

“A Point of Conscience”: Breastfeeding and Maternal Authority in *Pamela 2*

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Could you ever have thought, Miss, that Husbands have a Dispensing Power over their Wives, which Kings are not allowed over the Law? ... Did you ever hear of such a Notion before, Miss? Of such a Prerogative in a Husband? Would you care to subscribe to it?¹

Pamela to Miss Darnford

Pamela's outraged description of her husband's domestic tyranny signals the onset of the first conflict in her married life, and introduces the reader to a crucial episode in the sequel to Richardson's phenomenally popular first novel. *Pamela 1* (1740) had been occupied with the violent sexual pursuit of a young servant girl by her wealthy and more experienced master; it ended, disturbingly for some readers, with the sudden repentance of the master, Mr B., who condescends at last to marry the girl he had hoped to rape. Part 2 (1741) takes up where Part 1 left off, and follows Pamela and Mr B. into their married life.

What this means for the heroine, of course, is that the continuation is largely a record of maternal experience: Pamela is pregnant virtually throughout the sequel (seven times in all), adopts an illegitimate daughter of Mr B.'s from a former liaison, and gives considerable attention in her correspondence to the care and education of her children.

1 Samuel Richardson, *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded*, Parts 1 and 2, 4 vols (London, 1742), 3:389–90. References are to this edition.

Pamela's impassioned complaint to Miss Darnford is also occasioned by her motherhood: she and Mr B. have disagreed over whether Pamela should breastfeed their first child herself, as she believes is her Christian duty, or hire a wet nurse, as Mr B. insists. The episode carries significant narrative weight in *Pamela 2*: Pamela recounts each argument between herself and Mr B. in detail, adding her own ruminations all along, and soliciting the advice of various correspondents.

Despite all this palaver, it is hardly surprising to readers familiar with Part 1 when Mr B.'s tyrannical "prerogative" eventually wins the day, and baby Billy is placed in the hands of a wet nurse. What does seem odd, however, is the dissonance between the inevitable subordination of Pamela's desires to her husband's and the language the text uses to represent it. For despite the fact that Mr B. eventually prevails, Pamela's arguments for maternal breastfeeding are represented as powerful and persuasive. All correspondents except Mr B. agree that maternal breastfeeding is clearly preferable to wet-nursing, all things being equal; and Mr B.'s arguments, as we shall see, are deliberately cast as unconvincing and poorly motivated. So clearly does the text support Pamela's position, in fact, that the dispute over maternal breastfeeding comes to seem only superficially about the matters ostensibly being debated: the relative merits of mother's and nurse's milk, the practical aspects of maternal breastfeeding (the physical and emotional commitment, the investment of time), and so on. Instead, the struggle to determine whether Pamela should breastfeed is a struggle to define the relative authority of husband and wife over maternal behaviour and the status of maternal subjectivity within marriage; most fundamentally, what is being contested between Pamela and Mr B. is the source of authority over a mother's body.

The vigorous arguments of a generation of conduct books and the increasing enclosure of women in domestic space were finally, by the 1740s, convincing large numbers of parents that maternal breastfeeding was preferable to hiring the services of a nurse.² In Pamela's central

2 For the enclosure of women in domestic space, see especially Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987) and Bridget Hill, *Women, Work, and Sexual Politics in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Blackwell, 1989). For changing trends in infant feeding during the first half of the eighteenth century, see pp. 266–68, below. The conduct-books with which I am mainly concerned are behaviour handbooks addressed to women and published before 1750. Excluded from concern are manuals specifically devoted to housewifery (cooking books, for example), the "child management" books that became so numerous after mid-century, and conduct-books written from an explicitly medical perspective, except where these serve as points of comparison: (Conduct-books written after 1750 tended to devote more direct attention to mothers than earlier works; for this reason, late-century manuals are often assumed to have inaugurated the eighteenth cen-

voice, *Pamela 2* powerfully repeats those arguments, presenting a convincing case for the dramatic benefits of maternal nursing. Mr B., on the other hand, mouths platitudes about motherhood that were routinely assigned to aristocrats, and always disparaged, in conduct literature.³ In this way, the novel sets up a paradigmatic encounter between traditional, patriarchal authority—represented by Mr B.—and the new authority of conduct literature, a reasoned discourse based (supposedly) on objective observation and predicated on the idea that correct behaviour may be defined communally. By teaching objectively correct codes of female behaviour, especially maternal breastfeeding, conduct literature provided a

ture's obsession with maternal behaviour; in fact, however, these texts entered an established tradition, and relied on definitions and positions that had become current earlier in the century.) Any reader of early eighteenth-century conduct-books will be immediately struck by their unanimity. This is largely because the majority simply reproduce, abridge, or conflate Richard Allestree (*The Ladies Calling*, 1673) and George Savile, Marquess of Halifax (*The Lady's New-Year's-Gift: Or, Advice to a Daughter*, 1688), often without attribution. To cite Allestree and Halifax, therefore, is to quote ubiquitous maxims that achieved the status of truth during the first half of the eighteenth century.

- 3 Denigration of aristocratic mothers as unloving pleasure-seekers who refuse to be inconvenienced by breastfeeding is commonplace in conduct literature of the period, and reflects a more general tendency among writers of the nascent bourgeoisie to "see the aristocracy as deficient in maternal feeling." David Kunzle, "William Hogarth: The Ravaged Child in the Corrupt City," *Changing Images of the Family*, ed. Virginia Tufté and Barbara Myerhoff (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 127. That aristocratic women tend to make poor mothers became an increasingly powerful idea as the century progressed, and was almost always linked to their failure to nurse. In the circular reasoning of conduct writing, women of means do not breastfeed because they are unloving mothers; and they are unloving mothers because they fail to establish the loving bond between mother and child understood to be the inevitable result of breastfeeding. For example, see James Nelson, *An Essay on the Government of Children, Under Three General Heads: viz Health, Manners and Education* (London, 1753), p. 44. In 1673, Allestree is "loth" directly to blame a failure of maternal love on "the Mothers transferring the Nursing her Child to another," and wants to leave room for the reformation of aristocratic mothers, to whom his work is largely addressed. But by the time of Thomas Marriott's *Female Conduct: Being an Essay on the Art of Pleasing. To Be Practic'd by the Fair Sex, Before, and After Marriage. A Poem, in Two Books* (1759), wealthy women are being explicitly barred from readership ("Rich Maids! approach not my Academy," p. 25). Marriott also argues significantly that maternal nursing is potentially a class leveller, and "binds alike each Mother, rich, or poor" (p. 263); presumably it is this kind of levelling, as much as breastfeeding itself, that he feels "rich" women are trying to avoid. The *Ladies Library* (London, 1714), attributed to Richard Steele, repeats what was by 1714 a well-worn argument: maternal breastfeeding is evidence of proper "Affection and Tenderness," which have been "implanted" in mothers by "Nature"; the only "restraint" breastfeeding places on women is restraint from the vices of vanity, theatre, and gambling, all popularly associated with upper-class women (pp. 225–26). So breastfeeding, the ultimate indicator of maternal virtue, is also the class act *par excellence*, distinguishing the selfless, virtuous, and affectionate domestic mother from the idle, selfish, pleasure-seeking aristocrat. Dorothy McLaren shows that seventeenth-century working mothers routinely breastfed their own and others' children for prolonged periods, but more privileged mothers did not. See "Marital Fertility and Lactation 1570–1720," *Women in English Society 1500–1800*, ed. Mary Prior (New York: Methuen, 1985), p. 23.

rival source of authority, whereby wives like Pamela could, conceivably, resist their husbands' commands.⁴

In the end, of course, the novel enforces Mr B.'s position of authority, and so works to curtail the growing influence of conduct literature and to reassert the autocratic rights of individual fathers. But because at the same time it represents Mr B.'s commands as logically flawed and politically suspect, *Pamela 2* undercuts its own efforts to contain the potential subversiveness of conduct writing's advice to mothers. The effort to teach wives to obey their husbands even when husbands are wrong backfires, to an extent, as the patently incorrect Mr B. is obeyed against reason and religion, merely because of his position as husband. As Pamela herself is quick to note in the complaint which forms the headnote to this essay, the patriarchal family *Pamela 2* defends turns out to be very much like the autocratic kingship England had publicly rejected half a century before.

Pamela 2 sets itself up as a corrective to conduct literature not only in political terms, but also aesthetically. Though primarily a didactic work, it sets moral lessons into motion, as it were, attempting to make entertaining material that conduct-books typically delivered in more direct, and even less palatable, forms. Ironically, Richardson's effort to revise conduct writing along novelistic lines is rather too successful for its own good. The "novelization" of didacticism is just convincing enough to invite critical judgments of the work as a novel, but not sufficient to make it seem a very good one.

For this reason, Part 2 has attracted virtually unanimous critical contempt as its readers have looked in vain for the linear structure most critics still believe must define a good novel.⁵ Even the most acute read-

4 During Richardson's lifetime, writers of conduct-books began to see and pre-empt this danger. For example, Seius Gaius (pseud.) argues in *The Mother's Looking-Glass* (London, 1702), a defence of maternal breastfeeding, that only "Sickness, Disability, Danger, publique necessity" or "Death" (!) can excuse a woman from nursing her children "with her own Breasts" (to do otherwise "is a sin"), pp. 11-17; by comparison, *The Ladies Library* provides an almost identical list of circumstances that can "excuse" a woman from "the great Duty incumbent upon all Mothers" to nurse their offspring, but adds "the Interposition of the Father's Authority" alongside the mother's illness, physical danger and "Extraordina[y] [sic] ... publick Necessity" (p. 221).

5 Terry Castle reviews the surprisingly uniform critical appraisals of *Pamela 2* in *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnavalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), pp. 131-32; Cf. Lois A. Chaber, "From Moral Man to Godly Man: 'Mr Locke' and Mr. B. in Part 2 of *Pamela*," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 18 (1988), 213-14; Ruth Bernard Yeazell, *Fictions of Modesty: Women and Courtship in the English Novel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 266. Susan Winnet provides a perceptive discussion of the genderedness of traditional reading expectations and pleasures in "Coming Unstrung: Women, Men, Narrative, and Principles of Pleasure," *PMLA* 105 (May, 1990), 505-18.

ers tend to throw their hands up in frustration as the sequel moves with apparent aimlessness from one illustrative vignette to another, tracing Pamela's dilemmas as wife and mother, inculcating lessons and drawing morals. According to Terry Castle, the problem is that *Pamela 2* "lacks a unifying plot; nothing 'happens' in it." Plot, character, incident—all fail to produce a satisfying, coherent narrative. Accordingly, Castle, like many others, finds the text "more than a disappointment. At times it seems almost to insult us, to affront our expectations. ... For the most part, Richardson's sequel is more than just plotless. It is an assault ... on plot itself."⁶

But from the perspective I am adopting, *Pamela 2* looks much less like a sloppy novel than like a strategically assembled conduct-book. Its structure reflects the diffuse, even disjointed, world of domestic detail and daily routine; the episodic nature of the anti-plot nicely serves Richardson's didactic purposes. It makes sense that, instead of offering an original story, Richardson's oddly amphibious text dramatizes (and, to an extent, revises) familiar moral instructions and norms for female virtue, norms already coded for eighteenth-century readers of conduct literature as classless and universal, but presented here by means of what Castle rightly calls "a thinly disguised paean to bourgeois values."⁷ So although *Pamela 2* may look like a novel, it does not work like one. Instead, the text functions as a generic anomaly, what we might call a

6 Castle, pp. 131, 135, 138. A few readers have found Part 2 slightly more palatable than Castle does; the faintness of the praise it elicits, however, remains damning. Margaret Anne Doody observes that there are "longer and more sustained conversations" in Part 2 than in Part 1 and that "Pamela is not here ... always the central speaker; there is more variety in style of speech, and of tone." *A Natural Passion: A Study of the Novels of Samuel Richardson* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), p. 80. But these positive comments appear in a chapter entitled "Pamela Continued: Or, The Sequel that Failed." Donald L. Ball's earlier essay makes similar observations about the sequel's technical improvements, but still *Pamela 2* "seems to incorporate and to continue needlessly all of the worst features of *Pamela 1* and to illustrate very few of the good ones." "Pamela II: A Primary Link in Richardson's Development as a Novelist," *Modern Philology* 65 (1968), 334.

7 Castle, p. 152. Pamela herself, like *Pamela 2*, is a kind of "hodge-podge" (Castle, p. 171), at once representing all social classes and none. She was born into what we might today call the lower middle class (her parents once ran a small local school), though by the time the first part of *Pamela* opens her family has fallen on hard times and her father is an aging ditch-digger. We first meet her as a household servant who is oddly also a companion, a kind of daughter, and even a double to her mistress. Eventually raised to the status of a "Lady" (3:6): wife to a wealthy and almost-aristocratic husband, she remains ever mindful of her inferior origins and obsessed with bourgeois values and duties. *Pamela 2*'s amorphous representation of class serves to universalize Pamela's experience; but at the same time, the country-house domesticity that Pamela embodies works to subsume all social classes, each of which Pamela in some sense represents. Cf. Armstrong, pp. 69–75, for a discussion of the shifting valences of the country-house ideal in eighteenth-century conduct literature. Pamela's house epitomizes the apparently classless domestic space that Armstrong says conduct-books created for popular emulation.

"conduct novel."⁸ In *Pamela 2*, Richardson puts the traditions of conduct literature to work, giving form and voice to the perfect woman whom didactic writers were so eager to define. "What a bewitching Girl art thou!" Lady Davers cries to Pamela in letter 19: "What an Exemplar to Wives now, as well as thou wast before to Maidens!" (3:104). The Pamela of Part 2 is female virtue personified, the paradigmatic and impossible bourgeois woman brought to life from the sketches of conduct writing, and worthy, as Richardson himself famously put it, "of the Imitation of her Sex, from low to high life."

In particular, Pamela demonstrates the attributes of her culture's vision of a perfect wife and mother. The two duties are, of course, intimately connected. When Lady Davers describes for Pamela the behaviours that will be expected of her as Mr B.'s wife, she emphasizes the requirement that Pamela produce "a Succession of brave Boys, to perpetuate a Family ... which ... *expects* it from you" (3:41–42). Without this, Lady Davers freely informs Pamela, all the rest of her famous virtues will mean nothing, and Mr B. "by descending to the wholesome Cot ... will want one Apology for his conduct, be as excellent as you may" (3:42). Pamela's maternity is the *sine qua non* upon which depend all the rest—her social position, her marital happiness, the continued recognition of her virtue, and its concomitant rewards.⁹



Pamela would not have had to look far for advice on how to be a good mother. At least since the publication in 1673 of Richard Allestree's *The Ladies Calling*, conduct literature had been energetic in its efforts to dictate specific standards for maternal behaviour, standards that continue today to influence Anglo-American maternal ideals. Allestree's

8 That *Pamela 2* is essentially a "narrative conduct book" was argued as early as 1968 by Ball (p. 334). But the work's status as a failed novel has nevertheless been in little doubt among critics

9 Lady Davers, of course, has nothing at all to say about Pamela's behaviour as a mother once all the projected sons are born: the important thing is simply that Pamela bear them. Once again, the B. family is associated with attitudes stereotyped during the period as aristocratic and affectionally limited. For Pamela herself, it is not enough merely to produce children; throughout *Pamela 2* she devotes herself to defining and practising virtuous motherhood, much as she had devoted herself to exemplary maidenly virtue in *Pamela 1*. Indeed, as I argue in a forthcoming book, motherly and maidenly virtue come to depend on one another in the course of the sequel: Pamela's virtuous motherhood retrospectively validates her sexual virtue in Part 1, and by the end of Part 2 it is clear that maternal virtue is possible only for women such as Pamela, wives who retained their sexual virtue before marriage.

supremely influential work¹⁰ defined “the office and duty of a Mother” in detail, outlining what, over the course of the next generation, would become standard prescriptions for maternal excellence: feelings of peculiar and overwhelming “tenderness” towards one’s children, constant personal care and attendance on them “through the several Stages of Infancy, Childhood, and Youth,” responsibility for their early education, and, especially, breastfeeding.¹¹

In a formulation with immense ideological implications, Allestree represents motherhood as an exclusively affective matter: when mothers fail to mother adequately, it is simply because either they love their children too much or they love them too little.¹² Mothers who overdo it are summarily dealt with: “The doting affection of the Mother,” Allestree informs his readers, “is frequently punish’d with the untimely death of her Children; or if not with that. ... they live ... to grieve her eies [sic], and to consume her heart ... and to force their unhappy mothers to that sad exclamation ... ‘*Blessed are the wombs which bare not*’” (pp. 205–6).¹³ It is

- 10 The *Ladies Calling* was almost certainly the most frequently reprinted conduct-book in the first half of the eighteenth century, reappearing under many titles and in fragmentary forms in other works. Calling it “immensely influential” (p. 5), Yeazell notes that there were “at least eleven impressions ... between 1673 and 1720,” and that the work was still being reprinted as late as 1787 (p. 240). It would be difficult to count the number of times that all or part of Allestree’s work was reprinted under other titles; Yeazell offers a partial list (p. 242n.27).
- 11 Richard Allestree, *The Ladies Calling* (1673; fifth impression, Oxford, 1677), pp. 201–13. References are to this edition.
- 12 Allestree’s explanation of maternal failure as the result either of an excess of love or of its absence would be reformulated with a vengeance more than a century later by Mary Wollstonecraft, for whom maternal failure seems almost an inevitability: “Woman ... a slave in every situation to prejudice, seldom exerts enlightened maternal affection; for she either neglects her children, or spoils them by improper indulgence.” *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1790), ed. Carol H. Poston (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988), p. 151.
- 13 The too-indulgent mother is a familiar figure in eighteenth-century writing in many genres. Mary Davys’s *The Ladies Tales: Exemplified in the Vertues and Vices of the Quality, with Reflections* (London, 1714) includes praise for a “most excellent Wife and tender Mother” whose “Tenderness to her child was temper’d with Prudence from that faulty Fondness, that is often of so fatal a Consequence to the unhappy Children of imprudent Parents” (p. 8); Richardson’s Lovelace blames his over-indulgent mother for his own villainy: “Why, why did my mother bring me up to bear no control? ... Ought she not to have known what cruelty there was in her kindness?” *Clarissa, or the History of a Young Lady* (1747–48), ed. Angus Ross (New York: Penguin Books), p. 1431; and Cadogan’s famous infant feeding essay draws a vivid picture of “the puny Insect, the Heir and Hope of a rich Family,” who “lies languishing under a Load of Finery, that overpowers his Limbs, abhorring and rejecting the Dainties he is cramm’d with, ‘till he dies a Victim to the mistaken Care and Tenderness of his fond Mother.” William Cadogan, *An Essay upon Nursing, and the Management of Children, from Their Birth to Three Years of Age* (1748), reprinted in *Three Treatises on Child Rearing* (New York and London: Garland, 1985), p. 7. Nelson asserts in 1753 that even when fathers try to exert their authority over children, often the “blind Fondness” of mothers interferes and causes the children to be spoiled (pp. 32–33). In 1779 *Female Government* actually advocated that sons be kept from their “dangerous,” indulgent mothers. See G.J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society*

when he gets to those mothers who love too little that Allestree formulates the most important touchstone for maternal virtue to emerge in the first half of the eighteenth century, maternal breastfeeding. Allestree argues against "the Mothers transferring the Nursing her Child to another" as an instance of maternal pride (p. 203), a pride nowhere more clearly seen than among wealthy and aristocratic women, who fail to breastfeed their children because of a vain belief in their own "State and Greatness. ... No other motive, but what is founded in their Quality, could so universally prevail with all that are of it" not to follow "the impulses of Nature" (p. 203).

Experts had long been vociferous about the need for maternal nursing, of course, and tracts like the Countess of Lincoln's *Nurserie* (1628) demonstrate that a few aristocratic mothers breastfed when it was anything but fashionable to do so. Furthermore, even in the seventeenth century, women who fed their own children were seen by their contemporaries as exemplifying "true, self-sacrificing motherliness."¹⁴ But it was only in the early eighteenth century that maternal practices actually began to change on a wide scale, so that by the second half of the century a dramatic transformation had taken place. Whereas in 1700 most babies of the upper classes and the gentry were sent out to wet nurses for at least the first year of life, by 1750 many mothers from the same classes were nursing their children themselves, at home.¹⁵ In the 1740s, when Richardson published *Pamela*, it was becoming increasingly common—indeed, fashionable—for women of comfortable economic circumstances to nurse their own children.

in Eighteenth-Century Britain (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 278.

- 14 Valerie Fildes, *Wet Nursing: A History from Antiquity to the Present* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 85.
- 15 There is little doubt that maternal breastfeeding was an increasingly valued activity in England from the late seventeenth century on, and was essentially *de rigueur* among the privileged by the middle of the eighteenth. Barbara Gelpi argues that Rousseau's vision of maternal breastfeeding as the agent of social reform and of the breastfeeding mother as the powerful complement to an infantilized husband "reflects an attitude already widespread in the culture." Barbara Charlesworth Gelpi, *Shelley's Goddess: Maternity, Language, Subjectivity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 44. Edward Shorter notes that "in the 1760s ... the switch to maternal nursing [was] already well underway among the middle classes," even in France (which considerably lagged behind England). Edward Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), p. 182. Fildes argues that the "movement toward a different concept of infant feeding received impetus in the publications of man-midwives in the 1730s" (p. 111), and that in "the second half of the eighteenth century" maternal breastfeeding had become a standard "feature of middle- and particularly upper-class society" (p. 116). Cf. Felicity A. Nussbaum, "The Other Woman": Polygamy, *Pamela*, and the Prerogative of Empire," *Women, "Race," and Writing in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Margo Hendricks and Patricia Parker (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 148; cf. also Ruth Perry, "Colonizing the Breast: Sexuality and Maternity in Eighteenth-Century England," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 2 (Oct. 1991), 204–34.

The shift to maternal breastfeeding was part of a complex of changes in the dominant cultural definition of maternal virtue during the Augustan period. Until the early part of the eighteenth century, middle and upper-strata husbands, who decided how infants would be fed, tended to disapprove of maternal breastfeeding and often vetoed mothers' deeply felt desires. "There is no doubt," Fildes observes, "that women who wished to feed their own children were frequently overruled by their husbands."¹⁶ By the 1750s, however, many fathers had been convinced that, for a variety of material and economic reasons, maternal breastfeeding was preferable to sending a child out to a nurse, or even to hiring a nurse at home (as Pamela and Mr B. eventually do). Accordingly, reluctant mothers were as likely to be pressured *to* breastfeed as formerly they had been prohibited *from* it.¹⁷ The desire to breastfeed was by mid-century considered to be one of the attributes of "natural" motherhood, part of virtuous womanhood itself.¹⁸ So in commanding their wives to breastfeed, husbands could imagine themselves as capitulating to a desire natural to any virtuous mother.

This paradoxical state of affairs, where fathers at once continued to exert their prerogative in determining the method of infant feeding but imagined themselves as capitulating in the process to the desires of their wives (or to desires their wives *ought* to have felt), is evidenced in the ambivalent language used by the apothecary James Nelson in 1753. "I cannot help advising in the strongest Terms," Nelson says, "that every Father consent, and even promote, that the Child be suckled by it's [sic] Mother."¹⁹ Eliding the difference between paternal "consenting" and

16 Fildes, p. 84. During the seventeenth century, Fildes argues, "women with any status in society rarely breastfed their own children. ... [usually because] many husbands did not approve of, or allow, their wives to breastfeed" (p. 83). Even in the early eighteenth century, "the method of infant feeding ... often depended upon the husband's will" (p. 114). Fildes's observations are supported by Nelson's *Essay*, where the author laments that "many a tender Mother, has her heart yearning to suckle her child, and is prevented by the misplac'd Authority of a Husband" (p. 43). One famous case involves the infant Samuel Johnson (b. 1709), whose father Michael (like Mr B.) overruled the wishes of his wife, Sarah Ford Johnson, in the matter of breastfeeding. At Michael's insistence, baby Samuel was sent to the home of a neighbour for ten weeks, where his mother visited him every day. For a discussion of Sarah Johnson's motherhood, see my "Critical Complicities: *Savage Mothers*, Johnson's Mother, and the Containment of Maternal Difference," *Age of Johnson* 5 (1992), 115-46.

17 Fildes, p. 118.

18 For the cultural and political functions of the idea of "natural" motherhood in the eighteenth century, see especially Felicity A. Nussbaum, "'Savage' Mothers: Narratives of Maternity in the Mid-Eighteenth Century," *Cultural Critique* 20 (Winter 1991-92), 123-51.

19 Nelson, p. 45. Moreover, the virtuous mother finds even her sexual desire satisfied in the act of breastfeeding. It is "not sufficiently known," Nelson says, that "there is an inexpressible Pleasure in giving Suck, which none but Mothers know ... the sensation ... is said to be mighty pleasing"

"promoting," Nelson's statement evades a recognition of different desires among mothers and further bolsters the notion that virtuous mothers are necessarily breastfeeding mothers.

But Nelson's equivocation also suggests that he expects a mixed reception from male readers and among the aristocracy (he laments on the same page that there is "little Probability ... that my Advice herein will be follow'd by Persons in high Life"). Nelson's concern was well founded. Though the trend was definitely towards maternal breastfeeding, there was by no means a universal change in the practice of eighteenth-century mothers.²⁰ Those women who wished to breastfeed had found an alternate source of authorization in the unanimous counsel of conduct literature; but the opinions of many husbands had not changed. In such cases, conduct literature may well have functioned as an incendiary intermediary, a challenge to the univocal authority of the father, a voice that spoke of maternal desire from within the sanction of an established and overwhelmingly male-authored genre. Depending on the particular organization of desire in specific households, then, conduct literature could function as a tool of male dominance, or as a challenge to it.

From Allestree on, conduct writers who treated motherhood started from the assumption that virtuous mothers naturally love their children more than do equally virtuous fathers.²¹ And, especially in the seventeenth century, conduct literature granted special authority to women as mothers, separate from and greater than the authority granted to mere wives. To be sure, such works shared with virtually all other forms of contemporary discourse the belief that women were by nature inferior, and rightly subordinate, to their husbands. But motherhood was understood as an

(pp. 44–45). Gelpi observes the sexualized language Nelson employs throughout this passage (p. 45).

20 Even in the 1790s, writers continued to complain that mothers, especially aristocrats, still did not breastfeed, and novelists continued to portray the mother who withholds her breast as the paradigm of maternal failure. I am indebted on this point to Perry's fine essay and to Susan Greenfield's paper, "The Maternal Bosom and the Slave Trade: Bodies in *Belinda*," delivered at the Northeast American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies in 1992.

21 A mother's love, Allestree teaches, naturally "do's usually exceed the love of the Father" because of the greater "strength of feminine passion" (p. 205). And according to *An Essay in Defence of the Female Sex* (1696, attributed to Judith Drake,) women are by nature "furnish'd with Ingenuity and Prudence ... for the Relief and Comfort of a Family; and ... over and above enrich'd with a peculiar Tenderness and Care requisite to the Cherishing their poor helpless Offspring" (3rd edition, London, 1697), pp. 18–19. Cf. the *Ladies Library*, where mothers have "at least the same, but generally a much greater Affection to them [their children] than the Fathers" (p. 33). Rousseau echoed these platitudes when he observed that in their "blind tenderness," mothers are "more attached to the children" than fathers. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile, or On Education* (1762), trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1975), pp. 37–38.

exceptional circumstance that granted a special dispensation, as it were, from the usual sexual hierarchy.

The Marquess of Halifax, for instance, makes the inequity of women's situation painfully clear to his daughter in 1688, but then goes on to suggest that women may offset this state of affairs by means of their extraordinary influence as mothers. "You must first lay it down for a Foundation in general," Halifax writes, "that there is *Inequality* in the *Sexes*, and that for the better Oeconomy of the World, the *Men* ... had the larger share of *Reason* bestow'd upon them; by which means your Sex is the better prepar'd for the *Compliance* that is necessary." In the overtly politicized domestic realm Halifax describes, the wife functions most often as the submissive subject of a husband who enjoys absolute authority. But strikingly, "in the *Nursery*" she can expect to "Reign without Competition."²²

Halifax imagined the powerful mother as a Machiavellian strategist who uses a rich array of political devices to appease and cajole a formidable list of potential enemies: children, in-laws, servants, social acquaintances, and husband. And as is well known, Halifax imagines maternal rule as necessarily duplicitous, based on the manipulation of affect and opportunity.

You must begin early to make them [your children] *love* you, that they may *obey* you. ... You must deny them as seldom as you can ... you must flatter away their ill Humour, and take the next Opportunity of pleasing them in some other thing, before they either ask or look for it: This will strengthen your *Authority*, by making it soft to them; and confirm their *Obedience*, by making it their Interest. ... Let them be more in awe of your *Kindness* than of your *Power*.²³

So while Halifax sees the nursery as a unique realm of female authority, that authority can only succeed when it proceeds with duplicity much like that practised by the famous "trimmer" himself when negotiating the treacherous worlds of seventeenth-century public politics.

Furthermore, even the heavily coded and self-deprecating maternal "reign" Halifax imagined was to be short-lived. Although subsequent works of conduct literature continued to encourage mothers to build their

22 George Savile: Marouess of Halifax: *The Ladw's New-Year's-Gift: Or, Advice to a Dquehter in The Complete Works of George Savile, First Marquess of Halifax*, ed. Walter Raleigh (New York: Augustus M. Kelley Reprints, 1970), p. 8.

23 Halifax, pp. 22-23.

authority on love rather than fear,²⁴ later writers tend to shun Halifax's explicit identification of maternal affect as a political tool and his suggestion that motherhood might constitute a locus of unique, incontestable authority. The 1714 *Ladies Library* follows Halifax in recommending that mothers elicit "honour" and "obedience" from their children by "natural and gentle Methods"; but it also takes pains to warn mothers against attempting to exercise "Craft." And as if in direct rebuke to Halifax's patriarchal vision, the *Ladies Library* is careful to insist that women enjoy no peculiar authority even as mothers.

The *Father* is ... Superior to the *Mother*, both in Natural Strength, in Wisdom, and by God's Appointment ... the *Children* are especially to Obey their *Fathers*. ... if it happens, that the Inclinations or Desires of the *Mother* should differ from those of the *Father* ... in ... Things of Moment ... the Father is the Superior Authority, and must be obey'd. ... [The mother] is not presum'd to have a Will contrary to her Husband's.²⁵

No longer, by 1714, could a woman expect to "Reign without Competition," even in the nursery.

On the whole, then, early eighteenth-century conduct literature privileged motherhood *per se* in new ways. It perceived mothers as uniquely suited, indeed obligated, to be their children's first teachers and constant companions. It dictated maternal behaviour across class lines and used breastfeeding not only as a litmus test for maternal virtue but also as an indicator of broader personal and class virtues. The trend to recognize and extol uniquely maternal behaviour continued as the century progressed. But along with it came increasingly overt efforts to subordinate the power of mothers to that of fathers, and to give fathers more direct participation in childrearing.

This development is clearly visible in mid-century conduct handbooks. In 1748 William Cadogan calls on "every Father to have his Child nursed under his own Eye" and to do away with traditional attitudes that made infant care "one of the Mysteries of the *Bona Dea*, from which Men are to be excluded." James Nelson is careful in 1753 not to address mothers

24 In Maria Susannah Cooper's *The Exemplary Mother: Or, Letters Between Mrs. Villars and her Family. Published by a Lady*, 2 vols (London, 1769), the mother is noted for her "empire" over the "inclinations" of her children (1:17), an empire she attributes to her early breastfeeding and to a combination of Halifaxian tactics (diverting children's attention rather than denying them anything, avoiding contradicting them too much, and so on). She is always begging her children to think of her as a "friend" more than as one with "the authority of a parent" (1:27).

25 *Ladies Library*, pp. 33-34.

only, insisting that he speaks to "every Parent." And writing in 1769, William Buchan extols the great "importance" of mothers, who "have it very much in their power to make men healthy ... useful in life, or the pests of society," but is quick to add a revealing caveat: "The mother is not the only person concerned in the management of children. The father has an equal interest in their welfare, and ought to assist in every thing that respects either the improvement of the body or mind."²⁶

Writers of eighteenth-century conduct-manuals and handbooks continued to teach that mothers love their children more than fathers and are specially equipped to care for them. But the suggestion implicit in late-seventeenth-century handbooks that motherhood might therefore constitute a place where the authority of wives is actually *greater* than that of their husbands was being explicitly discredited. By the middle of the century, mothers were increasingly elevated as moral and religious exemplars and mothering was increasingly imagined as a set of behaviour patterns and attitudes entirely peculiar to women; but at the same time, fathers were instructed to exert patriarchal authority over even the smallest of nurslings, and, in the process, over mothers.²⁷



The domestic crisis over maternal breastfeeding that erupts in *Pamela* 2 allows for a direct rehearsal of emerging bourgeois norms against the maternal values associated in conduct-books with the morally debilitated aristocracy. When Pamela insists that she ought to breastfeed the coming child, she repeats the arguments, the tone, and sometimes even the language of conduct-books. She reasons that a mother need not breastfeed if she is unhealthy but that breastfeeding is an "indispensable duty"

26 [Cadogan], p. 25; Nelson, p. 4; William Buchan, *Domestic Medicine; Or, A Treatise on the Prevention and Cure of Diseases by Regimen and Simple Medicine* (1769; 2nd edition, London, 1772), pp. 5-6. The handbooks mentioned in this paragraph are early examples of a new development in conduct writing during the second half of the eighteenth century. Conduct-books from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, on which this essay is largely focused, tended, when not anonymous, to be attributed to public figures with ecclesiastical or moral authority (Allestree, Fleetwood, Steele)—or in the case of Halifax, the authority of social rank. During the second half of the century, a growing number of manuals were written by medical doctors, apothecaries, and members of the new order of male midwives. Some of these functioned much like the earlier conduct-book I have been describing; others had more specifically medical agendas. I am indebted to Lois Chaber for pointing out this distinction.

27 The paradoxical development I am describing has been observed recently by Nussbaum, who calls it a "profound historical contradiction": "eighteenth-century Englishmen largely defined themselves, sexually and materially, as fully outside the scope of the maternal yet eager to intervene within it" ("'Savage' Mothers," p. 126).

when a mother is well (4:34). It is "most natural" to breastfeed, she says, and "unnatural," even "sinful," not to do so (4:34–35). Pamela's rhetoric is by no means inflated when compared to that of conduct-books, which routinely made a religious duty of maternal nursing. Maternal breastfeeding, the *Ladies Library* informs its readers, is "of a more necessary and indispensable Obligation, than any positive Precept of *reveal'd Religion*"; and maternal failure to breastfeed "is one of the great and crying Sins of this Age and Nation. ... The neglect of this *Duty*, is a sort of exposing of *Children* ... it ... is but little better than the laying of a *Child* in the *Streets*, and leaving it to the Care and Compassion of a *Parish*."²⁸ Pamela goes on to draw the conclusion obvious to Protestant readers: if breastfeeding is a spiritual duty for which she will be held individually accountable to God, then it supersedes all lesser duties, including her duty to obey Mr B. "As great as a Wife's Obligation is to obey her Husband," Pamela says, "it ought not to interfere with what one takes to be a superior Duty. ... Even a Husband's will is not sufficient to excuse one from a natural or divine Obligation" (4:34, 36).

It is this pious conclusion that causes the unpleasantness between Pamela and Mr B. For while Mr B. clearly understands that "the chief thing" that makes Pamela want to breastfeed "is that you think it unnatural in a Mother not to be a Nurse to her own Child" (4:40), he nevertheless summarily forbids Pamela to do so. Furthermore, he uses the reasoning assigned specifically in conduct literature to the corrupt aristocracy: he wants Pamela to keep her figure, he wants to have her body at his disposal (not the baby's), he wants her to continue her education (she is studying French and Latin), he considers nursing to be "beneath" her as his wife. He argues that the child would disturb her sleep; he wants to take Pamela abroad and cannot if she is breastfeeding. Mr B. even hints that if Pamela insists on breastfeeding he may have recourse to polygamy, a subject about which he has already made his wife "often somewhat uneasy":

28 [Steele], p. 222. The aristocratic Halifax had used similar language to discuss his version of maternal failure; but for him, the worst possible maternal behaviour is not failure to breastfeed but constant attendance on children and public displays of maternal affection. "You may love your *Children* without living in the *Nursery*, and you may have a *competent* and *discreet* care of them, without letting it break out upon the *Company*, or exposing your self by turning your *Discourse* that way; which is a kind of *Laying Children* to the *Parish*, and it can hardly be done any where, that those who hear it will be so forgiving, as not to think they are overcharged with them." By this restraint, according to Halifax, upper-class women may "distinguish" themselves from "Women of a lower size" (p. 22). These pronouncements, not surprisingly, are among the few in Halifax not to be found readily in later writers of conduct literature.

Suppose I put you in mind, that while *Rachel* was giving her Little-one all her Attention, as a good Nurse, the worthy Patriarch had several other Wives.—Don't be shock'd, my dearest Love. ... I will not think of any more Wives, till you convince me, by your Adherence to the Example given you by the Patriarch Wives, that I ought to follow those of the Patriarch Husbands. (4:39)

And he threatens to stop loving Pamela if she insists on nursing the baby herself: "I advise you, my dearest Love, not to weaken, or, to speak in a Phrase proper to the present Subject, *wean* me from that Love to you, and Admiration of you, which hitherto has been rather increasing than otherwise, as your Merit, and Regard for me, have increased" (4:43).²⁹

A problem of conscience emerges for Pamela: ought she to obey what she sees as a divine imperative to breastfeed her own children, or the unequivocal edict of her husband, to whom she owes obedience as the "one indispensable of the Marriage Contract" (4:34)?³⁰ "For if I think it a *Sin* to submit to the dispensation he insists upon as in his power to grant, and yet *do* submit to it, what will become of my Peace of Mind?" [4:44]). The dilemma is a serious one. Pamela believes that she will be individually responsible for the decision she makes—"how can a Husband have Power to discharge a Divine Duty?" (4:34)—while at the same time she recognizes that it is not really her own decision: her required "compliance" (to use Halifax's term) necessarily compromises her agency. So Pamela is irreducibly the accountable actor behind whatever action she chooses, yet autonomy and agency are also, paradoxically, denied her. As Terry Eagleton observes in a different context, Pamela's guilt resides precisely in the fact that she is not a free agent.³¹ She agonizes over the compromised nature of her overdetermined choice: "Must not one be one's own Judge of Actions, by which we must stand or fall?" (4:34).

29 Cf. Nussbaum, "Other Woman," pp. 148–51. Nussbaum shows that men's belief in their sexual deprivation while their wives breastfed led for a while to debates over the viability of polygamy. Mr B.'s reasoning draws on the traditional notion that sexual intercourse and breastfeeding were incompatible. Linda Pollock notes that "the main reason for wet-nursing seems to have been pressure from husbands to resume sexual relations with their wives," which many believed would curdle breast milk. *Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations from 1500 to 1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 50. Cf. Perry, p. 227. Occasionally, eighteenth-century writers provide a different picture, laying the desire for renewed sexual intercourse at women's door. According to the pseudonymous "Gaius," the reason mothers do not want to nurse their own children is "the lack of moderation in their lusts; for whilst they will not contain themselves, they disdain to give suck to the little ones, they have brought forth" (*Mother's Looking-Glass*, p. 13).

30 Perry offers a persuasive reading of the conflict between Pamela's roles as mother and wife, rightly observing that in *Pamela 2* breastfeeding is "less urgent than a woman's duty to sexually serve her husband" (p. 226).

31 Terry Eagleton, *The Rape of Clarissa: Writing, Sexuality and Class Struggle in Samuel Richardson* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), p. 35.

Pamela 2's answer to this crucial question is clearly "no." Pamela's parents outline the text's rationalization for the necessity of Pamela's capitulation:

We think, besides the Obedience you have vowed to him, and is the Duty of every good Wife, you ought to give up the Point, and acquiesce; for this seemeth to us to be the lesser Evil: and God Almighty, if it should be your Duty, will not be less merciful than Men; who, as his Honour says, by the Laws of the Realm, excuse a Wife, when she is faulty by the Command of the Husband; and we hope, the Fault he is pleased to make you commit, (if a Fault, for he really gives very praise-worthy Motives for his Dispensation) will not lie at his own Door. So e'en resolve my dearest Child, to submit to it, and with Cheerfulness too. (4:46)

Mr B. is even more explicit, citing the Old Testament against Pamela's religious scruples to demonstrate "of how little Force even the Vows of your Sex are, and how much you are under the Controul of ours" (4:40): "Even in such a strong Point as a *solemn Vow to the Lord*, the Wife may be absolv'd by the Husband, from the Performance of it. ... an Husband may take upon himself to dispense with such a supposed Obligation, as that which you seem so loth to give up, even although you had made a Vow, that you would nurse your own Child" (4:41). The husband's will takes precedence over what his wife understands as "natural" and "divine" in her motherhood, and makes it excusable—indeed, necessary—for her to commit what she defines as "sin." Even if a husband is incapable of making fine judgments about moral and spiritual duty ("my dear Mr. B.," Pamela notes archly, "was never yet thought so intirely fit to fill up the Character of a Casuistical Divine, as that one may absolutely rely upon his Decisions in these serious Points" [4:44]), his opinions nevertheless have virtually divine authority in *Pamela 2*.³²

32 It is amusing to read *Pamela 2* against Lady Mary Lee Chudleigh's *The Ladies Defence: Or, The Bride-Woman's Counsellor Answer'd: a poem. In a Dialogue Between Sir John Brute, Sir William Loveall, Melissa, and a Parson. Written by a Lady* (London, 1701). Chudleigh's male speakers—hilarious caricatures of male chauvinist attitudes—often sound very much like Mr B., whom we are meant to take seriously. Chudleigh's parodic Parson, for instance, instructs wives that "A blind Obedience you from Guilt secures, / And if you err, the Fault is his, not yours" (p. 11). And Mr B.'s threats of abuse sounds strikingly like the Parson's justification of unkind husbands: "If we are cruel, they have made us so; / What e'er they suffer, to themselves they owe: / Our Love on their Obedience does depend, / We will be kind, when they no more offend" (p. 8). Pamela's predicament also recalls the dilemma of Defoe's six-year-old boy in the first part of *The Family Instructor*. The boy tells his father that "sometimes my Mother won't let me go to Church, if it be but a little ill Weather, and if a little Wind does but blow; and if God requires me to go, and my mother won't let me, *what must I do?* Won't God be angry with me for not going to hear his Word preached?" No, the father replies. "If your Mother won't let you go, then Child, it is none

Though hardly one to capitulate easily, Pamela finds the combined weight of all these arguments and threats to be too much, even for her. "Recollecting everything, [I] *sacrificed to my Sex*, as Mr. B. calls it," she writes (4:52). After a good cry, finding that "my heart was relieved by my eye" and that she feels "lighter and easier," she proceeds immediately to hire a wet nurse. "We are quite reconciled," Pamela reports to her relieved parents, "although as I said, upon his own terms" (4:54).

And so, we are to believe, the breastfeeding crisis is resolved. Never mind that immense questions about power relations between spouses, individual responsibility and agency, and maternal authority have been raised—a few tears and a toss of the head presumably make everything right. Although Pamela does regret the decision at one other point, when Billy seems to be dying of smallpox ("Had I been permitted—But, hush! all my repining *ifs!*" [4:252]), her faltering proves unjustified: Billy pulls through and all is well. And apart from this brief qualm, the text refuses to acknowledge that the disturbing problems raised in the breastfeeding crisis are not addressed, but only deferred, by the decision to hire a wet nurse.

Nevertheless, the cost of Mr B.'s victory over Pamela's claims to maternal authority and autonomy is high. In order explicitly to subordinate Pamela's will to her husband's, Richardson must necessarily give her arguments a voice, permitting dissonance to sound in his otherwise well-tempered text. Though ventriloquized, contradicted, and finally neutralized, Pamela's subversive maternal voice sounds clearly in the breastfeeding episode, and its echoes disrupt the presentation of virtuous maternity as unproblematically submissive to patriarchal authority.

The exchange between Mr and Mrs B. immediately upon her acquiescence—both what is said and what is left unsaid—undermines the ostensible resolution of the conflict and complicates the reductive positions husband and wife have assumed. Mr B. begins by complaining that Pamela forces him to "a hated, because an ungenerous, Necessity of pleading my Prerogative. And if this was not like my *Pamela*, excuse me ... that I could not help being a little unlike myself." Pamela's response to her husband's complaint is in two parts—her spoken response,

of your Fault." [Daniel Defoe], *The Family Instructor. In Three parts. I. Relating to Fathers and Children. II. To Masters and Servants. III. To Husbands and Wives*, 15th edition (London, 1761), pp. 36–37. The comparison signals the childlike status of wives in the conventional reasoning of Mr B. and Pamela's parents. By worrying about her own responsibility, Pamela presumes that she, like Mr B., can claim adult subjectivity and spirituality. *Pamela* 1 had validated the lower-class heroine's claim to have a "soul equal to the soul of a princess," but the breastfeeding episode in Part 2 explicitly denies Pamela's claim to have a soul equal to her husband's.

and her silent thoughts, which she shares only later in a letter. Out loud, she argues again for the priority of her individual conscience and for her innocence:

I am sure, said I, I was not in the least aware, that I had offended!—But I was too little circumspect. I had been used to your Goodness for so long a Time, that I expected it, it seems. ... I thought, Sir, you would have distinguish'd between a Command where my Conscience was concerned, and a common Point: You know, Sir, I never had any Will but yours in common Points. ... I had no Intention to invade your Province, or go out of my own. Yet I thought I had a Right to a little Free-will, a very little; especially on some greater Occasions. (4:49–50)

Pamela's mixture of thick irony and obsequious apology, of course, makes little impression on her husband. "I forgive you heartily," Mr B. contentedly informs her. "Give me one Kiss, and I will think of your saucy Appeal against me no more" (4:51).

But silently, Pamela constructs a different response, equating Mr B.'s deployment of his "prerogative" in the breastfeeding crisis to his attempts at crude sexual force before they were married. "Ah! thought I," she writes in retrospect, "this is not so very unlike your dear Self, were I to give the least Shadow of an Occasion; for it is of a Piece with your Lessons formerly" (4:49). At stake in those former "lessons," of course, was the crucial question of whether Pamela or Mr B. had the authority to dispose of Pamela's virginity—that is, to deploy her female body and its desire. In both Part 1 and Part 2, then, the central conflict is between autonomy and subordination, choice and constraint, liberty and tyranny. One might argue that Part 2 revises Part 1: in Part 1, Pamela was right to resist, in Part 2 she is right to capitulate. But, on the other hand, we might note that Pamela only managed to come through the harrowing situations of Part 1 safely because Mr B. chose, at crucial moments, not to rape her after all. From this perspective, choice is Mr B.'s peculiar privilege in Part 1 as in Part 2. The difference is only that in the breastfeeding crisis, Mr B. makes a different choice, forcing his desire on Pamela against her will. Crucially, it is the fact of their marriage that allows Mr. B. to perform this new violence on Pamela *without seeming to violate her*, since as his wife she can have no desires apart from his anyway. When Pamela pleads for "a Right to a little Free-will, a very little," Mr B. responds characteristically: "Why so you have, my Dear; but ... I must have your whole will" (4:51–52). As in the *Ladies Library*, the mother

(who is only legitimately visible as a wife) "is not presum'd to have a Will contrary to her Husband's."

To her credit, Pamela recognizes these strategies for what they are—manifestations of domestic tyranny: "He is pleased to entertain very high Notions ... of the Prerogative of a Husband. Upon my Word, he sometimes ... makes a body think a Wife should not have the least Will of her own. He sets up a dispensing Power, in short, altho' he knows, that that Doctrine once cost a Prince his Crown" (4:39–40). But though the "doctrine" of patriarchal absolutism had long been rejected in the context of royal authority, it remains fully in force in the realm of domestic politics—Mr B's inflexible exercise of husbandly "prerogative" will cost him nothing. As Pamela's parents advise, "it will signify nothing, after all [to resist]; for he will have his Way, that's sure enough" (4:47). Or as Pamela complains to Miss Darnford at the start of all the trouble, Mr B. enjoys "a Dispensing Power ... which Kings are not allowed over the Law" (3:389).

Pamela 2, then, initially presents a perfect mother according to the tenets of eighteenth-century conduct literature—tender, careful, always present, instructive, and eager to breastfeed. But by refusing to *let* Pamela breastfeed, Richardson's "conduct novel" challenges conduct literature's authority to dictate maternal behaviour, and redefines virtuous motherhood: specific patterns of maternal behaviour become less important than the context of female subordination in which they take place.

But delimiting the authority of conduct literature to dictate maternal behaviour is only one of the projects of *Pamela 2*. The narrative of Pamela's unsuccessful attempt to breastfeed her own child also, paradoxically, colludes in conduct writing's effort to further the extent of patriarchal sovereignty over the bodies of children and mothers. With significant (if qualified) success, *Pamela 2* works to eliminate the possibility that mothers might "Reign without Competition" even over the site of motherhood, and to deny particularity, autonomy, and desire to maternal voices. So Richardson's sequel is an assault upon more than our literary sensibilities; in its efforts to reassert patriarchal prerogatives over maternal bodies it constitutes an early statement of a sexual politics only too familiar in our own day.