Last*, it is not the sole cause of Fielding’s unease with happy endings. That is, Fielding’s dissatisfaction with *The Adventures*’ ending is not merely a response to immediate personal tragedies but also symptomatic of a consistent disillusionment with narrative conventions and the obligatory “happy ending.” *The Adventures, Familiar Letters*, and *Volume the Last*, despite their differences, are all expressions of alternatives to conventional narrative. In this section of the dissertation, I will consider a number of Sarah Fielding’s writings on the nature of narrative. These writings illuminate Fielding’s purposes in writing *Familiar Letters* and especially her search for a “Plutarchian alternative” to narratives based upon Aristotelian conventions. I will pay particular attention to Sarah Fielding’s handling of “poetic justice,” action and plot, and comparative biography.

\(^{131}\) Peter Sabor, Betty Schellenberg, et al. remark on this influence.
In *Remarks on Clarissa* (1750), Sarah Fielding presents a dramatic dialogue between supporters and critics of Samuel Richardson’s *Clarissa*. After Miss Gibson, the character most representative of Fielding’s own perspective, has defended Clarissa and Richardson from various charges, she discusses the ending with Bellario, who has come to admire Samuel Richardson’s work. Bellario writes to Gibson, “I confess I was against the Story’s ending unhappily, till I saw the Conclusion; but I now think the different Deaths of the many Persons … produce as noble a Moral as can be invented by the Wit of Man” (47). Bellario insists, “The true Difference between the Virtuous and the Vicious lies in the Mind,” not in whether they are rewarded or punished. An unhappy ending not only enables readers to see how a virtuous mind copes with disappointment. It also reminds them that what matters most is not “the ending” or the events that take place, but the internal developments and responses of the mind. As Bellario notices, there is a strong contrast between the deaths of Lovelace and Clarissa: “Wild was the Life of Lovelace, rapid was his Death; gentle was Clarissa’s Life, softly flowed her latest hours” (48). What is significant to Bellario is not the fate of the characters but that they meet their fate in radically different ways which correspond to their dispositions.

Like Richardson, Bellario explicitly attacks the doctrine of “poetic justice,” the artistic prescription that demanded a proper distribution between rewards for the virtuous and punishments for the wicked. Bellario writes in his letter to Miss Gibson,

Rightly I think in the Author’s Postscript is it observed, that what is called poetical Justice is chimerical, or rather anti-providential Justice; for God makes

132 Despite the 1750 publication date, according to Peter Sabor’s introduction to *Remarks on Clarissa*, Sarah Fielding presented a copy of the work on January 8, 1749 (iv).

133 See Sabor’s introduction, v.
his Sun to shine alike on the Just and the Unjust. Why then should Man invent a kind of imaginary Justice, making the common Accidents of Life turn out favourable to the Virtuous only? Vain would be the Comforts spoken to the Virtuous in Affliction, in the sacred Writings, if Affliction could not be their Lot.

But the Author of *Clarissa* has in his Postscript quoted such undoubted Authorities, and given so many Reasons on the Christian System for his Catastrophy, that to say more on that Head would be but repeating his Words. The Variety of Punishments also of those guilty Persons in this Work who do not die, and the Rewards of those who are innocent, I could go through, had not that Postscript … already done it to my Hands. (49)

Bellario’s argument relies heavily upon Richardson’s Postscript (“to say more on that Head would be but repeating his [Richardson’s] words” and “I could go through [the reasons], had not that Postscript … already done it to my Hands”), and does not offer any significant additional theological or philosophical justification for Richardson’s work.

Where Richardson and Fielding differ is in their analysis of narrative. For Richardson, it is more important to defend *Clarissa* on the level of plot and on endings than on character. For example, Richardson emphasizes in the “Postscript” that when Lovelace is punished, “his punishment [is] brought on through the intelligence of the very Joseph Leman whom he had corrupted; and by means of the very women whom he had debauched” (1498). Richardson is thus concerned to stress a causal link between a character’s actions and his/her fate: actions produce not simply consequences, but the plot itself.

In contrast, Fielding is more concerned with how patterns of thought and behavior express themselves in response to disturbance. Fielding’s interest is not so much in proving that Lovelace caused his own punishment as in proving there is a continuity in behavior between how Lovelace lived and how he died. As Fielding would later write in her preface to *The Countess of Dellwyn* (1759), “the Moral [of a story] should most
clearly manifest what seems to be … That the Mind, under the Influence of any indulged
vicious Passion, is of itself and essentially unhappy, even without the Consideration of
any Consequences …” (12). While Fielding may concur with Richardson’s theological
reasons for violating “poetic justice,” her more significant interest is in the “moral” that
can become observable only when virtue is unrewarded (but happy) while vice is
unpunished (but miserable).

Despite Fielding’s challenge against “poetic justice,” some of her own writings
appear to conform to the prescript. In The Governess (1749), a novel for children which
takes place in a girls’ boarding school, Miss Jenny Peace tells the story of “the cruel
Giant Barbarico, the good giant Benefico, and the pretty little dwarf Mignon” (69).
Barbarico decides to separate two lovers, Amata and Fidus, imprisoning the latter. Fidus,
saddened and fearing that Amata is dead, is comforted by Barbarico’s kind-hearted page,
Mignon. Angered at Mignon’s kindness, Barbarico throws Mignon in a dungeon where
he discovers a magic fillet that can paralyze Barbarico. With the help of Benefico,
Barbarico is slain with his own sword. Fidus, who cannot be happy about the victory
while his Amata is dead, is overjoyed to discover she still lives. Barbarico ultimately
causes his own death (much as did Lovelace), since it is Mignon’s imprisonment that
occasions the discovery of how to slay Barbarico. Jenny’s story concludes with a happy
ending for the virtuous and a punishment for the wicked.134

134 It is important to note that, even when events are favoring Barbarico, Fidus sleeps soundly, but
Barbarico’s sleep is restless; Fielding wants to make clear that Fidus’s content and Barbarico’s discontent is
not tied to any external circumstances or conditions but to their inner dispositions. “Poetic justice” is
insufficient in accounting for the inner disposition necessary to appreciate a happy ending.
Despite making a seeming capitulation to “poetic justice,” Sarah Fielding at the same time provides an unhappy ending. Before telling the story of the giant Barbarico, Jenny Peace, the narrator of the story, describes her own life history. She once had a favorite cat named Frisk. One day a group of school-boys stole the cat and tortured it until the cat escaped. Jenny continues, the cat “expired at my Feet. I was so struck with the Sight of the little Animal’s dying in that manner, that the great Grief of my Heart overflowed at my Eyes, and I was for some time inconsolable” (65). Jenny’s mother rebukes Jenny for her grief: “If, therefore, you give way to this Melancholy, how will you be able to perform your Duty towards me, in cheerfully obeying my Commands, and endeavouring, by your lively Prattle, and innocent Gaiety of Heart, to be my Companion and Delight?” (65-6) While Jenny’s own life story offers unpunished schoolboys, and a loving child chided because she cannot perform “lively Prattle,” Jenny’s fictional tale depicts a world in which a wicked giant is punished and virtue is rewarded. Even though Jenny was scolded for grieving over her dead cat, Fidus’s fidelity (reflected in his grief over Amata’s apparent death) is rewarded with the discovery that she still lives.

Juxtaposing these two very different endings enables Fielding to offer the happy ending of “poetic justice” while at the same time disturbing her audience with the failure of justice in the real world. Even if Mrs. Teachum agrees with Jenny that her Barbarico story contains “a very good Moral” (34), that “by Patience you will overcome all Difficulties” (34), Jenny Peace’s own story reveals that virtue does not always triumph, and that real life can be very disturbing. It is striking that an American edition of The Story of the Cruel Giant Barbarico, the Good Giant Benefico, and the Little Pretty Dwarf Mignon is published in 1768, which prints the fairy tale without Jenny Peace’s own
“unhappy ending.” The American publication thus prevents the ambivalence that Sarah Fielding intended to communicate. In Fielding’s own version, Amata’s miraculous return is contrasted with Jenny’s tortured cat who returns only to die at her feet. Even if Fielding affirms a “moral” that arises from the happy ending of poetic justice, at the same time she forcefully demands the acknowledgement that endings are often unhappy. Fielding wishes both for a “very good moral” of the Barbarico story and “as noble a Moral as can be invented by the Wit of Man” in Richardson’s.

As Fielding seeks an alternative to the moral of “poetic justice,” she also pursues an alternative to traditional narrative and its focus on action. Fielding writes in The Cry (1754),

Plutarch, in the beginning of his life of Alexander the Great, says, that “neither do the most glorious exploits always furnish us with the clearest discoveries of virtue or vice in men; sometimes as matters of less moment, an expression, or a jest, informs us better of their manners and inclinations than the most famous sieges, the greatest encampments, or the bloodiest battles whatsoever. Therefore, as those who draw by the life, are more exact in the lines and features of the face, from which we may often collect the disposition of the person, than in the other parts of the body: so I shall endeavour, by penetrating into, and describing the secret recesses and images of the soul, to express the lives of men, and leave their more shining actions and achievements to be treated of by others.” (The Cry 11-12.)

Fielding’s quotation from the Dryden edition of Plutarch’s Lives (1683-86) associates her work not merely with the novel or drama but with personal biography. Her form of biography is like Plutarch’s: she is not interested in great accomplishments, in “the most famous sieges, the greatest encampments, or the bloodiest battles.” Her interest is not in action but in manners and intent. Her aesthetic therefore demands as
central that which is normally placed on the periphery as unimportant to “the story.” A year after Fielding had written *Volume the Last* (1753), a triumph in narrative linearity and compressed form (according to critics), she has explicitly offered a critique of narrative autobiography and novel-writing that focuses solely on action.

Fielding’s reference to Plutarch in *The Cry* is not an isolated incident. In *The Countess of Dellwyn* (1759), Fielding writes,

Amongst all the Biographers, whose Characters were taken from real Life, none seem to have in so very intelligible a Manner acquainted their Readers with the true Characteristic of their Heroes, as *Plutarch*;… The short and pointed story of *Alexander* the Great’s enquiring of the Philosopher, “What a Man must do to become a God?” throws more Light on the inward Recess of the proud Hero’s mind, than if *Plutarch* had blazoned forth his own Parts by all the most pompous Descriptions of *Alexander’s* Conquests;… this Story … is also a sort of Key to every Action which is recorded of his life. (8)

In this passage, Fielding again refers to Plutarch’s treatment of Alexander the Great. Fielding’s purpose as a fiction-writer/biographer is to provide “a sort of Key to every Action” and to reveal “the inward Recess of the proud Hero’s mind.” Fielding’s preference for opening the inner mind is in tension with the narrative philosophy prized by event-centered narrative and by “poetic justice.” According to Thomas Rymer, the intent of “poetic justice” is to answer a mystery: it depicts “that constant order … that necessary relation and chain, whereby the causes and the effects, the virtues and rewards, the vices and their punishments are proportion’d and link’d together; how deep and dark

135 Compare Fielding’s remarks with Johnson’s in *Rambler* 60: “…the business of the biographer is often to pass slightly over those performances and incidents, which produce vulgar greatness, to lead the thoughts into domestick privacies, and display the minute details of daily life, where exterior appendages are cast aside, and men excel each other only by prudence and by virtue” (131).

136 We might compare Smollett’s remark in *Ferdinand Count Fathom* (1753) that a novel’s plan “cannot be executed with propriety, probability or success, without a principal personage to … unwind the clue of the labyrinth” (43). In this case, the “key” is not to the novel itself, but to the character.
soever are laid the Springs, and however intricate and involv’d are their operations” (75). While for Rymer the purpose of “poetic justice” is to show the link between actions and their consequences, Fielding is concerned with the cause of action and “the inward Recess.” Fielding thus challenges the closure-centric approaches to narrative upheld by “poetic justice” and found in the event-centered character of most fiction-writing.

Fielding’s narrative theory leads her not only to assault “poetic justice” and the centrality of events, but also the centrality of the individual character. Betty A. Schellenberg notes that The Adventures of David Simple provides not merely David Simple’s story, but the autobiographies of Camilla, Cynthia, and Isabella. Fielding’s fiction perpetually includes the lives not just of one character, but of many. The inadequately title The Countess of Dellwyn really offers comparative studies of the flawed Countess and the heroic Miss Bilson. The Governess offers a variety of characters and narrators. By 1744, Fielding had completed a draft of The Lives of Octavia and Cleopatra (first published in 1757), a work which would contrast the autobiographies of a virtuous Octavia and a selfish Cleopatra. With a few isolated exceptions such as The History of Ophelia (1760), Fielding consistently avoids focusing her work on one character alone.

137 Schellenberg writes, “David … relinquishes his own story as he becomes the auditor of the stories of others” (26).

138 According to Peter Sabor, 600 subscription receipts for The Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia were published in 1748 (xxxix). In the “Editor’s Introduction” to The Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia, Christopher D. Johnson claims that “Fielding had certainly completed a draft of the Lives by 9 July 1744” because Edward Young referred to this work in a letter to Samuel Richardson (17). This early dating is significant because it is closer to the dates of Familiar Lives (1747) and suggests an earlier Plutarchian influence, since Plutarch structured his biographies as comparative lives.
Fielding may hint at her purposes for this tendency toward comparative lives in *The Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia* (1757). Again depending upon Plutarch, Fielding writes,

> The Reader, like a Traveller, herein [Plutarch’s *Lives*] views the Manners of human Nature, and Customs of the World; the Intrigues of Policy, the Arts of Lovers, and the Exploits of Heroes; with the secret Springs and Motives of their Actions, at a much easier Expence indeed, and with no more Labour than turning over a new Leaf; which often unfolds to him as unexpected a Scene, and different a Prospect, as if he had changed his Climate, or taken a Flight from one Region to another. For such Reasons the celebrated Montaigne recommends the Lives of Plutarch, as the most useful and valuable Treasure of antient Learning. (ii)

Although Fielding again praises Plutarch’s revelation of “the secret Springs and Motives of [characters’] actions,” she is most concerned in this passage with the variety offered in Plutarch’s work (“different a prospect,” “taken a Flight from one Region to another”). Plutarch’s work is “most useful and valuable” because it provides a wide diversity of scenery and situations contained within one work.

This variety of scenery is in part due to the structure of the work. In *Lives*, Plutarch’s biographical descriptions of major figures from Greece and Italy are structured around the principle of pairing: although his subjects are distanced from each other by time, place, and circumstance, Plutarch compares how the two figures behave under various circumstances. For example, after offering the biography of Demosthenes, the Grecian orator, Plutarch offers the biography of Cicero, the Roman orator, and then compares the two. Plutarch thus literally offers “a flight from one Region to another,” from Athens to Rome, upsetting such conventions as “unity of place.” What makes Plutarch such a “valuable Treasure” is the fact that he is not focused on one mere individual but describes a variety of individuals and a variety of situations. It is probably
no accident that Fielding’s commendation of Plutarch occurs in The Lives of Octavia and Cleopatra. This work’s title suggests that it is structured as a comparative biography between Antony’s virtuous wife and Antony’s selfish paramour. The flaw in the Bildungsroman is that it can focus on only one life, when there are multiple roads. Writing ought to enable us to move beyond the limitation of subjective experience to compare diverse subjectivities and experiences.

This survey of Fielding’s other works suggests three characteristics of Fielding’s writing. First, in Remarks on Clarissa, Fielding adopts an oppositional stance toward “poetic justice” because it prevents “as noble a Moral as can be invented by the Wit of Man.” In The Governess, Fielding maintains this distrust of “poetic justice” by offering Jenny Peace’s life-story at the same time that she offers a fairy tale that does offer the “very good Moral” that patience will be rewarded; by juxtaposing these two endings, Fielding is able to use “poetic justice” and critique it. Second, Fielding defends her narrative art through appeals to Plutarch’s biographical approach, which is concerned not with action itself but with supposedly trivial details which are personally revealing. Fielding is not interested in “unity of action” so much as “unity of mind,” the accurate representation of the labyrinthine mind. Third, Fielding is interested not only in representing the intricacies of the individual mind, but in representing and comparing a diversity of minds and characters. These three characteristics of Fielding illuminate her narrative techniques in the David Simple story.
3.2 The Adventures of David Simple, Doubling, and Narrative

The Adventures of David Simple offers the story of a man who, after being betrayed by his brother Daniel and gaining an inheritance, goes on a search throughout London to find a true friend. On the way, he finds several friends, all of whom he rescues from poverty and oppression, and one of whom he makes his wife. Fielding thus offers a hero who, in the words of Linda Bree in Sarah Fielding, “provide[s] providential relief for other victims of society” and is himself “an instrument of poetic justice” (33, italics mine). The apparent linearity of Fielding’s design in this first novel may seem to justify the claim that Familiar Letters is not a “true sequel,” because it lacks narrative cohesion.

Nevertheless, The Adventures is susceptible to a similar charge of narrative disconnectedness. As Linda Bree notes, The Adventures offers multiple episodes which critics sometimes dismiss as detached (43). Betty Schellenberg argues that the first part of David Simple intentionally avoids linearity and progression to demonstrate that “hero on a quest” narratives are intrinsically antisocial (25). Familiar Letters and The Adventures are similarly engaged in challenging assumptions about narrative form.

This section of my dissertation has two arguments. First, I argue that the seemingly disconnected episodic character of The Adventures is in part owing to Sarah Fielding’s technique of “doubling (or “pairing”), of representing different characters or situations which are meant to be compared and contrasted, much as in Plutarch’s Lives.140

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139 Bree’s reference to “poetic justice” is revealing, given Fielding’s own critique of the technique in her Remarks on Clarissa (1750).

140 Linda Bree suggests a similar argument in Sarah Fielding: “…the overarching structure of David Simple operates through the rhythm of the connections within and between these various episodes…. Elsewhere, situations, characters, and moral positions deliberately rehearse, or contrast with, each other. At
However, unlike Plutarch’s *Lives*, the constraints of narrative prevent *The Adventures* from offering a “true” doubling. By a “true” doubling, I mean a pair in which the characters or outcomes being contrasted are given equal weight. A novel which uses doubling only incidentally must exclude alternatives at the end, much as David Simple’s happy ending diminishes the importance of Isabelle’s tragic story. Even though Fielding tries to maintain a tension between two different ways of viewing the world (optimistic or pessimistic) in the characters of Varnish and Spatter, narrative closure demands that Varnish’s optimism seem to triumph in the first novel.

Second, I argue that Fielding’s technique of “pairing” or “doubling” is important not only as it illuminates the contrast between characters and situations within *The Adventures*, but because *The Adventures* and *Familiar Letters* themselves function as a contrasting pair of alternative forms of narrative. Sarah Fielding’s habit of providing doubles and contrasts within a text provides a natural transition to the doubling that takes place outside a text in the form of a sequel, or, (using Gerard Genette’s terminology) a hypertext. The first novel’s lack of “true” doubling may help explain why Fielding writes a work that does not appear to be a “true” sequel: the epistolary form of *Familiar Letters*.

its most basic, ‘pairs’ of moral qualities exemplified through character illuminate the question, which Fielding addresses throughout, of what constitutes a workable and virtuous philosophy of life” (43). My difference from Bree is that I have tried to contextualize this tendency within Fielding’s larger corpus (especially those works which invoke Plutarch) and that I argue this “pairing” methodology illuminates Fielding’s use of narrative within *Familiar Letters*. Even though Bree defends the cohesion and unity of *The Adventures* despite her technique of doubling and her insetting of stories, Bree does not extend the same principled defense of cohesion to *Familiar Letters*.

141 In fact, Fielding sometimes uses several groups of doubles. In the inset story of Corinna, when contrasting six different gentlemen suitors, the narrator elaborates on how “every two of them were a perfect Contrast to each other” (201).

142 According to Genette in *Palimpsests*, a hypertext “is “any text derived from a previous text either through simple transformation … or through indirect transformation” (7).
*Letters* offers an alternative to “unity of action” and challenges the finality of the happy ending in a way that the contrasts and inset stories within *The Adventures* do not.

Doubling, by its nature, calls into question all presumptions of unity or the finality of any ending. In avoiding the artificiality of linearity and endings, Fielding at the same time creates an epistolary world that appears outside of time and unsusceptible to change.

From the very beginning of *The Adventures*, Fielding signals both her interest in doubling and in challenges to unity. The novel initially appears to be about two brothers: David Simple and his brother Daniel. Growing up, both boys are characterized by “the most perfect Unity and Friendship” (8), and there “never appeared any thing mean in their Actions” (7, italics mine). It initially appears that the slight differences between the two brothers improve their condition, since Daniel’s “cunning” enables him to prevent others from imposing on his older brother’s credulity. After their father’s death, both brothers cope in different ways: David overcomes his sadness through “philosophical considerations” and “natural calmness,” and Daniel’s natural gaiety restores him. The two brothers “seemed to be getting into their former State of Happiness” (8, italics mine).

The first chapter suggests a unity and friendship between two brothers of differing temperament.

This perceived unity is ultimately a fiction. In the first chapter, Fielding uses words such as “seemed” and “appeared” to suggest a unity that is in fact absent. It initially appeared that the differing qualities of the two brothers fostered unity, enabling them to compensate for each other’s weaknesses; the second chapter reveals instead that
Daniel’s “cunning” renders him incapable of true love or unity. Fielding begins her novel by showing that apparent unity often breaks down when external events (such as a father’s death) intrude. Personality differences that had appeared complementary ultimately prove contradictory, and the doubling and contrasting that takes place within the fraternal relationship eventually breaks that relationship apart.

The relationship fractures because the brothers’ motives are too different. Fielding reveals in the second chapter that even Daniel’s apparent concern for David stemmed from selfishness: Daniel prevented others from imposing on David’s generosity so he could gain David’s money for himself. Daniel’s apparent fraternal affection stems from his position of weakness as a younger brother; after he forges his father’s will, he takes the entire inheritance for his own. Fielding employs a third person omniscient narrator who quickly moves between both brothers’ minds and contrasts their attitudes: in one sentence, she describes David’s gratitude for his brother’s “love,” in the next sentence, describes that Daniel “hugg’d himself in his Ingenuity” (12). Fielding thus juxtaposes two competing images within the space of two sentences: David who loves his brother, and Daniel who loves (and hugs) himself.

This breakdown of fraternal unity is illustrative of the narratological tensions within The Adventures. The more extreme the contrast between the two brothers, the more difficult it is to achieve unity. Similarly, the more extreme the contrast is between

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143 Fielding writes that Daniel “could easily find out an ill-disposed Mind in another, by comparing it with what passed in his own Bosom” (9).

144 According to the OED, “Hug” can mean to squeeze with affection, but it can also mean to congratulate oneself. Since the previous sentence mentions Daniel’s perceived affection for David (“David was very happy in the Proofs he thought he had of his Brother’s Love”), it is an especially apt word. Just as “hug” can have two different meanings (affectionate or self-congratulatory), Daniel’s behavior is likewise ambiguous.
the different inset stories—that is, the more episodic or picaresque *The Adventures* itself becomes—the less the narrative seems able to offer any coherent unity of design. Critics rarely challenge a lack of unity on the microcosmic level (i.e., the conflict and contrast between the two brothers), but they *do* challenge a lack of unity on the macrocosmic level (i.e., the contrast between different episodes and the juxtaposition of different life stories).

David eventually encounters more doubles. When David discovers that Daniel has forged their father’s will, David resolves to travel through London to find a true friend with whom to share his restored inheritance, meeting with various disappointments along the way (such as an unsuccessful courtship of the likable Nanny Johnson). During his travels, David encounters a dynamically contrasting pair in the persons of Spatter and Varnish. While Spatter always “imputed good Actions to bad Motives,” Varnish “sought out good Motives for every Action” (74). Far from offering a balanced picture of a person’s character, the interaction between Spatter and Varnish make the world unintelligible and the truth hopelessly obscure. Fielding describes how Varnish’s attempt to “paint” (or represent) a character is completely undermined through Spatter’s interference:

> If the Reader has a mind to have a lively Idea of this Scene, let him imagine to himself, a contention between a Painter, who is finishing his favourite Piece, and a Man who places his Delight in throwing Dirt; as fast as the one employs his Art to make it beautiful, and hide its Blemishes, the other comes with Shoals of Dirt, and bespatters it all over. And poor *David* was in the Situation of a Man, who was to view his Piece, which had thus alternately been touched by the Pencil, and daubed with Mud, till it was impossible to guess what it originally was. (74)

In this lively metaphor, Fielding suggests a new way of looking at (or creating) art. Rather than being the product of a solitary individual (Varnish), the art “Piece” is in
fact a combination of two contesting voices. In *The Art of the Novel*, Henry James describes his own revulsion at overlapping pictures: “A story was a story, a picture a picture, and I had a mortal horror of two stories, two pictures, in one” (83-4). In Fielding’s imagery, we do not have the appalling merger merely of two pictures, but of two artists (Varnish and Spatter) and two materials (paint and dirt). What David sees is not the unity of design (“touched by the Pencil”) but disunity and conflict. Varnish’s art and Spatter’s dirt become so intertwined that David cannot see either perspective standing by itself: “it was impossible to guess” what Varnish’s perspective originally was, beneath the contrasting dirt of Spatter. Where Jane Barker’s artwork offers different patches, Fielding’s artwork effectually superimposes contrasting patches on top of each other.

Fielding’s metaphor emphasizes the dialogic character of her own novel. Earlier, I have argued that Bakhtin’s notion of “dialogue” helps us challenge critical frameworks which treat an artistic work as a closed system. Bakhtin disagrees with the assumption that “the artistic work as a whole … is self-sufficient and closed authorial monologue, one that presumes only passive listeners beyond its own boundaries” (274). Bakhtin’s insights inform our understanding of “intertextual dialogue,” in which a sequel acts to disrupt or contrast with an earlier work. In *Volume the Last*, it is as if Fielding seeks to be a Spatter to her own Varnish—she decides to “throw dirt” upon Simple’s happy ending. As Crusoe’s journal is divided into two separate columns (labeled “good” and “bad”), so Sarah Fielding creates a rupture between *The Adventures* and *Volume the Last*, between Varnish’s optimism and Spatter’s pessimism. In *Familiar Letters*, Fielding will seek an “intertextual dialogue” in which she challenges endings altogether.
Fielding’s own sympathies (and the readers’) are naturally directed toward the noble painter rather than the irritable dirt-thrower. At first, it may seem easy to reject Spatter as a mere misanthrope and to accept Varnish’s perspective at face-value. David Simple himself is charmed by his conversation and “could not help applauding Mr. Varnish” (74), who “turned Extravagance into Generosity, Avarice into Prudence, and so on” (74). Varnish turns evil into good, not by changing an action, but in changing how it is perceived. Viewed from a different perspective, extremes can become transformed into Aristotelian moderation (e.g., extravagance into generosity).

Despite this apparent favoritism toward Varnish, Fielding relies just as much upon Spatter for her narrative art. While Varnish encourages the metamorphosis from evil to good, Spatter’s presence allows for endless metamorphoses, and a return to evil. David Simple’s spirit of benevolence is inadequate if it is isolated from the awareness of malevolence in the world. As in Pope’s Essay on Man, David (and the novel) hangs between two perspectives, in doubt to deem humanity a God or a beast. David requires Spatter’s assistance so that he can recognize Varnish’s faults: through Spatter’s pessimistic insight, David recognizes that Varnish “kept up an eternal Cheerfulness, only because he had none of those Sensations which arise from Good-nature” (98). David needs their competing perspectives so that no one perspective (even the most charitable one) becomes reified. It becomes impossible for David to view either perspective independently without another, competing voice. Both Varnish and Spatter are ultimately flawed because they can only see the surface: they may varnish or spatter the outside, but the inside remains inaccessible. Neither Varnish’s nor Spatter’s perspective is ultimately vindicated.
At the same time that Fielding values contrasting different perspectives, she is also suspicious of the manipulative powers of contrast in art. In Book IV, Fielding describes two sisters, Sacharissa and Corinna. As her name implies (since her name means “sweetness”), Sacharissa has a sweet disposition and is marked by her remarkable kindness. Corinna shares her name with a famous ancient Greek poet and is a master at self-possession: she has “got such a Command of [her Eyes], that she could lower their Fierceness, and turn them into the greatest Softness imaginable…. She spoke in so many different Tunes of Voices … that it might truly be said, in her was found ‘Variety in one’” (199-200). While Sacharissa is merely softness, Corinna is softness and fierceness.

Corinna emphasizes the importance of contraries for engaging the interest of suitors. Corinna tells her sister,

all the Pleasures of Life are heightened by sometimes experiencing their contrary.—Even Fewel burns the stronger for being dashed with cold water.—But then indeed we ought to have Judgment enough not to throw too much, lest we extinguish it instead of increasing the Flame. (201)

To gain suitors’ interest, Corinna must alternate between encouraging their flames and throwing water on them. Corinna’s remarks compare to Crusoe’s reflections in Robinson Crusoe that “we never see the true State of our Condition, till it is illustrated to us by its Contraries; nor know how to value what we enjoy, but by the want of it” (102). Crusoe’s own insight into human nature is easily integrated into a theory of manipulation.

Corinna’s reflections are ultimately a reflection on the power of speech and writing. It is hardly accidental that Fielding has chosen Corrina’s name to correspond with the name of a famous Greek poet. It is likely that Fielding is conscious of the fact that Corinna’s insights could just as well offer a commentary on what attracts an author’s
“suitors,” i.e., readers. As I earlier argued, in the “Crusoe Trilogy,” Defoe is highly conscious of the need of narrative to present contraries and conflict in order to sustain readers’ interests, which is why he tried to elevate in narrative that which was opposed to narrative: mercy and peace. Fielding clearly prefers Sacharissa’s ethic to Corinna’s, as represented in the fact that Sacharissa marries a sensible man, and Corinna marries a vain man. Nevertheless, Fielding can elevate Sacharissa’s opposition to “contraries” only by employing “contraries,” i.e., contrasting her with her sister. Fielding’s novel must, in a sense, become the very thing that it is trying to criticize.

Fielding’s own novel risks applying Corinna’s practices to narrative. Much as Corinna must alternate between encouraging a fire and dashing it with cold water, so too does Fielding hint at David’s joy (e.g., his friendship with his brother Daniel or his courtship of Nanny Johnson) only repeatedly to thwart its actualization. We cannot have an interesting story without “contraries” such as Varnish and Spatter. At the same time that David needs contraries in order to see beyond one character’s limited perspective, contraries encourage readers to enjoy conflict and their own manipulation over truth.

This insight into the nature of literary composition explains the purposes of Volume the Last. Corinna’s art lies in knowing how much cold water is too much. From Corinna’s critical standpoint, Volume the Last is clearly an exercise in poor judgment, since the sequel offers a continuous sequence of death and despair with little relief: Fielding does throw “too much” cold water on the readers’ hopes for David’s happiness, since one effective means of exposing the manipulative tendencies in Corrina’s art is to render pain unbearable. It is not surprising that Volume the Last was so unpopular with Fielding’s early audience: Corinna’s insights would have led Fielding to expect that such
might be the case. *Volume the Last* thus reflects a self-conscious decision on Fielding’s part to challenge the conventions of narrative to which she herself had conformed. While Defoe’s *Farther Adventures* challenges an audience’s predisposition to favor conflict by showing them mercy and peace, *Volume the Last* challenges this desire by showing conflict at its most excruciating. Both Defoe’s and Fielding’s sequel thus expose possible flaws in conventional narratives and endings.

At the end of *The Adventures of David Simple*, it seems that paradise has been regained, and poetic justice’s ideal of a happy ending for the virtuous has been realized: David Simple has found a happy life with his wife Camilla, her brother Valentine and his wife Cynthia. However, as critics such as Linda Bree and Betty Schellenberg have argued, the inset story of Isabelle complicates the ending of *The Adventures*. In Isabelle’s story, the seemingly happy quartet of the Marquis de Stainville, his wife Dorimene, his sister Isabelle, and her suitor Dumont is upset and runs into tragedy when Dorimene falls in love with Dumont. Believing Dumont has betrayed him, Stainville kills Dumont and stabs himself, Dorimene poisons herself, and Isabelle enters a nunnery.

Because the end of Isabelle’s story is tragic, it holds a peculiar power over David Simple and his friends. When David’s group decide to compare their own sufferings (which seem now at an end), David and Valentine contend that Cynthia and Camilla have suffered the worst. Cynthia and Camilla reply “That, indeed, they had always thought their own Misfortunes as great as human Nature could bear, till they had heard poor Isabelle’s Story” (196). Although Isabelle is outside their group, they cannot help

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145 Schellenberg writes that the optimism of David Simple and his party about friendship “is defeated in the face of Isabelle’s experience” (*The Conversational Circle* 31), and Bree writes that “Isabelle’s world is in many respects a distorted, fantasy version of David’s” (*Sarah Fielding* 44).
contrasting their own good fortune with the tragic lot of her circle of friends. Neither an individual nor a group can truly be detached from other groups because the human mind is drawn to comparison.

Fielding uses this comparison to encourage self-analysis and awareness of contingency. David Simple and his friends must contemplate a world where virtue is not rewarded, and Isabelle’s fate was their own. Isabelle’s story might have ended happily if events were different, and David’s story could have ended tragically. Both endings are equal possibilities, and there is no room for presumptive certainty of happiness.

The general tendency of conclusions in narrative is to close off possible endings. A novel does not offer a “choose your own adventure” story, just as a concerto does not allow for the improvisation of jazz. Novelistic form lends itself toward stability and ultimately reification, because the endings of novels typically do not change and may be received as unchallengeable. As Samuel Richardson suggests in a letter to Elizabeth Carter (dated December 17, 1748), readers were so upset with the ending of Clarissa because they had already had completed the ending in their own minds: “A great deal of this trouble [about Clarissa’s ending] I have had from publishing a work in Parts which left everyone at liberty to form a catastrophe of their own” (Carroll 117). Because of the delay in publishing installments, readers are able to fix their own imagined ending as the “right” ending.

The very notions of “unity of action” and of “the ending,” in their Aristotelian formulation, emphasize necessity over alternative possibility and contingency. In chapter 7 of Poetics, Aristotle writes that an end “is that which itself naturally follows some other thing, either by necessity, or as a rule, but has nothing following it” (65). Similarly, the
conception of “poetic justice” (especially as elaborated by Thomas Rymer) implies that the rewards and punishments for characters depicted in an artistic work must proceed from necessity and a clearly Providential order. The author who wishes to depict the apparent contingency and randomness of the world is in an artistic bind: if aestheticians most value works that manifest design and plan, how can an author accurately represent disorder in the world without appearing to be a deficient writer? “Poetic justice” permits the virtuous only one kind of fate, the wicked another. By inserting Isabelle’s story, Fielding calls into question the stability of the happy ending for the virtuous.

Despite the presence of Isabelle’s story, the “happy ending” of The Adventures dominates the narrative. Rather than concluding with a contrast between David Simple’s happy family and Isabelle’s broken relationships, the novel ends with a contrast between Simple’s family and “the world”: Fielding writes, “It was this Care—Tenderness---and Benevolence to each other, which made David, and his amiable Company happy; who, quite contrary to the rest of the world, for every trifling Frailty blamed themselves …” (238) Much as “poetic justice” separates the virtuous from the wicked and the happy from the unhappy, so Fielding concludes her own contrast by separating David Simple’s family from “the rest of the World.” Contrast with the world (“quite contrary …”) has become, for Simple’s family, the separation and isolation from the world and from the unhappy fate of Isabelle and her friends. Care and benevolence have made the family’s happiness a concrete and seemingly perpetual reality, detached from the outside world. Unlike Varnish, it seems that Fielding has provided an artwork that has detached its characters from the mud and cynical stain of Spatter’s world and achieved a true familial unity never possible with David’s brother Daniel.
Fielding’s technique of doubling calls into question all presumptions of unity or the finality of any ending. Doubling and contrasts call into question the possibility of unity, both in terms of human relationships (e.g., David and Daniel) and in terms of a coherent, unified story (e.g., the novel’s episodic character and introduction of inset stories). Contrasting may promote the observer’s dissatisfaction with both sides represented in a pair—neither Varnish nor Spatter offer resolution. Even contrast itself can become manipulative or self-indulgent, as when Corinna uses contrast to control others. Contrast must itself be contrasted and challenged, as when Sacharissa challenges Corinna’s use of contrast. While contrasts can remind characters of alternative possibilities and contingency (e.g., Isabelle’s fate), they can also lead to a false sense of confidence and separation, as when Simple’s family becomes separated and “contrary” to the world at the novel’s end. Even though Fielding’s doubling makes room for virtue unrewarded and unhappy Isabelles, the drive toward narrative closure demands that the happy ending dominate and that alternative possibilities seem closed off. The dissonance of doubling has become the harmony of happy endings.

3.3 *Familiar Letters*: Neither Beginnings nor Endings

Thus far, I have been suggesting that, even before *Volume the Last*, Sarah Fielding’s preference for comparative lives has provoked her to challenge the focus on a single character or a single life. As I shall argue, *Familiar Letters* offers a more successful emancipation from character-centric and closure-centric narrative through epistolary form. Epistolary form enables Fielding to reflect on the contingency of David Simple’s “happy ending.” The negative effect of epistolary form is that it encourages
readers to place an undue trust in the sincerity of “familiar letters.” Further, by placing epistle writers outside of linearity, beginnings, and endings, *Familiar Letters* suggests that, even if David Simple’s happy ending was once a result of contingency, it is no longer susceptible to change. These potential weaknesses have an effect on the ways in which Fielding constructs *Volume the Last*.

In *Familiar Letters*, epistolary form permits Sarah Fielding to provide a diversity of correspondents: of the forty-four letters, there are twenty-four different letter-writers writing from nine different provinces. Some of the letters are not even written by Sarah Fielding. The chief letter-writers are Cynthia (eleven letters) and Camilla (seven letters). Eighteen letter-writers author only one letter. Most of the letter-writers never appeared in the earlier work *The Adventures of David Simple*. Confronted with such a diversity of perspectives and a lack of linear plot progression, the reader may understandably write the work off simply as “not a true sequel.”

Before making such an assessment, however, it is important to consider the effects of this epistolary form. Perhaps the most illuminating consideration on the effect

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146 In *Sarah Fielding*, Linda Bree claims that there are forty-five letters (46), but she seems to be designating *Vision* as a “letter” (even though there is no addressee).

147 Cynthia, Camilla, David Simple, Spatter, Varnish, Delia, Leonora, an unnamed gentleman, Ferdinand, Theodosius, Lysimachus, Cratander, Sophronia, Celia, Pharamond, Cleomenes, Aurelia, Silvia, Lavinia, another unnamed gentleman, Valentine, a French gentleman, Prudentia Flutter, and Lucy Rural.


149 According to Sarah Fielding, Henry wrote five of the letters (as well as the preface), and James Harris wrote two dialogues. Some critics have contended that Henry is also responsible for the portion of *Familiar Letters* entitled “A Vision”: Martin Battestin suggests that “it is likely that he [Henry] also wrote the final section” of *Familiar Letters* (14). For a defense of Fielding’s authorship, see Sheridan Baker’s “Did Fielding Write ‘A Vision’?” (1989) My own argument concurs with Baker in attributing the composition to Sarah Fielding.
of epistolary form in Sarah Fielding’s *Familiar Letters* is in its “Preface,” written by
Sarah’s brother Henry. Henry Fielding writes:

> I know not of any essential Differences between this, and any other way of
> writing Novels, save only, that by making use of Letters, the Writer is freed from
> the regular Beginnings and Conclusions of Stories, with some other Formalities … (I. viii)

> It is the lack of a sense of an ending—of the “regular Beginnings and Conclusions
of Stories”—that makes *Familiar Letters* so difficult to accommodate to our sense of
what a novel is. Fielding’s project resembles Shaftesbury’s own, when he describes his
sequel, *Miscellanies*, as a work “without a real beginning, a middle or an end” (349).
Even though Richardson, like Fielding, writes novels by “making use of letters,”
Richardson’s epistolary novels maintain the conventionality of an ending (even though,
as in the case of *Clarissa*, the work might offer an ending the reader does not expect). As
Linda Bree notes, “Fielding deliberately rejects many of the qualities Richardson
demonstrates to be the strengths of writing in letters,” such as the use of suspense (48).
While Bree views Fielding’s editorial decisions as signs of weakness and didacticism, I
contend that they show Fielding trying to work out a consistent alternative to
conventional narrative. Suspense does not merely heighten a reader’s interest; it also
encourages readers to become focused on the ending, on viewing “the story” as a closed,
coherent unit rather than as part of a comparative system.

An interest in “endings” and closure was of particular importance during the time
that Fielding was composing *Familiar Letters*. As Peter Sabor suggests, Fielding appears
to have been composing the sequel from 1744-1747 (xi). Fielding’s time of composition
intersects with a pivotal moment in British history. In 1745, England was held in fear by
the attempted invasion of the Pretender in order to seize control of the throne from the Hanoverian line; the Pretender had even made successful incursions into Scotland. In Henry Fielding’s journal *The True Patriot*, a February 1746 announcement reports that Sarah Fielding’s sequel will in fact be delayed because of these tumultuous times:

> The Author of *David Simple* hopes her Subscribers will not take it amiss that she is obliged to defer the Publication … as her Friends were totally prevented by the late Public Confusion … nor could she herself think it decent to solicit a private Subscription, in a time of such Public Danger. (148)

*Familiar Letters* is thus composed at a time in which there is a heightened awareness of political and social upheaval. As Peter Sabor argues, it appears that the book’s delay in publication is due not to friends’ failure to subscribe but to Fielding’s slowness in completing the work. (*Familiar Letters* would not be published until April 1747, over a year and a half after the 1745 rebellion.) The “Public Confusion” surrounding the rebellion is of such importance that it disrupts Fielding’s private life and hinders the composition of her text. This national disturbance thus may provide a relevant context for understanding the circumstances surrounding the sequel’s composition.

The 1745 rebellion inspired national anxiety and a sense that England was at a defining turning point. The “present rebellion” led to a host of pamphlets and newspaper headlines informing concerned citizens about the prospects for the future. In *A Serious Address to the People of Britain* (1745), Henry Fielding, Sarah’s brother, warns that the present rebellion threatens nothing less than “the total destruction” of the English constitution (2). Henry describes the stakes in absolute terms: “It is a Cause, Gentlemen, in which our All is concerned … every Blessing which can make Life dear to ourselves,
or our Posterity, are at stake” (2). England’s entire future hinges upon whether the rebellion is put down.

Henry Fielding is not alone in describing the conflict in such absolute terms. In *Four Letters Taken from the General Evening Post*, “Montanus” writes that the threat is so “glaring” that “those who are not alarmed by it, deserve the sharpest Whips and the heaviest Chains, without Redemption or End” (4). Those who fail to be sufficiently concerned about England’s immediate future merit nothing less than eternal torment in hell. In *Britannia’s Alarm*, Thomas Gibbons describes the future of England and liberty should the Pretender triumph:

…at one wastful Blow to strike the Crown
From George’s Head, to tear up Liberty
From its fair Roots, and perish it for ever. (6)

Such remarks highlight the sense of finality surrounding the immediate events of 1745. Without a Hanoverian victory, liberty would perish “for ever.” Long before David’s tragic end in *Volume the Last*, the British people were obsessed with the possibility of a tragic ending to their own national story. The anticipated results of the 1745 conflict would have such far-reaching consequences that its effects could only be described in absolute and eternal terms (e.g., “our All is concerned,” liberty has perished “for ever,” and the complacent should suffer “without Redemption or end”). It might not be too much of an exaggeration to call these texts “apocalyptic.”

Given such anxiety concerning how England’s story will “end,” it is surprising that Fielding’s *Familiar Letters* has no ending at all. While the events of 1745 inspired Sarah’s brother Henry to incorporate the war as a plot device in the novel *Tom Jones*, Sarah’s own epistle-writers are noticeably vague about the time and circumstances of
their writing. Even though Sarah Fielding’s own writing has been impinged upon by the tumultuous political situation surround 1745, her own characters seem uninterested or unaware of any contemporary events. In *Familiar Letters*, Fielding rarely includes temporal indicators, and letter-writers only give vague personal details, thereby giving the letters an essentially timeless quality.\(^{150}\)

The epistolary form’s lack of “beginnings” and “endings” can be read as Sarah Fielding’s subversion of a contemporary preoccupation with endings. While her brother describes the politics of the moment as a situation in which “our All is concerned,” *Familiar Letters* is concerned with what transcends the moment. While others might focus on action and national events, Sarah Fielding’s own concerns are with private life and how even apparent trivialities may reveal someone’s character and commitments. Rather than focusing on deeds and national events, *Familiar Letters* challenges the artificiality and conventionality of an ending. Fielding provides an alternative to the plot-centered form of fiction and national discourse.

Fielding’s diversity of letter writers prevents readers not simply from focusing on endings, but from too closely identifying with any one character. Both the critics Linda Bree and Mika Suzuki call attention to letter-writers’ distance: Fielding’s letter-writers are more concerned with describing other people’s experiences than their own. Yet such detachment, and such a diversity of different epistle-writers, may both be necessary to prevent the reader from becoming too much attached to any one character’s perspective.

\(^{150}\) The letters Sarah writes typically include the location of the letter-writer and the recipient without giving a date. Henry’s letters often have a date—e.g. letter 40, “London, December 20,” and letter 42, “Sunday Morning, Seven o’Clock, just out of Bed.” No letter appears to date the year, and given the long span of time in which Sarah was writing *Familiar Letters*, it is difficult to historicize the letters: such ambiguity may well have been intentional.
In narrative, there is always the danger that conventions become reified through repetition, or that one character’s perspective may dominate through the intensity of experience.

In *Familiar Letters*, Sarah Fielding describes the danger of allowing earlier personal experience to blind a person from accurate judgment. Fielding describes a scene in which one character is puzzled by how much the handsome and noble Bellmour permits his ugly wife to dominate him. He is told,

> Odd as it may appear, a handsome Woman would hold no Power over Bellmour. He has often been present, where the Affectation of Beauty has been troublesome to the Company; and therefore joined the Idea of Beauty and Affectation so strongly together, that he resolved to marry a woman, who was, as he thought, *too ugly to be affected*: Nay, he has joined the Idea of Sense too to Ugliness. (I: 187-188)

In this anecdote, Fielding focuses on the danger of personal experience. Through repeated encounters with affected beautiful women, Bellmour has created a false association of the idea of beauty with the idea of affectation. As common as it might be to associate beauty with affectation, such identifications are disastrous because it would encourage someone to reduce the complexity of human experience to a generalization. Much as the experience of reading *Pamela or Virtue Rewarded* may encourage one to associate virtue with a temporal reward, so too does a narrative have the tendency toward elevating one generalization. In *Familiar Letters*, Sarah Fielding offers a good number of beautiful women who are affected, but she offers ugly ones, too.

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151 Compare John Locke’s reflections on the association of ideas in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Locke writes that sometimes ideas “come to be united in some men’s minds, that ‘tis very hard to separate them, they always keep in company, and the one no sooner at any time comes into the understanding, but its associate appears with it” (355).
This diversity in representation calls into question Mika Suzuki’s characterization of \textit{Familiar Letters} as a work whose orientation “is toward order, closure, and meaning” (204). To defend her claim, Suzuki points toward the epistolary writers’ habits of generalization: “there are frequent remarks in generalized terms rather than those emphasizing the particularities of the individual experience” (204). As I have already suggested, any characterization of Fielding’s habit toward “closure” must account for the lack of closure singled out in Henry Fielding’s “Preface” and the lack of conventional beginnings and endings. Fielding’s apparent “frequent remarks in generalized terms” lack the force of finality. One letter’s generalization is contradicted by events in a different letter, or by a competing generalization.

Fielding’s incorporation of multiple characters and multiple stories enable her to demonstrate the contingency and artificiality of the first novel’s “happy ending.” For example, in \textit{Familiar Letters}, David Simple receives a letter from a stranger in Yorkshire inspired, like David, to search for a true friend. After the Yorkshire man recounts his endless failures, David writes back, “if at the Conclusion of your Letter, I had found any Account of your own Happiness, the History of your Life would have been a very great Entertainment to me;” (179). Alas, for David and the reader, the Yorkshire man’s story does not offer a happy conclusion. The Yorkshire man cannot re-duplicate David Simple’s life, and his depiction enables Fielding to show how David’s fate might have been different. The first novel’s happy conclusion uneasily coexists with the unhappy ending of the Yorkshire man’s letter. Both endings are granted comparable prominence.

Through reading other characters’ histories, Cynthia, like David, is reminded how her happy ending could have ended tragically. Camilla recounts to Cynthia the life story
of a woman whose strongest passion is “to communicate Happiness to my Fellow-Creatures” (82). This unnamed woman explains why she chose her husband: “[U]pon the most mature Deliberation my Age and Experience was then capable of, I thought possessed of every Quality capable of rendering my Life happy. He also chose me freely …” (83). This woman, like Cynthia, possesses both virtue and wisdom.

Nevertheless, the woman’s virtue becomes a hindrance to her happiness. Oddly enough, her husband cannot recognize her love for him because she treats him respectfully: “I cannot treat him with Contempt, because I love him; and he takes that Treatment to arise from Contempt, which is the effect of Affection” (85). She fails to satisfy his pride through flattery, since “Flattery … is another Word for Contempt” (90), so her husband runs off with another woman. Her husband could “not distinguish” the effects of pure and impure affection, and mistook the impurity for the essence.

The virtuous woman’s fate forces Cynthia to imagine how her life could have ended differently. Cynthia writes, “Had not I been so happy, as to meet with your Brother, this might very likely have been my own Fate; and the Idea of it is so horrible, that I think it is the only Misfortune in life, which it would have been impossible to have supported” (92). Cynthia recognizes that her happiness is not contingent on her own virtue, but on someone else’s. No matter how wisely she chooses, her own virtuous love might even be her downfall. Wisdom in fact contributes to the woman’s pain, since it enables her to recognize she has lost her man because she cannot flatter him on his own terms. It is because Cynthia is distanced from the events being described that she is able to compare both characters’ situations.
The virtuous woman’s fate not only challenges the conventionality of Cynthia’s happy ending but the conventional associations of affection with praise. The virtuous woman states that her husband’s problem is rooted in a failure to “distinguish”; like the man who associated the idea of beauty with the idea of affectation, he has come to identify affection with praise (and consequently flattery). Fielding uses this woman’s story to challenge conventional identifications and associations: not only does Fielding question the association of affection with praise, but she also disputes the association of virtue and wisdom with happiness. Since Bree and Suzuki call attention to epistle-writers’ distance from the events they describe, it is important to note that this distance can make the event more personal: Cynthia’s explicit identification with the woman’s fate (“Had not I been so happy”) encourages the reader to reflect on their own contingency and on the possibility of self-deception through conventionality and the incorrect association of ideas.

Fielding’s diversity of letter-writers enables her to prevent a false association of ideas by offering opposing viewpoints on the same action. Although many of the “good” characters from The Adventures return in Familiar Letters, the only two “bad” characters to show up are the friends Varnish and Spatter. From London, Spatter satirically describes the woman Selimena: “...she walks and struts about the Room, repeating, in an audible Voice, all the tragic Strains her Memory can furnish, where Women lament their hard Fate....I cannot contain my Laughter, when I see a Fool in distress for nothing” (I: 136-137).

Spatter rejoices in the objective detachment which enables him to see Selimena’s sufferings are laughable. Given that The Adventures has already revealed that Spatter is
not a character to be fully trusted, Fielding’s inclusion hints at the danger that Spatter’s supposed objectivity is actually a heightened subjectivity. We cannot wholly trust Spatter’s “familiar letter,” nor can we wholly trust Varnish’s answer:

As to Selimena, perhaps ill Health makes her fretful; or she may have some hidden Grief which you are a Stranger to; or is it not impossible but her great Innocence, and Fear of having acted wrong, may be the Cause of that Uneasiness she shews at all her past Actions. (I: 143)

The tendentiousness of Varnish’s defense of Selimena may in fact convince the reader of her guilt. Nevertheless, Varnish makes some substantial points that are never refuted. (Fielding includes no reply from Spatter, so both perspectives are given equal time.) Spatter indeed does not know whether there is “some hidden Grief,” and whether his distance from Selimena’s situation actually makes him incapable of judging it accurately. We do not know whether the situation is similar to Pamela’s in Pamela II, where Mr. B. blames Pamela for crying needlessly when a “hidden Grief”—knowledge of Mr. B.’s affair—is causing her sorrow. While the discrepancy in character judgments by Spatter and Varnish are often amusing, they are often disturbing because they show how difficult it is to interpret the world. Neither Spatter’s faith in depravity nor Varnish’s faith in human goodness lead to an accurate assessment of the situation, and Fielding does not offer the intervention of a third-party to resolve the epistemological dilemma. Although the bulk of letters in Familiar Letters are from trustworthy writers, the correspondence between Spatter and Varnish hints at the difficulty in assuming that a detached “familiar letter” is truly an objective one. Distance may be necessary for objectivity, but it may also invalidate human judgment. Unlike a third-person objective narrator, a letter-writer can never know whether there is a “hidden grief” at work.
In addition to the many letters contained in *Familiar Letters*, Fielding includes the allegorical work, “A Vision.” Fielding’s anonymous narrator describes a vision in which she is conveyed to a plain with four gates. The writer describes,

> On the First [gate] was written, *The Way to Wealth*; on the Second, *The Way to Power*; on the Third, *The Way to Pleasure*; and on the Fourth, *The Way to Virtue*….. but I observed at the very Top of the Gates, other Words were written in such small Characters, that they were difficult to be distinguished. On the First, *To Avarice*; on the Second, *To Ambition*; on the Third, *to Disappointment*; and on the Fourth, *To Pride*: but these Inscriptions were overlook’d by almost every Person there…. Curiosity led me to wish, I could follow every Company … (232-233)

Fielding’s narrator is able to see the small print that the other characters overlooked. While the prominent letters claim to point the way to obtaining objects, things, or qualities (e.g., “wealth” and “power”), the small letters show that the path instead yields a specific psychological state: the mental state of “avarice” has been falsely identified with “wealth,” pride with “virtue.” The narrator’s ability to read the “small print” seems connected to her very detachment:152 rather than settling on any one road to happiness, she wishes she “could follow every Company.” Unlike in traditional narrative (the picaresque excepted), the narrator (as character) does not have to fix on one road, on one united plot. Fielding emphasizes that a road is *never* uniform but double: the big print always obscures the small print, and the conventional identification wins over the truth. Even when faced with four different roads, the journeyer has no choice at all: all roads, even “virtue,” lead to vice.

152 Despite a lack of any explicit gender identification of the narrator—an omission that may be intentional (since it makes the narrator even more detached)—I will refer to the narrator as “she” for the sake of convenience.
Because of the narrator’s detachment, she is able to travel on each road. After the company pauses on the road to wealth, she asks the guide when they will arrive. He answers, “The whole Company but yourself think we are already arrived” (235). Eventually disgusted by the blindness of her fellow journeyers, the narrator passes through each of the four gates. Rather than centering on one character’s journey, Fielding allows the reader to go on multiple journeys and to be detached from the limitations of a character’s subjective perspective. In *Serious Reflections*, Defoe deviates from novelistic form to write a collection of essays, choosing to have his protagonist fly above the earth to gain a more objective perspective on the world. Similarly, Fielding rejects the linear novel for the multiplicity of epistle-writing. Fielding’s narrator gains objectivity not by escaping narrative but by entering multiple narratives and taking multiple roads. Off the beaten trail, the narrator watches the procession of the self-deceived travelers: “each Individual fixing one Eye on the Guide, lest he should lose his Way; and the other, on the Person next behind him … that his next Neighbour might not come near him” (238). The narrator observes characters trapped in linear progression—looking backward and forward at the same time, but still unable to see their own condition. Unlike Crusoe in *Serious Reflections*, their eyes can never take in past, present, and future at once. Only the narrator can “see things as they were” because she desires to know the “real truth,” while the rest of the company had too “great [a] desire of finding [their wishes] to be real Substance” (238). More than wanting a happy ending, a person must want the truth.

Upon the road “to virtue,” Fielding’s narrator eventually becomes disgusted by human vanity and wishes for an alternative road. As she turns her head, she sees a
“narrow winding Lane” with a small party helping each other along the path. “Curiosity” leads her to join them, and she is overjoyed to discover that “the Rule of the [group’s] Lives was the Gospel” (257). In this small group, she discovers that “every Seed of real unaffected Virtue was cultivated and improved; and, consequently, all the real Happiness Human Nature is capable of, was here enjoyed” (258). “A Vision” concludes, “I was so pleased with this Scene, that I wished never to lose the View of it; but alas! I awoke, and all the Vision vanished from my Eyes” (ibid.). Just when the narrator has discovered the hidden road to happiness, the vision vanishes, and the narrative concludes.

It is only through objectivity that Fielding’s narrator is able to see that friendship (and Christianity) is what truly matters. The ending of “A Vision” is ultimately ambiguous in that it manifests both the fragility and the resilience of friendship: the vision of “real Happiness” must vanish, no matter how much the narrator wishes to preserve it. Yet even though this vision passes away, it is the last image of *Familiar Letters*. The vision vanishes before the eyes of the narrator, but it shall always remain the last image on the printed page. The conclusion of *Familiar Letters* reminds us of the impermanence of real happiness, but its most forceful concluding image is of that happiness.

My analysis of *Familiar Letters* should indicate two potential weaknesses that Fielding addresses in *Volume the Last*. First, even though Fielding presents objective, distanced epistle-writers to show the contingency of events, the lack of personal detail means that such contingency is placed in the past: the Yorkshire man’s fate suggests that David Simple’s story could have ended differently but is in danger no longer now that he has true friends. Cynthia discovers what could have happened in the past if she had never
found Valentine, but she does not see a possible danger of future disappointment. Because there is a lack of personal detail, it seems that epistle-writers like Cynthia and Camilla occupy a timeless, permanent state of happiness. Even though the narrator of “A Vision” may see the vision vanish, the reader sees David Simple’s family remains fixed in happiness.

The second potential weakness of Fielding’s use of “familiar letters” is that readers might come to mistake biased advice as objective detachment. Despite the correspondence of Varnish and Spatter, most of the epistle-writers do offer valuable advice, and the lack of personal detail inhibits the reader from seeing how epistle-writers may fail, either by offering bad advice or by failing to put into practice good advice. As there is a danger in wrongly associating the idea of beauty with the idea of affectation, or the idea of affection with flattery, there is a danger of associating the idea of advice with true affection. As I will show, Volume the Last addresses these two limitations to Fielding’s earlier use of epistolary form.

3.4 Volume the Last and the Abuse of the Familiar Letter

As I have suggested thus far, even though The Adventures uses doubling (e.g., competing perspectives in Spatter and Varnish, or doubled endings such as David’s and Isabelle’s), the novel still concludes with the artificiality of David’s happy ending. In Familiar Letters, the distance of epistolary writers from the events they describe and the lack of one central storyline prevent the privileging of any one ending or one individual character; Fielding insists on doubling, on pairing the happy ending and the tragic ending.
In *Volume the Last*, Fielding shows how seemingly objective epistle-writers may fail to make a correct application, how letter-writing can be abused by supposed “friends” such as Mrs. Orgueil and Mr. Ratcliff, and how David’s “happy ending” can still end in tragedy.

In *Volume the Last*, Sarah Fielding takes pains to situate the *Familiar Letters* correspondence into the sequence of David’s life. Without reading *Volume the Last*, all that the reader knows is that while Cynthia is at Bath, she initiates a correspondence with Camilla, who is in London; the only reason given for the friends’ separation is that Cynthia is traveling to Bath for her health. In *Volume the Last*, Sarah Fielding provides additional details concerning the friends’ separation: “The whole Family [David, Camilla, Cynthia, and Valentine] intended to remove to the Bath …. But the Morning before they undertook their Journey, *David* received a Letter from *London*” (248) informing him of a lawsuit (which he will eventually lose). We learn that, in London, David has been befriended by Ratcliff, a supposed benefactor who offers to help David with his lawsuit but who will ultimately contribute to David’s troubles.

This new information about David’s situation radically transforms the understanding of *Familiar Letters*. Earlier, it seemed that the family’s separation was simply a product of natural events, such as Cynthia’s unanticipated illness. Now, we learn that the cause is more sinister—the family is separated because it has become a victim of human malice and greed through an unjust lawsuit. This new information reveals that the seed of financial ruin had already been sown in *Familiar Letters*, at a time in which it had seemed that the family was self-sufficient and happy.
Once readers of *Volume the Last* have learned about David’s lawsuit, they are able to see how Cynthia’s aphoristic advice in *Familiar Letters* could (or should) have been practically implemented. In *Familiar Letters*, Cynthia tells Camilla the story of a countryman who visits London and is misled by the supposed authorities there: Cynthia concludes, “But you, Camilla, who so strongly prove your own Capacity of enjoying Happiness … will easily, without any Assistance, make the Application of my Story” (28). In *Volume the Last*, we now recognize that David Simple is like the bumpkin who visited London, being taken in by Ratcliff’s claims of specialized knowledge of “the world” and the London legal system. Once *Volume the Last* has filled in the personal details omitted in *Familiar Letters*, we learn that Camilla was not in fact able to make the proper application of the story. In *Volume the Last*, when David makes the mistake of forming a friendship with the arrogant Orgueil, the narrator comments, “if Cynthia had strenuously urged [her family] to have been guided by her Judgment, [this] Intimacy … would soon have been dropped” (252). Even though *Familiar Letters* has established Cynthia as a source for sound advice, we learn in *Volume the Last* that advice fails to be acted upon.

Epistolary advice fails not only because characters fail to practice the advice, but because advice-givers are flawed. In *Familiar Letters*, most letter-writers were well-meaning. In *Volume the Last*, Fielding again depicts epistolary correspondence through the inclusion of six letters. However, rather than featuring a correspondence within David’s family (as in *Familiar Letters*), four of the letters are by the chief villains in the story, Mrs. Orgueil and Ratcliff. As David struggles with financial hardship, he receives “a letter from a Friend,” Ratcliff. In the letter, Ratcliff, under the guise of friendship,
encourages David’s family “to conform to their Circumstances” (273). Ratcliff’s wife notes “with friendly Concern” that David’s daughter excels in music and painting rather than needlework; to illustrate his concern, Ratcliff recounts the story of their last servant. The servant girl was very talented in French and music, but since she was poor at needlework, Mrs. Ratcliff dismisses her, advising her “to stick more to her Needle, and leave off her Pen and her Pencil” (274). Ratcliff concludes the anecdote, “I know you and your Wife have Sense enough to make the proper Use of this Story …” (274)

Ratcliff’s certainty that David and Camilla will “make the proper Use of this Story” (274) echoes Cynthia’s warning in *Familiar Letters* that Camilla would “easily, without any Assistance, make the Application of my Story” (28). The similarities between the two warnings reveal the possible danger in a “letter from a friend”: too often, individuals may use the guise of friendship in order to insult or exert control over others by offering them “guidance” and teaching them their place. There is the danger that conduct advice can lapse into empty platitudes and insensitivity to others’ suffering.

Without attention to the intimate details of David’s situation, many of his actions in *Volume the Last* may indeed appear blameworthy. In *Volume the Last*, David Simple himself hires a horse out to try to bring his niece home so the family can nurse her back to health. Orgueil reproaches David for the extravagance of hiring a horse, given his financial circumstances: indeed, when Orgueil later considers offering some financial help to David, “the thought of the Chariot immediately succeeded, and the immense Imprudence of riding about in a Chariot, in such Circumstances” to persuade him not to help (281). Orgueil’s reproach of David’s coach ride is typical advice given in conduct manuals: in Samuel Richardson’s own epistolary work called *Familiar Letters*, a father
rebukes his son for “too soon keeping an horse” (letter XI, p. 20). In Amelia (1753), Sarah Fielding’s own brother Henry represents the dangers that arise from the “childish vanity” of a poor man’s buying a coach (143).\textsuperscript{153} From the standpoint of a conduct manual and other familiar letters, Orgueil seems right in denying help to someone who has committed “immense Imprudence.” For Sarah Fielding, context is the key to determining whether an action is extravagant or in fact necessary. From the standpoint of Volume the Last, it becomes clear that self-righteous charges of “imprudence” do not spur people toward self-improvement but toward incapacitation. While Familiar Letters may focus on the good advice of friends, Volume the Last is preoccupied with the bad advice of supposed friends who provide no help that goes beyond mere words.

This insensibility to others’ suffering compromises the authenticity of letter-writing. In Familiar Letters, characters like Cynthia and Camilla seemed completely honest; in Volume the Last, Fielding reveals how often epistolary writing becomes disingenuous, as writers are more interested in constructing a persona than in comforting others. When Orgueil appears on the verge of death, Mrs. Orgueil sends a letter to “her most intimate Friend and Acquaintance”: “The Physicians have declared their Despair of my dear, my ever to be lamented Mr. Orgueil’s Life: and I have been forced, raving, screaming, fainting, from his Bed-side.” Just as Mrs. Orgueil is about to send the letter, she is disappointed to learn that Orgueil is going to live: Fielding writes, “instead of having an Inclination to send her Friend a Letter of the good news, she [Mrs. Orgueil] had a great mind to send her that already writ, as thinking it was great Pity she should

\textsuperscript{153} Henry Fielding makes a similar remark in his Preface to Joseph Andrews. In the “Preface,” Fielding provides as an example of the ridiculous a poor man who “descend[s] from his Coach and Six” (7).
have taken so much Pains for nothing” (335). Mrs. Orgueil’s pains in maintaining the persona of the loving, raving, screaming, fainting wife are more important than setting her “most intimate Friend’s” heart at ease. The epistolary form—that which ought to convey one’s innermost thoughts and one’s deep concern with others—becomes merely an exercise in self-panegyric and deception. *Volume the Last* acts as a kind of “textual doubling” of *Familiar Letters*, where the friendly letter is turned into its opposite.

While the epistolary form allowed Fielding to show the contingency of human happiness and David’s “happy ending,” *Volume the Last* displays this contingency more radically. In *Familiar Letters*, multiple stories and multiple endings enable characters like David and Cynthia to see how things might have turned out differently, as if David had never found a true friend, or if Cynthia had never found Valentine. In *Familiar Letters*, this danger seems relegated to the past—what *could* have happened—not something that can affect David in the present as he experiences great wealth and trustworthy friends. While *Familiar Letters* uses multiple stories to juxtapose the happy ending and tragic ending, *Volume the Last* shows how the happy ending can be transformed into tragedy. The best of times becomes the worst of times, and the best of endings becomes the worst of endings.

As I have been suggesting, *Familiar Letters* makes an important contribution to the David Simple corpus. In *Familiar Letters*, Fielding uses epistolary form to pair the happy ending and the tragic ending, with neither ending dominating. In *Volume the Last*, Fielding adds details of personal context to transform the meaning of *Familiar Letters*, showing that the situation is the opposite of what it seemed: while *Familiar Letters* suggested a happy, self-sufficient family guided by Cynthia’s wisdom, *Volume the Last*
reveals that David’s destruction has already begun, and Cynthia’s wisdom is unheard. In *Volume the Last*, Fielding reveals that epistle-writing is dangerous specifically *because* it is associated with honesty and love, easily making it a vehicle for deception and the manipulation of others. *Familiar Letters* demonstrates that David’s “happy ending” could have ended differently, but *Volume the Last* shows that David’s happy ending is *still* capable of changing into its tragic counterpart. Sarah Fielding uses both sequels to re-visit *The Adventures of David Simple* and show that one ending is never sufficient. In principle, it is difficult to know when a work is truly complete or whether it is in need for some touching up with paint—or with mud.
CHAPTER 4:

THE INCONCLUSIVE MEMOIRS OF MISS SIDNEY BIDULPH: PROBLEMS OF POETIC JUSTICE, CLOSURE, AND GENDER

A 1761 bestseller, Frances Sheridan’s three-volume novel Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph claims in its “Editor’s Preface” to challenge “poetic justice,” the notion that dramatic works should represent the reward of the virtuous and punishment of the wicked. Sheridan’s fictitious “editor” (the supposed discover of the memoirs) contends instead that the good and evil humans undergo on earth do not manifest God’s approval or disapproval because such events are always “temporary” and in a state susceptible to change (6). Yet just as earthly human life is always prone to later alterations, so also are the conclusions of novels; in 1767, Sheridan offered two additional volumes under the title Conclusion of the Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph, and her earlier ending proves to be premature.154

The sequel quickly became an integral part of what constituted the “work” as a whole. The sequel was included in the third (1767), fourth (1772), and fifth (1796) editions of the novel published before the end of the eighteenth century (Fitzer 43).

154 Interest in Sheridan’s novel has grown over the past few years. As Kathleen M. Oliver noted in 2003, there had only been nine published works since 1949 that discussed the novel in any degree of depth (698). However, since 2001, there have been four articles (by Oliver, Fitzer, Schellenberg, and Ward) and four book chapters (by Chaplin, Augustin, Schellenberg, and Thompson). Recent critical interest tends to focus on the novel’s depiction of gender or female domesticity and sensibility.
Frances Sheridan’s biographer (and granddaughter) Alicia Lefanu suggests that the sequel may in fact be superior: “By many persons the second part of Sidney Biddulph was preferred to the first; as the production of a person who had acquired more extensive view of life, and a greater insight into character” (290). Despite this early recognition of the sequel’s significance, recent scholarship has focused on the first three volumes while dismissing or virtually ignoring Sheridan’s sequel; it is surprising that aside from a 1986 essay by Margaret Doody, no significant attempt to interpret the two works together has been made.155 Sheridan’s sequel provides a unique opportunity to explore how a sequel affects an understanding of a novel already concerned with endings and the changes that take place over time.

I hope to prove two things in this chapter. First, I argue that the first novel uses the prolongation of narrative to expose the flaws of judgment in female characters. The sequel extends the story even further to expose the first novel’s failure adequately to condemn male partiality and flexibility in judgment. The sequel thus acts indispensably as a corrective to views that may see the earlier text as a validation of privileged male perspectives. While central female characters in the first novel are mistakenly confident in their powers to recognize “Providence,” central male characters in the sequel wrongfully seek through “provident” activity to direct events and control women. The two novels are thus mutually corrective.

155 For James Foster, “the sequel is not as good as the first part,” partly because the sequel’s protagonist, Faulkland’s son, “is a sorry hero because he continually wanders over the line separating the lover who is a slave of passion from the booby” (143). Although Janet Todd argues that Sidney Bidulph shows that “the heroine can suffer extremely but does not die to obtain reverence” (165), she admits this generalization is true only “so long as one discounts the rather unfortunate sequel” (298).
Second, I argue that although *Sidney Bidulph* is a novelistic narrative, the dramatic conventions and theatrical debate concerning “poetic justice” provide an indispensable context for understanding the relation between the first novel and the sequel. Although Sheridan’s challenge to “poetic justice” is often seen by critics merely as a derivative recapitulation of Samuel Richardson’s criticisms of “poetic justice” in his “Postscript” to *Clarissa*,156 we can see Sheridan’s more distinctive contributions to the debate through considering how “poetic justice” was theorized in the dramatic criticism of her contemporaries. The formulations of “poetic justice” prevalent in Sheridan’s time principally fostered the formation of rigidly critical—i.e., negative—conclusive judgments. “Poetic justice” provided critics with a framework for condemning plays that clearly depicted the reality of human suffering (“virtue unrewarded”). Usage of the theory also encouraged spectators to condemn a play’s “bad” characters, whose sufferings at the end of a play could be interpreted as manifestations of God’s justice (“wickedness punished”). Sheridan apparently found that novel form was uniquely suited to expose the superficiality and negativity of theatrical judgments fostered by “poetic justice,” since novelistic narrative time is not subject to the constraint of such dramatic conventions as “unity of time.” This chapter considers the effect of a sequel on narrative unity and evaluates the powers found in narrative form to critique prescriptions from another artistic form. I shall now consider what made the concept of “poetic justice” so relevant to Sheridan in her historical context.

156 Although virtually every article printed on *Sidney Bidulph* has alluded to “poetic justice,” the theory usually merits no more than a paragraph, and critics regard Sheridan’s invocation of “poetic justice” simply as a manifestation of her dependence upon Richardson: Barker characterizes her attack on the theory as “little more than a pretext or afterthought” much like Richardson’s (67), and Fitzer notes in passing that Sheridan’s moral “is also the moral of *Clarissa*” (44).
4.1 The Drama and Virtue Rewarded

The theater provides an essential context for understanding Sheridan’s life and work. At about the age of twenty, Frances Chamberlain first intervened in theatrical controversy with the publication of “The Owls,” a poem defending the young actor and manager Thomas Sheridan from critics of his management of Dublin’s Smock-Alley theater. After Thomas met his young defender and married her in 1747, his acting career caused him repeatedly to uproot his new family to adapt to changes in the theater. When a 1754 Dublin performance of *Mahomet* erupted in riots over the drama’s political content, the family moved to England where Thomas could act at Covent Garden. In 1756, the Sheridans returned to Ireland where Thomas again managed the Dublin theater. In 1758, after the Smock-Alley theater failed, they returned to England once more, deeply in debt. While Thomas was negotiating for acting shares at Drury Lane, Frances in 1759 began writing *Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph*. Between 1763 and 1765 she wrote three plays, *The Discovery*, *The Dupe*, and *A Journey to Bath*: the first of these had an impressive first run of seventeen nights and was deemed by Garrick as the age’s best comedy (Hogan 13). Even though Sheridan dedicated her novel to Samuel Richardson, her novel may be just as dependent upon the drama: Sheridan’s male framing editor challenges “poetic justice” explicitly in response to a private reading of John Home’s

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157 For a discussion on dating the poem’s composition and occasion, see Robert B. Hogan and Jerry C. Beasley’s “Introduction” in *The Plays of Frances Sheridan*, p. 15. Hogan and Beasley invalidate Alicia Le Fanu’s claim that the poem was occasioned by the 1747 Kelly riot.
1756 play Douglas (5-6), not in response to reading Richardson’s novel Clarissa. Sheridan’s novel clearly ties its challenge of “poetic justice” to theatrical performances.

The importance of the “reward of virtue” (a central concern for theorists of “poetic justice”) took on national significance in light of the 1755 Lisbon earthquake and the Seven Years War (1756-1763). The earthquake, widely regarded as a manifestation of God’s judgment, provoked a royal proclamation for a day of fasting on February 6, 1756. The occasion elicited dozens of published sermons describing how the nation could cultivate God’s favor through the virtuous lives of its citizenry.\(^{158}\) This royal proclamation explicitly connected the earthquake to the need for national repentance as the basis for military success: preachers were to “implore a blessing from Almighty God upon his Majesty’s fleets and armies … as also for the humbling ourselves before Him in a deep sense of his late visitation by a most dreadful and extensive earthquake … in order to obtain pardon of our crying sins … and for the continuance of his mercy in the support of … the prosperity of our country” (Allen 23-24). George Fothergill’s 1756 sermon (republished in 1758) proclaimed that if “seasonable Acts of Devotion be but accompany’d with a sincere repentance for our Personal Sins … we may then humbly hope to avert His Judgments now in the earth[quakes] …. as also … to dispose our Enemies” in the future (31). James Bate’s sermon claimed that if parishioners amended their private faults, the nation could “reasonably hope, to avert from our Country, all public Calamities and national Judgments” (27, italics mine). This correlation between private virtues and divine favor provided a possible relief for national anxiety about

\(^{158}\) The February and March 1756 issues of The Monthly Review list 45 sermons, the majority of which were available for sale.
England’s future: citizens’ pooled individual virtues might reward the nation with protection both from natural disaster and from military defeat.\textsuperscript{159}

These national anxieties over virtue’s reward in the real world played themselves out in concern over virtue’s reward on the stage. In May of 1759—the year Sheridan began writing *Sidney Bidulph*—there was published an anonymous pamphlet (receiving attention and criticism in the May 1759 issue of *The Gentleman’s Magazine*) entitled *Observations on the Importance and Use of Theatres*. The Licensing Act of 1737 already mandated that all new plays must be approved by the Lord Chamberlain, even those not performed in Covent Garden or Drury Lane. This Act had compelled many politically subversive playwrights (most notably Henry Fielding) to turn to periodical or to novel writing, and it had drastically reduced the number of new plays performed.\textsuperscript{160} The anonymous pamphlet claims such restrictions are inadequate: many of the older plays already in the theatrical repertoire are harmful to virtue, so England requires the government of a controller with sole determination over the performance of both new and old plays. A proper tragedy would reward “patient virtue” and “manly resolution,” but on the English stage, “the innocent alone perish” (15). Such spectacles hardly encourage virtue.

The pamphleteer contends that these tragic spectacles are especially harmful in light of the present war. The stage has a negative effect on military enlistees that must be overcome: “Our sea officers have shewn that a years [sic] absence from this school of weakness [the theater] hardens the *Briton*, and he is again a hero” (16). Heroic action

\textsuperscript{159} For a wider survey of the Lisbon sermons, see Robert G. Ingram’s article, “‘The trembling Earth is God’s Herald’: Earthquakes, Religion and Public Life in Britain During the 1750s” (2005).

\textsuperscript{160} For more information, see Matthew J. Kinservik’s *Disciplining Satire* (2002), pp. 99-101.
depends upon the belief that people are rewarded for virtuous action, and happy endings toughen the soldier. Disinterested regulation of the playhouses is so “necessary” because “we have been compelled into a war with a powerful enemy” (23). By taking away private ownership of the theater, the government can arm theatergoers with a spirit of “manly resolution” for the coming struggles and can even gain additional revenue for armaments (15, 23).

This concern with the political ramifications of “poetic justice” reminds us that the theory’s neoclassical roots lie in its usefulness for furthering a political agenda. The French neoclassicist d’Aubignac insists that nothing is more “advantageous” for the prince than for his citizens to retain the memory of how wicked behavior is punished on the stage (7). The spectacle of wickedness punished can discourage citizens from pursuing “wicked” activities (such as rebellion and treason). However, to encourage citizens to active virtue—especially military bravery—it is important to emphasize that such heroism will be rewarded. The pamphleteer’s concern with “manly resolution” thus calls attention to the political concerns already implicit in the early formulations of “poetic justice.”

The Sheridans’ own theatrical experiences contradicted this claim that “patient virtue” and “manly resolution” were rewarded in the real world and needed to be rewarded on stage. In fact, Frances Sheridan’s major biographer (and granddaughter) Alicia Lefanu describes the troubles of the Sheridan family in terms which resemble Sheridan’s own description of Sidney Bidulph: Lefanu describes Thomas Sheridan’s “unmerited sufferings” (75) and his “domestic sorrows, from which the highest lot in
human life is not exempted” (69). As Lefanu suggests, the unequal distribution of rewards in real life is a recurring concern in Sheridan’s fiction, as in her tale of Nourjahad. Regardless of whether family troubles were a direct influence on Sheridan’s depiction of unrewarded virtue, the Sheridans’ own sufferings would offer Frances Sheridan external confirmation of her claims.

Thomas Sheridan not only underwent “unmerited sufferings” but portrayed unrewarded virtue in his art as an actor, rewriting and staging Shakespeare’s Coriolanus. Coriolanus is a story in which the “manly resolution” of a national hero is requited by his ungrateful nation with exile. Ironically, Thomas Sheridan acted the title role at Covent Garden in 1755, the year after his own “manly resolution” was rewarded with exile from Ireland for political troubles. Although Thomas Sheridan presented a gold medal to John Home for his “Perfect Tragedy,” Douglas (Sheldon 228), the Monthly Review attacked Home’s play in its 1757 review for its “want of moral,” apparently disturbed by the unmerited death of its virtuous protagonist (428). (In The Memoirs, Frances Sheridan attacks “poetic justice” explicitly in response to reading this

161 Compare Lefanu’s remark that “the highest lot in life is not exempted” from domestic sorrows and Sheridan’s claim in The Memoirs that nothing is “sufficient to defend us against the inevitable ills that sometimes are allotted, even to the best” (11-12).

162 LeFanu writes that Frances Sheridan’s tale of Nourjahad came to her on a sleepless night, “when from reflecting upon the inequality in the conditions of men, she was led to consider that it is in the due regulation of the passions, rather than on the outward dispensations of Providence, that true happiness [sic] or misery depends” (295). This contention is not far different from Fielding’s insistence that the giant Barbarico ought to be portrayed as miserable even when external events are favoring him.

163 Sheridan’s revised play combines Shakespeare’s text with James Thomson’s Coriolanus (1749).

164 The medal’s inscription, according to Sheridan’s cousin Samuel Whyte, reads as follows: “Thomas Sheridan, Manager of the Theatre Royal … presents this small token of his gratitude to the Author of Douglas, for his having enriched the Stage with a Perfect Tragedy” (Whyte 46-7).
Thomas and Frances were visible champions of plays that seemed morally suspect and subversive.

The stigma of “immorality” is often more harmful to the success of a play than to that of a novel.  Controversy surrounding a novel may in fact elicit more readers (and perhaps even helped the sales of Sidney Bidulph). However, because plays were primarily intended for public theatrical performance rather than private reading, their financial success depended upon approval by governmental monitors (as well as sufficient numbers in attendance and a third night performance). With the Licensing Act, the government already could reject new plays whose content was found unsatisfactory, and if the 1759 pamphleteer had his way, even old approved tragedies could be banished from the stage for content which failed to inspire “manly resolution.” Frances Sheridan argues for greater freedom in the theater through the vehicle of the novel, which permits a degree of freedom from regulation that the theater does not.

Even though the regulations proposed by the Observations pamphleteer were never implemented, the tract expressed important sentiments that reflected the English national post-Lisbon mood. The earthquakes and a precarious wartime state contributed toward making poetic justice’s fiction of rewards for “manly resolution” and “patient virtue” significantly attractive to the English nation, or at least to its government. England sought to inspire national confidence in virtue’s reward at a time when the Sheridans’ own theatrical hardships had made them acutely aware that the world did not

165 There are certainly exceptions to this generalization; the printed editions of John Gay’s Polly made the play a financial success, even though the government did not permit the play to be performed. (Of course, the financial success of this unperformed play is largely due to the fact that The Beggar’s Opera had already been performed.)
always reward virtue, and that it certainly did not reward plays which acknowledged the reality of unmerited suffering.

4.2 Poetic Justice and Wickedness Punished

In order to understand Sheridan’s response to “poetic justice,” it is important to survey the way in which dramatic theorists contemporary with Sheridan developed the term. The punishments offered by poetic justice imply a degree of certainty in identifying wickedness which Sheridan found problematic. Because narrative is not bound by dramatic conventions such as “unity of time,” Sheridan finds in narrative form a means to challenge the simplistic detection of wickedness promulgated by proponents of poetic justice.

As we have seen, many of the dramatic theorists who proclaimed the benefits of “poetic justice” regularly subordinated the concern for rewarded virtue to a concern for the punishment of wickedness. For example, in the Epistle Dedicatory to the play *The Ambitious Stepmother* (1700), Rowe insists that though he deliberately chooses not to preserve the play’s “two virtuous (or at least innocent)” characters, “That which they call the Poetical Justice is, I think, strictly observ’d” (B5).

Both the supporters and the critics of “poetic justice” created an environment that encouraged spectators to view suffering suspiciously. Rather than “letting the punishment fit the crime,” dramatists often let the crime fit the punishment. Writers such as Charles Gildon, Nicholas Rowe,

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166 The inclusion of the phrase “or at least innocent” may be significant; as noted, Rymer’s theory argues that the deaths of the relatively “innocent” comport with ideal justice.
and George Steevens accommodated themselves to “poetic justice” by arguing that the suffering of innocent characters was actually merited. Even the most eminent critics of “poetic justice,” such as Joseph Addison in *Spectator* and Samuel Richardson in *Clarissa*, agreed that the drama was obligated to show the punishment of wickedness.

Given Samuel Richardson’s close association with Frances Sheridan, Richardson’s writing on “poetic justice” especially merits our attention. In his “Postscript” to *Clarissa*, Richardson insists that *Clarissa* observes poetic justice, since all villains are “exemplarily punished” (1498). Richardson’s greater concern is to prove that Clarissa’s death does not mean her virtue is unrewarded. Richardson retorts to his critics, “who that are in earnest in their profession of Christianity but will rather envy than regret the triumphant death of CLARISSA” (1498). Richardson thus suggests that Clarissa’s death is virtue rewarded.

Richardson’s defense of Clarissa’s death is an unnecessary defense for the many critics already prone to form negative judgments of characters like Clarissa. *Clarissa* itself leaves open the possibility that Clarissa has been wicked: at one point she laments, “I find my presumption [in corresponding with Lovelace] punished!—punished, as other sins frequently are, by itself” (381). It may therefore be somewhat understandable that *The Monthly Review* compliments Clarissa’s “extremely evident” moral: Clarissa’s misfortunes are “no more than the natural consequences of her indiscretion” (260). This same article, which expresses contentment that Clarissa suffers what she deserves, conveys its disturbance that Sheridan’s filially dutiful protagonist Sidney Bidulph suffers too much: “the Author seems to have no other design than to draw tears from the reader
by distressing innocence and virtue, as much as possible…. Such representations are by no means calculated to encourage and promote Virtue” (260).

This review calls our attention to what makes Sheridan’s novel uncommon. In Sheridan’s time, it was a formidable challenge to represent suffering that could not be interpreted as resulting from a character flaw. Even the suffering of Sarah Fielding’s protagonist David Simple can be charged to his own account for a lack of prudence: Lady Mary Wortley Montagu writes that David’s suffering offers the useful moral that “the ill consequences of not providing against Casual losses … happen to almost everybody” (qtd. in Bree Sarah Fielding 90). When proponents of poetic justice condemned playwrights for not rewarding virtue, playwrights (such as Gildon and Rowe) could respond by condemning their dramas’ protagonists and claiming the suffering was actually merited—a concession that Sheridan refused to make. Purportedly to vindicate Providence, the proponents and the “critics” of poetic justice ultimately created a critical climate that encouraged spectators to form suspicious judgments, either toward plays that blemish Providence by not rewarding virtue, or toward protagonists whose suffering can be understood as a divine punishment for wickedness.

The reader’s inclination toward suspicion is dangerous because it often accompanies an unfounded confidence in the observer’s own power to judge characters and define justice. The temporal constraints intrinsic to theatrical performance—that a

167 It would not have been too difficult to accommodate Douglas to the theory of “poetic justice.” In Douglas, Lady Randolph keeps secret her marriage to the now deceased father of Douglas: Lady Randolph moralizes, “Sincerity,/Thou first of virtues, let no mortal leave/Thy onward path!…This moral learn,/This precious moral, from my tragic tale” (651). Lady Randolph has failed to acknowledge her first marriage, and this act of deceit ultimately leads to the death of her beloved son. (According to Rymer, a child’s dying for a parent’s sins is consistent with “poetic justice.”) It is important to note that even though Home’s play leaves open the possibility that Lady Randolph suffers because she has wickedly told a lie, Frances Sheridan seeks no defense of the play that would cast blame on the heroic characters.
play is limited to a short space of time on the stage—makes it more difficult to challenge either the superficial judgments or the artificial finality offered in a model ending. As Paul Ricoeur suggests, theatrical plot, as distinct from novelistic plot, “could only be conceived of as an easily readable form, closed in on itself, symmetrically arranged in terms of an ending, and based on an easily identifiable casual connection between the initial complication and its denouement” (9). The very idea of contesting or complicating theatrical endings seems so clearly ridiculous that in John Gay’s Polly, the sequel to The Beggar’s Opera, the Poet remarks, “A sequel to a play is like more last words. ’Tis a kind of absurdity” (1546).168

The narrative form of Sheridan’s first novel enables her to accomplish an effect that is analogous to this “absurdity” of “more last words.” As the Critical Review remarks on Sheridan’s novel, the difference between Sheridan’s “dramatic writings” and theatrical drama is that the former is not confined by “unity of time” (186). This early recognition of the difference between Sheridan’s dramatic novel and a dramatic work for the stage highlights the emancipating power of the dramatic novel to expose simplistic judgments and premature happy endings by showing much later consequences. Sheridan’s novel persistently seems on the verge of establishing confidence in human judgment or of providing a happy ending, yet successive events offer “more last words” and subvert reader expectations. “Poetic justice” cultivates a disposition toward rigidity in judgment that refuses to probe moral dilemmas. The suffering of Sheridan’s heroine is rooted in the fact that Lady Bidulph, the heroine’s mother, judges men with unjust

168 It is possible that Gay’s reference to “more last words” is also an allusion to the religious tract, More Last Words by Richard Baxter.
suspicion and fails to see beyond appearances. Sidney’s suffering in the first novel is not in spite of “poetic justice” but a result of the very perspective—unwarranted certainty in the identification of justice and of Providence—that adherence to the theory fosters.

4.3 Poetic Justice and the Rigidity of Female Partiality

According to the Editor and discover of the Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph, the story presents a series of letters intended to demonstrate “that neither prudence, foresight, nor even the best disposition that the human heart is capable of, are of themselves sufficient to defend us against the inevitable ills that sometimes are allotted, even to the best” (11-12). The novel thus fails to reward the “patient virtue” (the female equivalent of “manly resolution”) championed by the 1759 pamphleteer. In these memoirs (written as a series of letters to her confidante Cecilia), readers see that Sidney is marked by unimpeachable moral character and by filial obedience (unlike Clarissa Harlowe). In her youth, Lady Bidulph, Sidney’s mother, lost her first suitor: on their wedding day, he announced that years ago he had made an unfulfilled promise of marriage to another woman, and could not in good conscience marry Sidney’s mother. Now that Lady Bidulph discovers that Sidney’s suitor, Faulkland, has impregnated a young woman before meeting Sidney, Lady Bidulph fears the same scenario is happening again; she refuses to hear Faulkland’s explanations, exhorting him to marry the wronged woman and do her “justice” (47). Lady Bidulph convinces her obedient but dispirited daughter not only to give up Faulkland but also to marry the seemingly stable Mr. Arnold. Later,
under the influence of a scheming widow, Mrs. Gerrarde, Mr. Arnold throws Sidney out because he believes she is having an affair with Faulkland.

Despairing, Sidney returns to her mother to learn good news from her brother Sir George, Faulkland’s best friend. Faulkland has kidnapped Mrs. Gerrarde so that he can persuade her to write a letter convincing Arnold of his mistake. Sidney and Arnold are reunited, but their future is ruined by a lawsuit and Arnold’s early death. When Faulkland renews his marriage proposals, Sidney alienates her brother Sir George by persuading Faulkland (at her mother’s instigation) to marry Miss Burchell, the woman he reportedly seduced. When her mother dies, Sidney suffers in poverty until her rich cousin Mr. Warner makes her his heiress.

When Sidney at last repairs her relationship with her brother Sir George, she discovers that not only was Miss Burchell actually Faulkland’s seducer, but that this “sly rake in petticoats” (387) has even slept with her brother. Sidney and Sir George hope for the best until Faulkland arrives after (apparently) accidentally killing his wife and her lover when he discovered them in bed. After Sidney and Faulkland marry in a private ceremony, Faulkland discovers that his legal spouse (Burchell) remains alive. Faulkland tears himself away from Sidney and soon dies, while Sidney cares for the two daughters left her by Arnold. The editor learns from the narrative’s fragmentary ending that even worse events will befall Sidney, but the details remain a mystery. The story reveals that premature judgments and premature happy endings inevitably fail because readers cannot see beyond the appearance of justice or beyond the limitations of present perspective. The prolongation of narrative in the first novel reveals that “poetic justice” actually prevents happy endings and depends upon the exclusion of alternative perspectives of
what constitutes justice. “Poetic justice” must in fact compromise true justice in order to be manifested.

Lady Bidulph, Sidney’s mother, is perhaps the most vocal supporter of “justice” in *Sidney Bidulph*. She may be seen as representing the urge to instantiate poetic justice in the real world, since she regularly interprets events in the life of her daughter as the manifestation of Providence’s administration of justice. When Faulkland in a fit of rage whips his drunken footman for endangering Sidney’s life, the footman retaliates by sending the Bidulphs a letter written by Miss Burchell, revealing Burchell is pregnant with Faulkland’s baby. For Lady Bidulph, this event occurs “providentially” (43), because in discovering the letter, Sidney can be protected from “the worst of misfortunes”—marriage to a confirmed rake (43-44). Lady Bidulph later describes the event as a “most providential discovery” (101, italics mine). It appears, in Rymer-like fashion, that Providence has divinely intervened through a natural chain of causes and effects: Faulkland’s failure to control his temper has led to the disclosure that he cannot control his libido. Faulkland himself admits that by all appearances his conduct seems blameable (46). By all appearances, Sidney has avoided marriage to another Lovelace.

Lady Bidulph, like proponents of poetic justice, ultimately refuses to look beyond appearances. Even Sidney admits that her mother is “in general, but a superficial observer” (325) and “always takes every word she hears literally” (21). Lady Bidulph refuses to finish reading a letter from Faulkland defending his conduct, and she burns his letters of explanation without reading them (55). While Lady Bidulph appears to see beyond Faulkland’s “artful story” excusing his behavior (45), her inattentiveness toward
the complexity of moral issues—her refusal to finish Faulkland’s “artful” story—renders her susceptible to Miss Burchell’s “artfulness” when she meets the ambiguous lady.\textsuperscript{169}

Lady Bidulph admits that she does not care to look beyond appearances to the motivations behind them. She is concerned with “the bare facts” (340); as she admits, “I don’t pretend to know people’s hearts, I can only judge of them from their actions” (46). Nevertheless, Lady Bidulph compulsively leaps to the judgment of people’s intentions. Just before she makes her claim not to judge hearts, she narrates that Faulkland came to her, “full of pretended sorrow, but real guilt … he was prepared … to impose on me” (45). While for Rymer, poetic justice should lead one to sympathize with a person on the basis of his or her motivation, Lady Bidulph demonstrates that the tough certainty which poetic justice promulgates may lead one to judge motivation suspiciously simply on the basis of the action. The god of poetic justice punishes every action regardless of its motivation, and so does Lady Bidulph.

In Sheridan’s first novel, human attempts to punish unjust actions almost inevitably fail because human judgment is invariably flawed. As Sheridan writes in “The Editor’s Introduction,” the distribution of people’s earthly lot, “as far as we can see, appear[s] extremely partial” (7). Indeed, Lady Bidulph laudably perceives the inequitable character of a world that operates along gender lines: there is a double standard that exonerates the male rake and condemns the promiscuous woman as a “whore,” and Faulkland and Sir George appear to represent this double standard. Nevertheless, Lady Bidulph cannot correct the “extremely partial” division in human

\textsuperscript{169} Sidney writes, “I cannot help thinking, that there was something like art in Miss Burchell’s behaviour” (103).
society because she herself is prone to what Sidney calls “a sort of partiality to her own sex” (50, italics mine). The distribution of justice appears “extremely partial” to the observer partly because the observer has partiality. In Defoe’s *Farther Adventures*, the human desire to instantiate divine justice leads to the monstrous massacre of natives in Madagascar. Sheridan’s *The Memoirs* hints to how a similar theological framework can wreak havoc in a domestic setting. Rather than learning to see their own flaws, spectators often become prone to judge others by deficient criteria. These deficient judgments mean that, far from correcting known injustices, spectators may create and perpetuate new ones through the use of faulty standards.

Sheridan contests the sense of certainty in appearances and judgments by focusing on what is unseen in the future. For Sheridan’s editor, the world as we see it really *would* be unjust—“were there not an invisible world where the distributions are just and equal” (7). While this editor focuses on the “invisible world” that lies beyond earthly life, the novel’s narrative structure focuses on the “invisible world” of the future, the unexpected plot twists, the “more last words” that lie beyond the next page and beyond the temporal limitations of the stage. Narrative’s subversion of premature endings serves as the ultimate reminder of epistemological uncertainty.

Sheridan repeatedly hints at possible happy endings only to thwart their actualization. As noted earlier, the “most providential discovery” of Faulkland’s relationship with Miss Burchell initially appears to be a manifestation of poetic justice. The story could have simply ended with Sidney’s narrow escape from a disastrous marriage. In prolonging the story, Sheridan chooses not to conclude her novel in the way that Charlotte Smith later concludes *Emmeline* (1788): Sidney might have found a better
marital match, just as Smith’s heroine Emmeline gives up her mercurial suitor Delamere so she can later marry the reliable character Godolphin. After Sidney is left penniless by her husband’s death, Sheridan could have ended the story when Sidney’s wealthy cousin Warner chooses to make Sidney his heir after testing the generosity of her and her brother. Sheridan’s son, the playwright Richard Brinsley Sheridan, later uses this plot convention for the happy ending of his play *The School for Scandal*. Sheridan rejects another possible happy ending when she refuses to have Faulkland’s spouse die of natural causes (as Sidney’s husband Mr. Arnold did). Sidney and Faulkland could then have been rewarded with marriage. In *Betsy Thoughtless* (1751), Eliza Haywood allows her heroine to marry her beloved Trueworth after both of their spouses die. Sheridan not only appears to have Faulkland’s spouse die of unnatural causes (by her husband’s own hand), but reveals after Sidney’s re-marriage that Burchell yet lives! Rather than choosing the conventionally happy endings available to practitioners in theatrical or in narrative fiction, Sheridan challenges not simply theatrical “unity of time” but narrative time itself. She prolongs her narrative, using narrative’s potential for the unending contestation of expectations and premature endings to expose the incomplete character of all knowledge; it is hardly accidental that the last words of the *Memoirs* trail off in a fragment rather than offer proper closure.

While ending the narrative with a fragment may irritate the curious reader, it calls attention to the fragmentary knowledge upon which judgments are formed. Characters have access only to part of the story, yet they treat their own narrative as clear and complete: for Lady Bidulph, Faulkland has lost Sidney because of providential justice, and she does not need to hear Faulkland’s side of the story. The limited perspective
offered by her partial knowledge, far from disturbing Lady Bidulph, is what gives her confidence. Human happiness depends upon the illusion that a fragment offers the whole story of virtue rewarded and vice punished, at the expense of curtailing voices or phenomena that do not fit the account.

When Faulkland tries to save the marriage of Sidney and Arnold, his plan relies upon his power to control Mrs. Gerrarde’s voice. He dictates to her what she will write to Arnold. When Lady Bidulph hears the rumor that Faulkland has run off with Mrs. Gerrarde, she is “pleased” since it has “proved” she was right about the rakish Faulkland (167). Mystified when she learns that Faulkland has kidnapped Mrs. Gerrarde in order to help Sidney, Lady Bidulph cautions, “the end crowns all … let us see how [he] will conduct himself through this ticklish affair” (190). As with Fielding’s *Adventures of David Simple* and *Volume the Last*, we are led to place an emphasis on endings and conclusions rather than a character’s motivation or behavior. Startlingly, Faulkland conducts himself rather well. He makes the kidnapping appear to be voluntary, and he tricks Mrs. Gerrarde into alienating Arnold with her letter. Arnold comes to blame Gerrarde as “that vile sorceress” who tricked him into betraying his wife (248). This means that the promised closure of the happy ending that Sidney hopes for—the restoration of a marriage with the husband whom she has eventually grown to love—ultimately depends upon Faulkland’s power to control and even falsify the appearance of Mrs. Gerrarde’s character. In this sequence, Faulkland’s triumphal narrative *must* be a fragment—it must close out other voices such as Gerrarde’s—while at the same time must appear *not* to be a fragment but rather the definitive last word.
Faulkland’s kidnapping of Mrs. Gerrarde exposes many of the tensions within poetic justice. As Marla Harris perceptively suggests, Faulkland’s treatment of Mrs. Gerrarde is in fact consonant with poetic justice, since he “sells” Mrs. Gerrarde to his servant Pivet much as Mrs. Gerrarde “sold” her niece to Faulkland (63). There is also a certain “justice” in the fact that Mrs. Gerrarde, who has misrepresented Sidney’s actions, should have her own actions misrepresented. Yet this instance of retaliatory “justice,” far from providing a happy ending, makes it problematic. As long as Arnold lives, Sidney must fear that he will learn the truth of the kidnapping and be angry. While for Gildon, poetic justice punishes a heroine for lying, Sidney suggests that in a flawed world, poetic justice and the punishment of Mrs. Gerrarde cannot be maintained without lying. The punishment of Mrs. Gerrarde’s deceit requires the perpetuation of a different deceit. Sheridan seems to suggest that poetic justice must contradict itself in order to instantiate itself.

This necessary contradiction of poetic justice becomes most obvious not in Faulkland’s deception concerning Mrs. Gerrarde, but in the inability of “poetic justice” to bring about the “happy ending” it sought. One might expect that, once the wicked, seductive female Mrs. Gerrarde has been punished, “poetic justice” has been satisfied. Nevertheless, Arnold’s own failings remain to be punished. During his estrangement from Sidney, Arnold has mortgaged her jointure to set free Mrs. Gerrarde’s brother from jail. This same brother later testifies in a lawsuit that robs Arnold of all of his estate. Arnold laments that he “was justly punished” (244), and what could more manifest a providential punishment than his loss of the estate as a direct result of betraying his wife?
The events of the novel show that the closure poetic justice offers is hideous. At the very moment that readers might believe that poetic justice ought to demand Sidney’s happiness as virtue’s reward, they are reminded instead that the act demands the punishment of Arnold’s wickedness, a “just” punishment that also greatly injures Sidney and their two children. When Frances Sheridan revisits providential design in her play *The Discovery* (1763), the rakish, selfish Lord Medway’s plans to pay for his debts by forcing his son into marriage are upset when he discovers the intended bride is actually his own illegitimate daughter. He laments to his son George, “I should be resigned to it [my anguish], did it concern myself only, as the just punishment of a life of folly and vice; but when I think of you and your mother, I am distracted” (95, italics mine). Although Thomas Rymer in *Tragedies of the Last Age* would argue that punishing the innocent son for his father’s sins offers a providential interposition that “more discovers the work of heaven” (25), Sheridan reminds us that punishments are untidy and disturbing. A “happy” closure is only achieved through curtailing others’ voices or punishing inequitably. Like Defoe and Richardson, Sheridan seems to advocate a kind of “poetic mercy” which is not concerned with punishing characters but rehabilitating them. True “poetic justice” thwarts the happy ending, and it offers closure by fragmenting a story, not by completing it.

The fragmentary ending of the first *Sidney Bidulph* is a “right” ending, but also a wrong one. Time’s passage in the first three volumes reveals the fatal results that partiality and premature judgments can bring about, and this fragmentary ending calls

170 Lord Medway’s son describes the situation in the following words: “My Lord, there is something so extraordinary in this event, that it looks as if Providence itself had interposed” (95).
attention to the fragmentary character of all endings, since humans can never see beyond appearances into the “invisible world.” Yet this ending of the novel is ultimately wrong because in it, the problems of judgment result primarily from women’s actions; as Kathleen M. Oliver notes, Faulkland is “passively manipulated, victimized, and silenced—by women” (683). Sheridan boldly challenges conventional gendered stereotypes of the rakish villain by presenting Miss Burchell as a “sly rake in petticoats,” but in doing so, she risks creating and perpetuating new generalizations: men like Arnold and Faulkland seem to be victimized through the sexual predation of women such as Mrs. Gerrarde and Miss Burchell or through the biased judgments of Lady Bidulph and Sidney. There is the danger that the first novel, standing alone, creates an unbalanced picture that may seem to exonerate male partiality as the only alternative to female partiality.

In writing a sequel, Sheridan ultimately endeavors to call generalizations into question. As Sarah Fielding tried to destabilize the reification of generalizations by offering multiple contradictory ones, Sheridan likewise undermines the finality of any one generalization. Like John Gay, Sheridan voluntarily undergoes the “absurdity” of presenting a sequel. Although women in the first novel use rigidity in judgment to control men, Sheridan shows us in the sequel that men may use a disturbing and selfish flexibility in altering judgments and commitments in order to facilitate control over women. The preoccupations of “poetic justice” with discerning Providence within the first novel are replaced by the male attempt to become “provident” and exert control over the story. As sequel, the narrative moves the story into the future while obsessively reinterpreting and even recapitulating the earlier events of the past.
4.4 Male Partiality and the Reassessment of Judgment

The sequel begins with the editor’s discovery of new letters by Sidney and her relations. Eight or nine years have passed since the end of the first novel, and Sidney has been raising the two daughters she bore with Arnold, the dutiful but melancholy Dolly and the vivacious and attractive Cecilia. Sidney has taught her children to look on Faulkland’s illegitimate son Orlando as their brother.171 When Dolly’s friend Sophia Audley discovers that Dolly is in love with Orlando, she encourages her brother Sir Edward to pursue Dolly’s sister Cecilia (since both girls have received a large independent inheritance from Sidney’s cousin Warner). Sir Edward believes that he can marry Cecilia and gain her inheritance if the more “dutiful” elder daughter Dolly weds against her mother’s wishes. Consequently, Sir Edward reveals Dolly’s love to his friend Orlando and encourages him to woo Dolly, although Orlando is already in love with Cecilia.

While Cecilia visits her uncle Sir George in Bath, Sophy Audrey leads Orlando to believe that Cecilia has found a lover there. Out of spite, vanity, and misguided compassion, Orlando exchanges vows of love with Dolly. When Orlando regrets his vows and suspects Cecilia may love him after all, Sir Edward suggests that Orlando could marry Cecilia while Sir Edward pursues Dolly. Cecilia finally obtains permission for Orlando to marry her, while Orlando requests Dolly’s silence about his broken vow.

Sir Edward threatens to reveal Orlando’s broken vow, however, unless Orlando assists him in his own marriage plans. With Orlando’s help, Sir Edward kidnap

171 Throughout the rest of this chapter, I shall refer to Faulkland’s son as “Orlando” rather than as “Faulkland” in order to prevent confusion.
imprisons Dolly so that, with her reputation ruined, she will agree to marry him. When Sir Edward takes the girl to the house of his trusted friend, Dolly escapes to her mother’s house with the help of the housekeeper Theodora, a woman whom Sir Edward had pretended to marry years ago but could now not recognize. At Cecilia’s wedding, Dolly unintentionally reveals Orlando’s broken vow. The wedding called off, Orlando repents of his behavior and kills Sir Edward in a duel. Sidney’s hope for happiness ends with the discovery of Orlando’s unfaithfulness, and, after encouraging him to atone for his misdeeds, she dies. Cecilia marries Lord V, an earlier suitor. Orlando returns from a stint in the army to propose to Dolly once more, but because she had accepted his vow without her mother’s permission, she decides never to marry, and Orlando chooses to do likewise. The sequel validates Lady Bidulph’s fears, showing that the lessons of Sidney’s past cannot prepare her and her children for the dangers posed by men’s schemes and fickleness.

As a sequel, the new story becomes inextricably linked to the events of the past. Early on, Sidney’s correspondent Cecilia encourages her to “forget the past, and look forward to the delightful prospect that is, before you!” (IV: 16) Yet Sidney cannot forget her past; it is the mistakes of the past that guide her actions. One of the sequel’s central messages may be that “the past never stops having an effect on the present” (Doody 345). Nevertheless, this effect is not unidirectional, but reciprocal. Present and future events never stop affecting how the past itself is interpreted and judged. When her daughter Cecilia refuses to marry her truly meritorious suitor, Lord V, Sidney writes to her daughter:

I would not constrain you, Cecilia; no, far be it from your affectionate parent’s heart to constrain so obedient a child; but I would advise you, my dear, advise you
for your good. *Advice* from a mother was always considered by me as a command: yet I do not desire you to regard it in so severe a light. We have been educated differently…. I … though tenderly beloved by my ever honoured mother, had, nevertheless, my neck early bowed to obedience; and this it was which constrained me to yield up my nearest wishes, and, as it were, mold my heart to the will of her to whom I thought I owed all duty. (IV: 190-1)

While the first novel might suggest that Sidney has suffered for doing what is right—so much that *The Monthly Review* could find no reason why she could be refused reward—the mature Sidney sees that her earlier perspective on duty had been wrong, and she has worked to correct it. Through her preoccupation with the sufferings that resulted from blind obedience and rigidity, Sidney appears to have moved forward in epistemological humility and in leniency—toward “poetic mercy” rather than “poetic justice.” Although she believes she has never “been willfully guilty of an action contrary to the duty” she owes God (V: 281), she can see her unintended guilt. She is even able to recognize her own “partiality” (IV: 21) for young Orlando and takes precautions that it shall not have a harmful effect on her daughters’ welfare.

Wise as the mature Sidney may be, her lack of suspicion endangers her family by perpetuating a new kind of blindness. In the first book, Lady Bidulph’s blindness arose from her tendency to make hasty judgments against males. The sequel reminds us that even charitable judgments can be mistaken because human knowledge is limited. Sir Edward, who knows Orlando well from school, sees aspects of Orlando that the rest of his family cannot:

He does the best and the worst things with equal indifference…. He has an infinite deal of vanity, but he has still more art in concealing it, and *I believe that I am the first who ever discovered that he had either*. With all this he has very good sense, and an address insinuating beyond any thing I ever met with. His faults seem all complexional, so are his virtues too, for he is neither right nor
wrong upon principle, and it appears a moot point whether nature intended him for an angel or a devil. (IV: 101, italics mine)

Orlando, like his mother before him, has an “art” in concealing faults and an “insinuating” manner, beyond the powers of the prudent and good to see. The difficulty in seeing beyond Orlando’s appearance is not because he is evil, but on the contrary: he defies the categories of “angel” or “devil.” According to John Locke, reward and punishment are possible only upon the basis of a stable identity, which Orlando does not have. Despite the ambiguity of Miss Burchell, characters in the first novel (such as Sir George) believed that they could easily categorize Orlando’s mother as a “prostitute” (328) and a “sly rake in petticoats” (387). In the character of Orlando, Sheridan makes explicit that there is no simple way to categorize Orlando’s unstable character as evil or good: his character remains unfinished.

Orlando’s instability postpones the novel’s ending and leaves its conclusion in doubt—whether his “flame shall light [Orlando and Sir Edward] both to happiness, or consume him in the conflagration” (IV: 74). In the first novel, happy endings largely fail because characters desire to get “justice” through judging and punishing others; Lady Bidulph’s and Sidney’s inflexibility make possible the first novel’s tragic ending. In the sequel, the problem is not the rigidity of the judges but the moral and psychological shapelessness of Orlando.

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172 As noted earlier, Locke argues in An Essay Concerning Human Understanding that there is an absurdity in punishing the “sober man” for the actions of the “mad man”: this is “somewhat explained by our way of speaking in English, when we say such an one is not himself, or is besides himself; in which phrases it is insinuated, as if those who nor, or, at least, first used them, thought, that self was changed, the selfsame person was no longer in that man” (309).
Orlando’s shapelessness indirectly calls into question the delineation of gender differences. As I have suggested earlier, Sheridan’s first novel and sequel each target a different gender by associating it with specific negative patterns of behavior or thinking. The danger in Sheridan’s challenging of contemporary gender stereotypes, such as the idea that only men are rakes, is that she risks creating or reifying new gender stereotypes: women may tend to be too judgmental in the first novel, and men tend to be too flexible in the sequel. In the character of Orlando, Sheridan undercuts this tendency to create new generalizations about the sexes.

Orlando complicates the tendency to stereotype because he is composed of qualities associated in the earlier novel with both genders. He shares many of his mother’s characteristics, and as Sir Edward remarks, “The father and the mother [are] pretty equally blended in [Orlando’s] composition” (IV: 100). Sir Edward further comments, “I do not think [Orlando] capable of a manly or steady friendship towards one of his own sex, or of a violent or constant attachment toward one of yours” (ibid., italics mine). Although Orlando’s father had a firm friendship with Sir George and constant attachment to Sidney, the qualities of Orlando’s mother seem to render Orlando incapable of any such “manliness.” Strict gender delineations are inadequate because Orlando integrates characteristics associated with both genders. While Alexander Pope in “Epistle 2” suggests that “Most women have no characters at all,” Sheridan retorts that many men do not either. In the character of Orlando, Sheridan suggests how Miss Burchell’s “insinuating” address and a supposedly “feminine” shapelessness of character can be used by a man to manipulate women.
Orlando’s moral shapelessness proves disastrous in the context of personal commitments to women. When Orlando regrets promising to marry Dolly when he loves her sister, Sir Edward encourages him, in words that echo the advice of Sidney’s friend Cecilia, to forget the “past,” which is for Sir Edward “but an idle rhodomontade” (IV: 205). Rather than ending with a marriage between Orlando and Dolly, the narrative defies conclusion because men deny their accountability to the commitments of the past; they are free to change their minds. The same Sir Edward who seemed critical of Orlando’s incapacity for a “manly” friendship and loyalty celebrates male infidelity to women. Sir Edward mocks Orlando’s delicacies, writing, “I have made and broken as many [vows] as most private gentlemen in England….Who ever thought that an oath to a woman was binding?” (IV: 201) In Sir Edward’s world, male honor upholds vows made to men, not to women.

In the context of the sequel, oaths to women do mean something. Although Sir Edward sports with male infidelity, he depends upon a wife’s matrimonial vow and her religious belief to keep her “out of mischief” (IV: 330). Lady Bidulph’s first love dies of guilt for not keeping his vows. Ultimately, both Orlando and Sir Edward suffer for refusing to honor their first vows to women. The sequel is able to move beyond both female and male partiality by moving back to the concerns of the past, reassessing and confirming Lady Bidulph’s belief that women often suffer because men change their minds.

This regression to the past complicates narrative time. The sequel’s development of epistemology through time does not take the form of a triumphal linear progression in which we learn to reject Lady Bidulph’s perspective as hopelessly flawed; nor does the
sequel present a simple cyclical repetition of past prejudices in which we learn Lady Bidulph’s suspicions are always right. Past and present ultimately function in dialogical interaction, a contestation of the values of the past and the present.

This contestation of value means that neither The Memoirs nor Conclusion can be read in isolation. Not only does Conclusion offer a valuable correction to The Memoirs, but The Memoirs can be seen as a corrective to its sequel. Read simply on its own, the sequel seems to perpetuate the stereotypical representation of men as rakes that The Memoirs had called into question. Sheridan’s sequel presumes that readers have already learned the insights of the first novel. Any separation we draw between the stories is ultimately artificial and can perpetuate the very generalizations that Sheridan intended to challenge.

The two novels ultimately call into question the artificiality of the Aristotelian convention that an artistic work is composed of “a beginning, a middle, and an end.” While the first novel calls our attention to the artificiality of endings and the inaccessibility of the “invisible world” of the future (7), the sequel calls our attention to the artificiality of the first novel’s beginning and the virtual inaccessibility of the “invisible world” of Lady Bidulph’s past, before The Memoirs began. It is as if Sheridan wishes her new work to be both sequel and prequel. Sheridan suggests an “intertextual dialogue” that is not simply between the first work and its sequel, but between first work, sequel, and Lady Bidulph’s own unwritten story. By depicting events which seem to repeat episodes which took place before the time of the first novel, the sequel ultimately gestures toward moving beyond narrative time, or perhaps outside of it altogether. As Serious Reflections permitted Crusoe’s imaginative ascent above the world to transcend
earthly limitations of perspective, Sheridan hints at the possibility of narrative to approximate the perspective of transcendence through perceiving the whole of past, present, and future. For Sheridan, such a perspective is ultimately available to Providence alone.

Sir Edward and Orlando serve as parodic imitations of providential transcendence. Believing that they can rightly perceive the future consequences of Orlando’s keeping his past vow, they re-interpret the vow’s importance. Orlando convinces himself that Sir Edward “would make her [Dolly] a much better husband than I should” (IV: 332), and that all will be for the best if Dolly but “imitate her mother’s admirable example, who more than once yielded up her own dearest interest to promote the good of others” (V: 80). Male characters counterfeit transcendent knowledge, using assumed consequences to justify the means and making Sidney’s self-sacrifice legitimate sacrificing a woman for men’s convenience.

In his own way, Sidney’s brother Sir George also tries to sacrifice his niece Cecilia through a reinterpretation of Sidney’s sacrifices. Sir George, who had insulted Sidney for her obedience to her mother in marrying Arnold, now uses her example positively in order to justify forcing Cecilia to marry Lord V: he insists that he “was convinced [Sidney] had had as sincere an affection for Mr. Arnold as if he had been the man of [her] choice” (V:10). Through the process of time (and perhaps through the influence of his vain wife), Sir George has perhaps become even more unyielding when it comes to arranging marriage than Lady Bidulph was; however, Sir George’s hardness, unlike Lady Bidulph’s, arises not from principle but selfishness. His apparent hardness ultimately depends upon his flexibility in reinterpreting events and reshaping judgments
as it becomes convenient; ultimately, only Sir George’s partiality to Orlando’s father convinces him to re-interpret Cecilia’s situation and allow her to marry Orlando rather than Lord V.

Sir Edward shows the power of male bias in re-interpretation in the description of his kidnapping of Dolly. In the first novel, when Faulkland, Orlando’s father, kidnapped Mrs. Gerrarde, he described the action as “knight-errantry” (188) and affirmed that he had “no designs but what are for the good both of her soul and body” (170). In a kind of grotesque parody, Sir Edward defends his own kidnapping, a “harmless piece of knight-errantry” that is ultimately in Dolly’s interests (V: 172). He confesses, “Sweet soul! I really am fond of her;... I’ll make her a good husband; for I intend to reform after I am married” (V: 196). Sir Edward’s abduction plot came under attack in The Critical Review’s review of Conclusion of the Memoirs, because such a plot had already occurred in many novels and manifests “a poverty of invention, and a want of judgment” (277).

What the early reviewer misses by reading The Conclusion in the context of other novels’ kidnapping plots is that The Conclusion is in fact a critique of The Memoirs.

Sheridan’s return to the kidnapping plot is not so much an instance of a “want of judgment” as the attempt to correct a “want of judgment” in the first novel. Faulkland’s flamboyant celebration of knight-errantry and of saving Sidney may encourage the reader to excuse the kidnapping. Sir Edward’s striking (but unconscious) resemblance to Faulkland leads the reader to a critical re-examination of the past and of Faulkland’s judgment.

Men often take credit for the power of foreseeing final consequences. Sophy comments to her brother Sir Edward that “you men have deeper judgements, and know
better how to deduce consequences for [women’s] affairs” (IV: 161). While Lady Bidulph rejoiced simply to discover Providence at work, Sir Edward triumphs in imitating providential control with his careful plotting: “See how provident I am, Faulkland” (V: 156, italics mine). Although Lady Bidulph questioned Faulkland’s kidnapping of Mrs. Gerrarde, contending “the end crowns all,” Faulkland’s plan triumphed and seemed to justify itself on the basis of consequences. Yet in the sequel we are reminded that women are the potential casualties of men’s “deeper judgements,” and the story’s end is never foreseeable. Although Sir Edward’s kidnapping plot appears to have provided for all contingencies and consequences, Dolly escapes a forced marriage to Sir Edward by the agency of the very woman he had pretended to marry. Some might even call such an event “poetic justice.”

Although poetic justice and Providence had been eclipsed in the sequel by Sir Edward’s own “provident” planning (V: 156), providential activity becomes the sequel’s new preoccupation in the end of the last volume. In her captivity, Dolly is comforted, “Your virtue shall not be unrewarded here, no more than it will be hereafter” (V: 213). After Dolly reveals Orlando’s secret vow, Cecilia comforts her sister, “you have been the instrument of providence to prevent the greatest misfortune that could have befallen me” (V: 256)—much as Lady Bidulph believed that a providential discovery preserved Sidney from marrying Faulkland. Sidney proclaims that “the hand of Heaven had directed the whole” (V:257). When Faulkland repents of his behavior to Dolly and is angered by Sir Edward’s treatment of her, he kills Sir Edward in a duel and determines that “’twas just that Heaven should in its instrument of punishment make use of the hand of him whose mind he had perverted” (V:268, italics mine). It might be understandable that the writer
of *The Critical Review* (perhaps without intending ironic reference to the first novel) claims that the sequel observes “poetical justice”—even though the writer is still not fully persuaded that Sir Edward’s sister is “sufficiently punished” (278). It seems that Providence is finally at work in redressing wrongs.

One might see these apparent acts of Providence as a departure from the first novel’s challenge of “poetic justice”; though God’s justice was delayed in the first novel, God has finally intervened. Yet the sequel is still not so simple. As an “instrument of providence,” Dolly reveals a truth that both “saves” Cecilia and causes Sidney’s death: Orlando “is as much the author of my death, as if he had dispatched me with a pistol ball” (V: 276). Even if Providence has intervened, it has taken innocent casualties.

Providence proves inscrutable, much as when Crusoe in *Farther Adventures* mistakes his wife’s death as Providence’s command to kill English sailors rather than to save them. The observer can never be sure whether Providence is intervening to provide relief or to inflict more suffering.

With Sidney’s death, forgiveness and atonement may seem the last possibility of making Providence intelligible; perhaps the sequel will provide a lens through which the apparent chaos of past events will manifest a purpose. While for Sir George it was a “pity” that Orlando did not die with Sir Edward (V:271), Orlando’s survival suggests the possibility of his gaining consistency in character, much as Betsy Thoughtless suffered for her flaws until she could merit Trueworth. Yet years later, when a reformed Orlando returns to Dolly “to deliver myself up to her justice” and proposes marriage (V: 318), Dolly refuses, punishing herself for her “disobedience” in accepting his earlier vow without first asking for parental approval.
The Critical Review expresses its frustration that Dolly’s determination arises from “a very absurd delicacy” (278), calling our attention to the apparent senselessness of the story. Providence does not simply prevent a bad marriage between Orlando and Cecilia but causes Sidney’s disappointment and death. Providence does not simply postpone a marriage between Orlando and Dolly to make Orlando worthy of her—such an ending would at least have rewarded Sidney’s child if it could not reward Sidney herself. Instead, Providence leaves both Orlando and Dolly single. Though the editor’s “Preface” to the first novel had offered a moral for the story, the sequel’s editor leaves no clear moral; the editor closes the narrative with the “compliment due to the judgment of his readers to leave them to make reflections for themselves” (V: 327).

This is a high compliment indeed, given the variety of mistakes in judgment the reader has witnessed. Sheridan’s protagonist has consistently failed to see beyond appearances, both when she was too strict in her judgments and when she was too lenient. Characters fail if they show too great a partiality, both if it is towards women or towards men. In the sequel, Sidney has rightly criticized past judgments while many characters (especially males) wrongly alter judgments and commitments for personal convenience. Though Mrs. Gerrarde and Miss Burchell may seem irredeemably evil, Orlando defies judgment because his character has not yet been fixed. Lady Bidulph wrongfully presumes that Providence will intervene to discover and correct injustices, while Sir Edward wrongfully presumes that nothing can intervene to upset his “provident” designs. Sheridan does not invite the reader to judge virtue until teaching that judgment and presumption are almost inevitably wrong.
Sheridan finds in fiction a resource to criticize the dramatic principle of “poetic justice” at a time when England was desperate for an intelligible correlation between virtuous living and divine favor and had considered pushing for stage regulation to make this correlation clear. Fiction’s freedom from “unity of time” enables Sheridan to probe the epistemological complexities of everyday life that defied the simplistic and rigidly harsh judgments “poetic justice” fostered. In the resource of the sequel, Sheridan is able to push against the normal limitations of narrative time. The sequel rejects artificial endings and beginnings to question her earlier narrative’s assessments and their implicit partiality toward men. The prolongation of the first novel (with its prevention of happy endings) and the sequel’s continuation remind us that an inaccessible “invisible world” always lies beyond appearances and premature endings. In prolonging her fiction, Sheridan argues that spectators should not direct their suspicions toward others, but toward themselves and the mistaken belief that their judgments and narratives ever have the final word.
CONCLUSION:

IN WHICH SOME THINGS ARE CONCLUDED

In the tale *Rasselas* (1759), Samuel Johnson depicts prince Rasselas’ departure from his home, the “happy valley,” and his reflections as he encounters the outside world. At the end of the story, after his characters have engaged in countless discussions and examinations of human vanity, Johnson entitles his concluding chapter, “The Conclusion, in Which Nothing is Concluded.” In 1790, Ellis Cornelia Knight does attempt to conclude Johnson’s story with a sequel, *Dinarbas*. In *Rasselas*, it appeared that Rasselas’ independence and freedom of choice allowed him to test a variety of walks of life and obtain objectivity. In *Dinarbas*, it becomes clear that it is the very power of choice—Rasselas’ ability to change occupations if they seem unpleasant—that has led him to make premature judgments on the quality of others’ lives rather than truly to experience their situation for himself.\(^{173}\) Despite *Rasselas*’ attempts to resist narrative closure, Knight suggests that the work encourages ethical closure and premature finality in the formation of character assessment.

\(^{173}\) In *Dinarbas*, when Rasselas is imprisoned, rather than live in solitude, he chooses companionship with the youths he rejected in the first novel for their dissipation. As he spends more time with them, Rasselas discovers in chapter 7 that he had “judged too severely”; they have many good qualities and even receive correction “with avidity” when offered from a “friend” rather than a “preceptor” (124).
This interaction between Johnson’s *Rasselas* and Knight’s *Dinarbas* points us beyond the imposition of my own formal circle, this dissertation. As I have argued, issues of novelistic form and content are indissolubly linked. The imposition of formal order upon the novel is connected to the curtailment of voices which do not contribute to a sense of uniformity and pattern. The “refusal of novels to end” (Hunter 279) signals the novelist’s refusal to reduce human experience to one simple “happy ending,” one definitive judicial pronouncement in “poetic justice,” or one character’s perspective being privileged above another’s. If the sequel is a “footnote” to the narrative of western history, it is a footnote which threatens to swallow up the earlier text as it swells to the size of a Jamesian “loose, baggy monster.” In principle, “relations never stop,” and so neither, in a sense, does this dissertation.

Knight’s *Dinarbas* offers an important warning in the conclusion of this study. Even if I have attempted, like Johnson’s *Rasselas*, to resist imposing artificial closure or premature judgment, there is always a need for “more last words” to challenge and correct the omissions in my own narrative of the eighteenth-century sequel. Not all sequels conform to my own organizing schema and the theory of “poetic justice.” Our narratives, both of western history and of the eighteenth sequel, remain in the process of composition.

The presence of the literary sequel heightens the sense that “the novel” suffers a fundamental identity crisis: whether it exists as the manifestation of formal perfection, or continued formal experimentation. Defoe’s *Farther Adventures* and Richardson’s *Pamela II* offer a challenge of narrative form itself, attacking their audience’s inordinate desire for conflict and violence. In Defoe’s *Serious Reflections* and Fielding’s *Familiar
Letters, we encounter two works that do not even seem to be novels at all, as they deny traditional beginnings and endings. In Conclusion of the Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph, Sheridan offers a work that simultaneously functions as sequel and prequel. Such works reflect a desire to challenge our most established notions of what a novel is and of how narrative is meant to function. Rather than seeing novelistic form as fixed or perfected, sequel-writers subvert earlier forms and seek alternatives to commonplace conventions, even that of “plot” itself.

Rather than seeing “the story” as something permanent and unchanging, authors re-define their works and themselves. Authors and characters undergo a kind of “annihilation” or “resurrection,” a self-division or self-multiplication. The novel’s momentum tends not toward containment and compression, but toward expansion and inclusion. The novel, in its most emphatic form, the sequel, encourages a rich multiplicity of voices and “patches,” of dialogue within a text and dialogue taking place between texts. As “wicked” characters and “virtuous” characters exist in dialogue, the distinctions between the two classes become blurred, and the closure of “poetic justice” is transformed into the sympathetic aesthetics of “poetic mercy.” It may be the case that the novel’s loose bagginess, its emancipation from “unity of time” (as well as “unity of action” and even supposed “consistency of character”), is not its weakness but its strength: the refusal to oversimplify or reduce the complexity of human experience—the insistence on the Lockean (and Shaftesburian) “multiplication of the self”—is the novel’s greatest end.
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