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Clarissa: A Study in the Heart

A Thesis Submitted to the College of

Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of Master of Arts

in the Department of English

University of Saskatchewan

Saskatoon

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ABSTRACT

Clarissa Harlowe's heart is the subject of this study. More specifically the subject is the way her heart is tried, broken, and eventually rewritten through a painful three-part confrontation with others, with herself, and with God. The heart is both a physical object and the spiritual, emotional, psychic centre of the human being; however, though the heart is bound up with the body, and though Clarissa dies when her heart breaks, it is the heart's interior, private nature that Richardson privileges. In the first confrontation, Clarissa's heart confronts others in the form of her family, the Harlowes, who attempt to force their daughter into marriage with a man she hates. In the second confrontation, Clarissa's heart confronts itself as its own unexamined depths are probed, a process of self awareness activated as a defensive measure by the presence of Robert Lovelace, her would-be seducer and eventual rapist. In the third confrontation, Clarissa's heart confronts God in the approaches of death, a state that forces the heart into a final inquisition where it must know itself clearly. During this three-part confrontation, Clarissa's heart is tried, broken, and eventually rewritten as a new whole. This rewriting is only possible because Clarissa "stitches" herself into Scripture, a process that mends and fortifies the broken heart by typologically locating it within a larger matrix of meaning. Along with this three-part reading of the novel I argue for a three-part definition of the heart: the heart as an organ of sympathy, an organ of conscience, and the heart as an apotheosized and sacred vision of the self. I suggest that Richardson, in writing about the heart like this, sets the direction of English fiction for his own eighteenth and for the following nineteenth century. Finally, I argue that *Clarissa* is a species of allegory and a typologically charged narrative that particularizes the universal Christian redemption drama through the story of Clarissa Harlowe.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all those who in one way or another contributed to the creation of this study. I would like to thank my mother for teaching me to read, my father for teaching me to think, and both of them for always being willing to read what I write; Dr. Peter Hynes for his support, encouragement, and direction and for always telling me I needed "more cowbell;" Dr. Lisa Vargo for always answering my questions and giving me the support I needed; Dr. Lindsey Banco and Dr. Gordon DesBrisay for their feedback and encouragement; Chuck, Sean, and Brent, my teachers; and Caitlin, Jason, Joel, Graham, Adam, and James for making school fun.

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“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”

Jeremiah 17:9

“But I will be bold to say, that neither she, nor my brother, nor even my father himself, knows what a heart they have set a-bleeding.”

Clarissa Harlowe

INTRODUCTION: THE HEART IN THREE PARTS

"As if her heart would break"

After the "fire scene"—one of Samuel Richardson's "warm" scenes in which Clarissa Harlowe, his young and virtuous heroine, is awakened by cries of fire only to be nearly raped by Robert Lovelace—the remorseless Lovelace, resolving to complete the assault, returns to her now-locked bedroom door and listens. Inside her newly-secured room Clarissa is sobbing "as if her heart would burst" (2.506). When he knocks and requests to speak with her, she approaches the door "only to draw another bolt, to make it faster" (2.506). The next day, still upset he wasted his opportunity of taking her by surprise, he writes how he "looked through the keyhole at my going by her door, and saw her on her knees, at her bed's feet, her head and bosom on the bed, her arms extended [*sweet creature, how I adore her!*]; and in an agony she seemed to be, sobbing, as I heard at that distance, as if her heart would break" (2.514). "As if her heart would break," or some variation of this phrase, is repeated four times in the immediate aftermath of the fire scene. The fire scene is a midway point in the drama of Clarissa's heart (it is also almost the exact centre of the novel); it is a crisis that suspends her heart between the wholeness it enjoyed before her troubles began and the brokenness the scene anticipates. Clarissa's heart, like Clarissa's body and virginity, is under siege. Richardson carefully stages the fire scene and its aftermath, as he often does, so that its physical action mirrors interior states. Her heart's suspension between wholeness and brokenness finds traumatic expression in a drama of beds, doors, locks, keyholes. In the same way that Clarissa attempts to preserve the integrity of her body by closing and locking doors and hiding herself from Lovelace, she attempts to preserve the integrity of her heart. All of Lovelace's attempts and contrivances, all of his ambivalences of character, all of his demonstrations that his and Clarissa's minds are "mismatched," as Clarissa will say, forces her to withdraw further away from him, further into herself. Abandoned and friendless, she must constantly close and lock her psychic doors in order to protect all she has left, her heart. But Lovelace relentlessly pursues her; barriers she may put up—both physical and psychic—are keyholes to be peered into and doors to be prised open. For Richardson, the heart is the sacred centre of the self. It is a close, intimate thing, like a woman's bedroom, into which only those bound by ties of love and sympathy may enter. But like a locked door, the way into the heart can be forced, the sacred centre of the self invaded, and the results, as Clarissa tragically learns, can be devastating.

Clarissa's heart beats at the centre of this study of Samuel Richardson's novel *Clarissa*. More specifically my focus is on the way her heart is tried, broken, and eventually rewritten through a painful confrontation with others, with herself, and with God. The language of hearts runs throughout the novel—what a heart is, who has a heart, how a heart behaves, why a heart hardens or softens, what a heart conceals and what a heart reveals. But as even a short list like this suggests, the heart in *Clarissa* is a complex image and it often appears unstable. Its meanings are various, diffuse, often overlapping. Its definitions shift as contexts change and as different characters in different situations for different reasons use the word. Its synonyms include "mind," "self," "spirit," "soul." None of these synonyms is perfect and each retains its own nuances; they are nevertheless intimately bound to the heart and its larger set of meanings. The heart is also often an invisible image, hovering above without being explicitly mentioned but heavily colouring the action. As an image, the heart is unruly above all things; determinedly pinning it down with any one fixed meaning, or even with a complex set of meanings, edges dangerously close to hermeneutic violence and limits the expansiveness of Richardson's vision, to avoid which one must tread carefully. The critical temptation to contract or define, after all, often leads to diminishment. But *Clarissa* resists contraction. The novel is large and expansive, unfolding over thousands of pages in obedience to Richardson's unprecedented impulse to render on paper as completely as possible the interior life of its central character. The image of the heart is likewise large and expansive. It is specifically the narrative of the broken heart that will provide the imaginative thread that unites this study of *Clarissa.*

Clarissa's broken heart can be traced through a series of events, starting with her family's unreasonable demands that she sacrifice herself by marriage to Solmes, continuing through the curse her father places on her after she is abducted from Harlowe Place, and concluding in the rape and the delirium that follows it. All of these events should be seen not as separate but as increasingly brutal forms of the same assault. The broken heart, however, does not remain broken and Clarissa, by rigorously "stitching," as I will call it, the material of Scripture onto the tatters of her broken heart is able to mend—to rewrite—her heart: is able, that is, to be reborn.

A reading that sees all the separate attempts to break Clarissa's heart as smaller pieces of a single larger event, however, depends on certain interpretive starting points, the foremost for my purposes being that *Clarissa* is a novel about religious experience. I read *Clarissa* as a species of allegory, a novel that renders the particular history of Clarissa Harlowe with the force

of universal truth. Richardson's word for this is "example," though example is often too small a word and is too often linked to Richardson's explicitly didactic impulses for its mythic dimensions to be fully appreciated. Richardson is writing a myth of Christian redemption. If this were all he were doing, however, *Clarissa* would likely compel little critical interest today. It is not all he is doing. While he is setting forth a dramatic[1] performance of what are in the end rather conventional religious sentiments (though perhaps not conventional in their severity), he is also setting the direction of the English novel for both his and the next century. He is not only writing a sort of myth, he is creating a new sort of epic, a new species of writing, one that displaces the poetic and figurative with the here-and-now urgency of life as it is lived—he is, in other words, creating the English novel as we now know it and as it will be realized by the George Eliots and the Thomas Hardys of the next century. William Hazlitt suggests that "If poetry has 'something more divine in it,' this"—*this* being fiction as realized by Richardson, Fielding, Sterne, *et al*—"savours more of humanity" (106). Richardson is writing the epic that savours more of humanity. In this human-scaled epic, the heart is no figurative image but a real thing, an organ that pulses in an intersection of the worldly and the spiritual.

Probing Clarissa's heart and examining the way it breaks and mends means anatomizing *Clarissa*, peeling back its layers, seeing how all its parts fit together. It can be an indecorous activity. Criticism often is. The anatomist metaphor, however—a metaphor of bodies being opened, of parts being touched, of tissues and connections being examined—may not be inappropriate. Richardson stands in the middle of a cultural revolution of the human body; early modern medical and anatomical understanding is rapidly evolving. If Richardson was not familiar with the medical discourses of his day he certainly felt their cultural impact. In the century prior to Richardson's, William Harvey redefined the heart as the pump at the centre of a circulatory system, an epochal change in the ways people understood their own material existence. Richardson, I suggest, is the literary equivalent of a William Harvey. As Harvey redefined the heart in the body as the pulsing pump of all life, Richardson defines it as the centre of human social, emotional, and religious life—a circulatory system of feeling and sentiment and the beating centre of the sacred human self. At the same time, another metaphor—one suggested

[1] Richardson's novels have often been called "dramatic. Beyond the general meaning of drama as story, his novels share certain features with the stage, most notably their lack of a narrator's voice. Like actors on a stage, the characters speak for themselves and readers, like an audience, are offered no so-called objective voice to take their cues from. Readers must judge the characters solely on what they themselves say, or write, and do.

by the fire scene, one that is broadly sexual—may also be appropriate. Richardson's intention to render in letters the mind and heart of his virtuous young heroine involves an association of page and body: both are media of presence that bring hearts into proximity with each other. Characters in the novel often regard letters as physical extensions of the letter-writer, treating these pieces of paper with the same delicacy (or lack thereof) they would show the writer's physical body. There is a "closeness" in *Clarissa*, a sense that to read the novel is to become involved with the woman, to enter as a lover into that bedroom-like space of the heart Lovelace attempts to invade. Richardson invites us into this involvement, not from any lurid or voyeuristic impulse—he does not, like Lovelace, peer through the keyhole—but from an intensely moral and religious one. If Richardson's examination of the heart can be compared with an anatomist's examination of a body, it can also be compared with the meditation of a lover on his beloved. Both are ways of "knowing." This strange mixture of the careful, close, slightly cold observation of the anatomist pairs with the warm, passionate, deeply involved attachment of the lover; when it comes to Clarissa Harlowe, Richardson is both and wrote from both perspectives. But his motives for examining the heart as both anatomist and lover remain the same. The heart is an organ of feeling and by drawing readers close to Clarissa and her distresses Richardson hopes to provoke a revolution of the heart.

An Apology for a Three-Part Method

Mark Kinkead-Weekes emphasizes the importance of reading *Clarissa* according to a three-part division. "*Clarissa* is actually three novels in one, each with a different focus" he writes, a structure obvious in the novel's first publication but that "later editions have obscured" (123).[2] *Clarissa* was first published in three instalments. Instalment one, volumes one and two, was published in December 1747; instalment two, volumes three and four, in April 1748; instalment three, volumes five, six, and seven, in December 1748. Subsequent editions blurred

[2] My study of *Clarissa* uses the four-volume Everyman's Library 1962 edition of the third edition text; citations refer to volume and page number. The decision to use this text was based partly on its availability to readers, partly on its ubiquitous presence in Richardson criticism, and partly because it presents, unlike the Angus Ross edition published by Penguin, the third edition text, an edition substantially longer than the first and second editions. As a note, *Clarissa* is sorely in need of a new critical presentation of the third edition text. The Clarissa Project's eight-volume facsimile reproduction of the third edition text provides a definitive paper edition and online resources such as ECCO provide valuable electronic versions; neither are entirely conducive to sitting down with and reading, however, a practical concern when it comes to a novel as long as *Clarissa*.

these natural divisions and presented the novel as a single literary object in eight volumes.[3] However, the divisions were not entirely effaced and their distinctions, though now slightly more "soft," remain. They can be detected in the competing voices of the three primary narrators struggling for authorial dominance, in shifting locations, and in the expanding and narrowing of certain themes and concerns.[4]

Kinkead-Weekes organizes his study around these instalments.[5] While these instalments inform the basic structure of my three-part study of the heart, I have made one significant alteration and moved the dividing line between instalments two and three. Instalment two of the first edition ends with Lovelace's arrival at Hampstead in pursuit of Clarissa. His tricking her back to Sinclair's and raping her there are part of the third instalment. However, I include this material (ostensibly the fifth volume of the first edition) in my second division of the novel, or second movement of the heart, as I shall call it.

In the first movement of the heart, the action occurs almost entirely at Harlowe Place, and is primarily narrated by Clarissa. In the second movement the action mostly occurs at Mrs. Sinclair's, with a significant interrupting escape to Hampstead. This second part is initially narrated by both Clarissa and Lovelace; as the novel approaches the rape, however, Lovelace exerts more narrative control until only his voice remains and Clarissa's diminishes almost to nothing. The third and final movement occurs mostly at the house of Mr. and Mrs. Smith, with significant episodes surrounding, such as Clarissa's arrest and her eventual posthumous return to Harlowe Place. This third part is primarily narrated by Jack Belford, a reforming rake and friend

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[3] With the expanded third edition of *Clarissa*, published in 1751, Richardson changed the novel's format, expanding the previous seven volumes into eight. In the new preface Richardson explains the change: the final three volumes of the first edition had been printed in a smaller type in order to reduce the size of the work and save readers from purchasing an eighth volume. With the addition of new material, however, and since apparently some readers complained about the small size of the type, an eighth volume was added. This presents several interpretive dilemmas. For instance, in the first edition, volume two ends by revealing that Clarissa has left Harlowe Place; it suspends the explanation. In the third edition, volume two ends several letters later, after Clarissa explains to Anna Howe the circumstances of her removal and, more critically, after Lovelace reveals to Belford that the entire episode had been contrived to trick Clarissa. The emphasis on dramatic suspense, therefore, is not only significantly lessened but it is also shifted over and given a different meaning.

[4] Alternately, Robert Erickson suggests a five-part/act structure for the novel based on location: act 1 at Harlowe Place, acts 2 and 3 at Mrs. Sinclair's, act 4 at the Smiths', and act 5 again at Harlowe Place ("*Clarissa* and Scripture" 186-7).

[5] According to these divisions the novel breaks down thus: instalment one tells the story of Clarissa at Harlowe Place and concludes with her sudden leaving; instalment two tells the story of Clarissa and Lovelace's relationship and concludes with Lovelace pursuing Clarissa to Hampstead; instalment three is the rest of the novel—the rape, Clarissa's effectual escape from Lovelace, and her eventual death.

of Lovelace who eventually becomes Clarissa's executor. Each of the three movements places Clarissa's heart in a unique position, what I will call a confrontation. Confrontation or struggle forms the dramatic centre of the novel. Clarissa is constantly confronted by forces attempting to control her. Not all these forces are external. In the first movement, Clarissa's heart confronts the hearts of others—the "hard-hearted" Harlowes—in a collision of interest and a contest to control the meaning of Clarissa, to control who she is: will she be a dutiful daughter or a disobedient one; will she marry Solmes as they command or will she remain single as she desires? In the second movement, the presence of Lovelace intensifies this contest with the "other" heart; but this intensified contest forces the heart into a confrontation not only with an aggressive other but also with itself, a painful process of self-examination and awareness that uncovers and probes the hidden desires and impulses that lurk at the bottom of the unexamined heart. In the third and final movement, the heart confronts God in a final inquisition of the heart where the heart must know itself. Each of these three movements concentrates its own thematic material and describes its own set of distresses and persecutions suffered by Clarissa; each part also climaxes in an action that cannot be undone or altered: in the first, Clarissa, tricked by Lovelace, departs Harlowe Place; in the second, Lovelace rapes her; in the third, she dies.

It is important to note that though they can be slotted into a three-part structure this way none of these divisions is hard or stable. These three parts are not distinct or self-contained; no heavy line distinguishes them; *Clarissa* is not a trilogy. Lovelace is not the only narrator of part two, for instance, nor Belford the only one in part three; the unexamined heart that confronts itself in the second movement is explicitly anticipated in the early parts of the novel. But each movement presents an intensification of its thematic materials; each narrator dominates or "controls" his or her part and emerges as the authority. In an early note on a draft preface (Keymer, *Richardson's* Clarissa 46), Richardson emphasized these divisions and the shifting primacy of narrators:

> The Two first Volumes chiefly written by the Two ladies.
>
> Two next.. by Lovelace.
>
> Three last................................ by the reforming Belford.

In a sense such a note is crude. It is reductive: it simplifies a complex of competing voices into a seemingly fixed system of meaning. It does, however, draw attention of one of the features of the text. The three primary voices of *Clarissa* emerge in a carefully structured competition before

finally settling into what might be called a judgment. Before examining each of the movements, however, a telescopic view of how the pieces fit together, and a brief outline of how I read the complexities of that whole, may be in order.

Three Movements, Three Voices, Three Hearts

Clarissa's voice emerges as the primary narrator of the first movement of the heart. Her voice saturates this part of the text as she resists a family project that aims, as her brother James Harlowe puts it, to make her be "what we would have her be" (1.430). Richardson's vision of the heart is anything but simple; the complexities of his text are not easily reduced to a simple "heart versus other" rubric, no matter how moving or tragic that contest may be. Such a binary structure does not elaborate the depths of the human heart. Richardson constantly juxtaposes the attempts of others to "break" the heart with the heart's own propensity to deceive itself, a complex vision that keeps the heart in a state of constant agitation and furiously engaged in a double activity of protecting and knowing itself. Clarissa's voice in the first part of the novel therefore emerges in an interplay, affectionate and friendly but also often challenging, with Anna Howe, Clarissa's close friend and primary correspondent.

Anna, "extremely concerned... for the disturbances that have happened in your family" (1.1), requests that Clarissa "write to me therefore... the whole of your story" (1.2). Multiple narratives about the goings-on at Harlowe Place have been spreading. Having heard confused reports about who is courting whom and about the details of a duel fought between Robert Lovelace, a known rake, and James Harlowe, Clarissa's brother, Anna wants to hear the story from Clarissa herself. Clarissa explains how all her troubles have come from her family's supposition that she loves Lovelace, to save her from whom, and to enlarge their own interests, they propose Mr. Solmes to her and attempt to compel her to accept him even though he is a man for whom she has an "invincible and avowed dislike" (1.152). Clarissa denies she loves Lovelace but the Harlowes refuse to believe her, and perhaps rightly so: Clarissa often seems either ambivalent or too self-assured in her own unexamined vision of herself. Though she may not be deceitful about her feelings, she may be self-deceived. Hearing all this, Anna becomes an interpreter of the situation, attempting, like a critic, to get to the bottom of things. She reads Clarissa—she reads not only Clarissa's letters but Clarissa herself, detecting motives and feelings hidden even from the well-meaning and sincere, though naïve, writer. Anna, from the

very beginning of the novel, alerts readers to the fact that in *Clarissa* writers do not always know themselves and that letters are not always as transparent as they appear.

After receiving a letter in which Clarissa attempts to clear herself of charges that she harbours romantic feelings for Lovelace, Anna responds,

> Be pleased to observe one thing, my dear, that whenever I have given myself any of those airs of raillery, which have seemed to make you look about you... it has not been upon those passages which are written, though perhaps not *intended*, with such explicitness [don't be alarmed, my dear!] as leaves little cause of doubt: but only when you affect reserve; when you give new words for common things; when you come with your *curiosities*, with your *conditional likings*, and with your PRUDE-encies (mind how I spell the word). (1.188)[6]

Anna offers a reading of Clarissa's protestations and finds lurking behind the explicit denials, behind the "new words for common things," and the "affect[ed] reserve," an unexamined motive. Anna plays detective, sifting words for clues, creating explanations and theories, putting things together. Anna's response accomplishes several things, not the least of which is to indicate to the reader the possible proliferation of interpretations that the text provides. Here, in effect, is a lesson on reading, a lesson on how the reader should always approach the written artefact with a sceptical hermeneutic. The writers in *Clarissa* are nearly all compromised. Not even Clarissa, Anna tells us, writes herself but often writes to conceal herself. But the lesson is complicated. Anna is teasing Clarissa, deliberately reading her friend's letters in a way she knows will alarm and provoke her. This lesson on reading must be subjected to its own rigors, at which point it becomes less a lesson and more another spiral through the complexities of the text. Anna teaches us how to read Clarissa; she also teaches us how to misread her. It is through this friendly interplay of teasing and encouragement, offered by a friend during a time when her heart is in direct confrontation with the designs of others, that Clarissa begins her slow and what will prove painful movement towards self-examination.

Lovelace's voice, which except in a few important instances Richardson carefully mutes for most of the first part, emerges in the second part of the novel, and provides a radically

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[6] Richardson employs italics fanatically. As his own officious and pedantic Elias Brand says, "*we learned men* do this to point out to the readers who are not so learned where the *jet of our argument lieth*, and the *emphasis* they are to lay upon *those words*" (4.313). Brand, in many ways, parodies Richardson's own sensibilities. All italicized words within quotations are Richardson's; the few italicized words outside quotations are my own emphatic pointing towards where the *jet of my argument lieth*.

different view, one that does not contradict Clarissa's account but that, filtered as it is through Lovelace's rake's creed, reads a new character onto her—the sexually degrading and misogynistic character of woman as viewed by rake. To Lovelace, all women are the same: they are all plotters and "little rogues;" they are all rakes at heart and deserve whatever play they get from other rakes. He knows this because he is, after all, as he brags to Belford, "so well acquainted with their *identicalness*" (2.370). But Clarissa appears, or at least affects, to be different. Lovelace wonders whether she is a woman or angel, whether she is at bottom flesh or spirit—whether, that is, "her virtue be founded rather in *pride* than in *principle*" (2.35). In the complex vision of the heart Richardson develops, both pride and principle *can* form the foundation of virtue; this mixed compound of motives Clarissa herself must confront in her own struggle with her heart. But Lovelace's binary vision of angel or woman leaves no space for the heart to struggle. It is viciously dichotomous and morbidly static—it does not allow a woman to grow, change, or transform. *Pride* or *principle* is all; once established, either forever fixes the heart's meaning. But in Clarissa, Lovelace encounters a woman not easily interpreted by his rake's creed. "To the test then," Lovelace declares, "and I will bring this charming creature to the *strictest* test" (2.36). The logic of such a test is that if her virtue fails and he is able to seduce her then she is a woman like every other woman—she will prove that maxim of the rake's creed, his vicious "*once subdued... always subdued*" (2.41). If her virtue, however, proves not to be founded on pride but on principle he will marry her. Whatever the trial's outcome, Lovelace plans to possess Clarissa as either his wife or mistress.

The revelation of this test, however, with all its plots, plans, and contrivances, is made only to Belford and not, obviously, to Clarissa, who for almost half the novel is kept in the dark about Lovelace's intentions. Though Lovelace hopes to coerce Clarissa into the "life of honour," as he calls keeping a mistress, all of his arguments in favour of such a lifestyle are made only to his fellow rake. To Clarissa, he maintains a posture of seemingly sincere propriety. Instead of trying to convince or to tempt her into seeing things his way, Lovelace plans to create a situation, most likely extreme, such as in the fire scene, when he hopes to surprise her in a weak moment and take her at advantage—a situation that will reveal the woman lurking beneath the angel. It may come as no surprise then that Lovelace's trial of Clarissa ends in rape.

Like Clarissa's in part one, Lovelace's voice does not go unchallenged. Jack Belford, who has been a rake like Lovelace but who now finds himself reforming, continually provides

what might be called the voice of reason or conscience, pleading with Lovelace to spare Clarissa a "trial" so entirely unfair to her. But despite Belford's pleadings, which resonate deeply with the whisperings of his own almost-dead conscience, Lovelace proceeds implacably: he continues with the trial and he continues to write to Belford in order to justify his procedure. But Lovelace's very act of writing betrays the conflict of motives within him. He is writing to Belford. But since Belford proves nearly from the start an ambivalent audience for Lovelace; since whenever Belford responds to Lovelace's letters it is often in an attempt to dissuade Lovelace from his project; and since Belford, who as a fellow rake should be the most receptive to Lovelace's logic, nearly always rejects it—what, with all this in mind, Lovelace hopes to accomplish by writing to Belford, other than self-justification, is unclear. Self-justification, of course, is a powerful motive; the heart in conflict with itself may slip into any number of self-deceptions. Like all men who find they need to play to an audience, Lovelace's voice is primarily directed at himself; his rakish reasonings are attempts to shore up a rationale that licenses his depravity. Pride and vanity certainly play a role in this, just as both play a role in Clarissa's conflict with her heart; but Lovelace's need to "play" and "write" to himself has a deeper meaning. Lovelace, the play-actor, the man who loves the audience, must ultimately work to deceive himself and his own heart. For all his affected rakish mirth and for all his black schemes, either real or imagined, Lovelace is a remarkably ambivalent being, a deeply divided soul capable of rising or sinking to great heights or depths. As his project to seduce—and if not seduce, then rape—Clarissa approaches its critical moment, Lovelace finds himself in constant conflict with himself and with a heart both calloused and seared but yet still tormenting him.

Two competing voices, therefore, attempt to control the situation and both are involved in presenting themselves in lights that promote their interests. This is not an equal competition or trial, however: one voice seeks to preserve itself and seeks to explain and defend its sincerity; the other seeks to possess the first, violently if necessary, in order to control, to prove a point, and to gratify a sexual lust. Richardson, however, having learned lessons from his first novel *Pamela* about how self-motivated voices can be interpreted in a variety of ways, is fully aware of the need for an authorial intervention, for a third voice that speaks from outside the involved selves.

In the third movement, therefore, Belford's voice emerges as the voice that will render judgment. Both Clarissa and Lovelace are compromised in some way. Each pleads for her or himself—justifying, explaining, defending, persuading. Belford is not without compromise

either; each letter-writer in *Clarissa* has his or her own motives. His function in the novel, however, is to act as a third party. Belford is able to make the imaginative leap—the charged overflow of sympathy, the transforming vision that learns to see another as a living, feeling, unique subject, and not just as an extension of the ego—that Lovelace refuses to make. “The most sublime act,” William Blake will say in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, “is to set another before you.” Lovelace cannot set anyone before him; Belford can. “It is a pain to me that I ever saw her” (3.197), Belford says in his letter immediately following Lovelace’s admission that he has raped Clarissa. “What must have been the poor lady’s distress... when dreadful certainty took place of cruel apprehension!” (3.197), he writes, entering into a consideration of Clarissa’s emotional state. Lovelace dismisses all such sympathetic considerations as weak, as “womanish,” as poisonous to his male heart. “I am convinced,” Belford counters, “that a capacity of being moved by the distresses of our fellow-creatures is far from being disgraceful to a manly heart” (3.446-47). This ability to imaginatively enter another’s situation allows Belford to judge between Clarissa and Lovelace. Having examined, so to speak, their two hearts, the heart that he can feel with, that he can sympathize with, that promotes tenderness and fellow-feeling with humanity is the heart he will side with. His function mirrors the reader’s: he must make sense of what has happened. He is an interpreter whose interpretation is based on feeling. And in his role as Clarissa’s executor and “protector of [her] memory” (4.78) it is his interpretation that will emerge as the final one.

These are the three primary voices of *Clarissa*. Against these voices a complex of competing voices is deployed to test, sympathize, challenge, subvert—the implacable Harlowes, the supporting rakes, the friendly though ultimately ineffectual voices of Clarissa’s few remaining friends, the myriad smaller voices that add to the general din. Any attempt to analyze the novel must adequately account for all of them, especially the primary three, and for the ways in which Richardson’s arranges them, for how they are structured, plotted, and advanced, and for *where* they are in the novel and for *when* they are in the novel. For although there is in *Clarissa*, as Terry Castle writes, a “cacophony of voices, a multiplicity of exegetes struggling to articulate different ‘constructions’ of the world” (21), this cacophony takes on an oddly logical symphonic tone, one composed by Richardson in order to present a stable vision.

Conclusion

In recent Richardson scholarship much attention has been given to the social dynamics in *Clarissa*. Its depiction of the place of women in the family, in society, and in the economy has been rigorously interrogated;[7] questions of sex, gender, and power have been asked and sometimes answered;[8] the ways in which Richardson attacks (and reinforces) patriarchal sensibilities and privileges have been praised (and excoriated).[9] Most of this attention has been directed, however, at what I have called the first two parts of *Clarissa*. Where the social is not the focus various theoretical concerns, like Richardson's epistolary form or class analysis, tend to take over;[10] once again, however, most of these studies tend to focus on the first two parts. Many readers' *Clarissa*, it seems, ends shortly after the rape. But a reading of *Clarissa* that privileges the first two parts over the third is in danger of missing the point, just as a reading of the *Inferno* without a reading of the *Paradiso* misses the point. Richardson provides a scathing critique of eighteenth-century bourgeois sensibilities; the sufferings and persecutions of Clarissa reveal a monstrous social system that dehumanizes its victims and promotes hard-heartedness in those the economic, familial, legal, or sexual codes privilege. But though the novel begins in the social it moves slowly but surely into the religious, ending not as a social critique but rather as a world critique, where "world" carries the Christian meaning of a fallen creation, of a spiritual force set against the righteous and virtuous heart. What begins as a private family matter expands into a struggle between two personalities given explicitly symbolic force before exploding out into an almost mythic confrontation between the heart and the world. A three-part reading of the

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[7] See Christopher Hill's "Clarissa Harlowe and Her Times," Laura Rosenthal's chapter on *Clarissa* in *Infamous Commerce: Prostitution in Eighteenth-Century British Literature and Culture*, John Allen Stevenson's "The Courtship of the Family: Clarissa and the Harlowes Once More," Morris Golden's "Public Context and Imagining Self in *Clarissa*," and Kathleen M. Oliver's *Samuel Richardson, Dress, and Discourse*. See also Lawrence Stone's *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800*.

[8] See Tassie Gwilliam's *Samuel Richardson's Fictions of Gender*, Rita Goldberg's *Sex and Enlightenment: Women in Richardson and Diderot*, Christine Roulston's *Virtue, Gender, and the Authentic Self in Eighteenth-Century Fiction: Richardson, Rousseau, and Laclos*, and Linda S. Kauffman's *Discourses of Desire: Gender, Genre, and Epistolary Fictions*.

[9] See Lois A. Chaber's "Christian Form and Anti-Feminism in *Clarissa*" and Florian Stuber's "On Fathers and Authority in *Clarissa*."

[10] See William Beatty Warner's *Reading Clarissa: The Struggles of Interpretation*, Terry Castle's *Clarissa's Ciphers: Meaning & Disruption in Richardson's "Clarissa*," Thomas Keymer's *Richardson's* Clarissa *and the Eighteenth-Century Reader*, Janet Altman's *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form*, and Terry Eagleton's *The Rape of Clarissa: Writing, Sexuality and Class Struggle in Samuel Richardson*.

novel allows this movement to be traced. It is with the first of these three movements, where the heart confronts others in a struggle to control its integrity, identity, and meaning—a struggle in which the other attempts to break the heart—that this study begins.

CHAPTER ONE: THE HEART AND OTHERS

The Heart and "Everything"

In the beginning, after the Harlowes reveal to Clarissa their scheme to marry her to the odious Solmes, Clarissa describes what she calls a "sad conflict" (1.67) with her mother. This sad conflict spreads over eight visits, lasts two days, and represents the first attempt to break Clarissa's heart. Knowing that Clarissa will resist their scheme, and knowing that her mother is their strongest weapon against her—because Clarissa has the greatest affection for her—the Harlowes force Mrs. Harlowe to become the mouthpiece of their daughter's doom. Torn between her love for the "best-beloved of my heart" (1.70) and her perceived duty to maintain "the family peace" (1.82), even at the expense of that best-beloved, Mrs. Harlowe unwillingly but dutifully attempts to convince Clarissa to surrender, and surrender with a "cheerful obedience" (1.98), to the dictates of Harlowe tyranny. She attempts to convince Clarissa, in other words, and to lay herself down as a living sacrifice upon the altar of her siblings' "AVARICE and ENVY" (1.40).[11] But "The man," Clarissa desperately says of Solmes, "person and mind, is a monster in my eyes" (1.80); "I had rather be buried alive," she pleads, "indeed I had, than have that man!" (1.87). What ensues, not only in this microcosmic sad conflict but in the rest of part one (and then in the rest of the novel, though the enemy changes), is a battle of wills—a contest between a young girl desperate to protect herself and preserve her moral, religious, and sexual integrity, and an implacable, cold, unfeeling family bent on carrying their will no matter the cost. It is not only a battle of wills; it is a battle of hearts. "They are resolved to break my heart" (1.112) Clarissa writes to Anna Howe after the unjust dismissal of her faithful Hannah. "And they think you," the impertinent Betty Barnes at a later point says, "are resolved to break theirs" (1.112). The epitome of the contest is given by Mrs. Harlowe in the sad conflict: "He would break your heart," she tells Clarissa of her father, "rather than you should break his" (1.107). This is a battle to control

[11] Which is not a metaphor too strong, especially given the language of sacrifice and the double meaning of altar that surrounds Clarissa's apprehended obedience; it is, I think, the metaphor Richardson invites us to see.

who and what Clarissa is. This is a battle to the death; or rather, it is a battle to the heart, which in *Clarissa* amounts to much the same thing.

But the confrontation is not fair. The heart confronts others in a contest to control; but the others may not have a heart, or not have a heart of the same quality, or if they have a heart they may ignore or suppress its better motions. In the world of *Clarissa*, hearts are either "penetrable" or "impenetrable"—that is, they are knowable or they are not; they are open or closed, soft or hard. Clarissa famously will say of Lovelace "that he wants a *heart*: and if he does, he wants everything" (1.202). Lovelace is not alone in this deficiency. During the sad conflict, Mrs. Harlowe, perhaps not recognizing the double meaning, will indict herself when she declares that "The heart, Clary, is what I want" (1.90). But the heart is, as Clarissa says, "everything." To want a heart is to be inhuman, or at least inhumane. Clarissa's "everything" is dense and compressed; it is ambiguous in its largeness. In its largeness, however, this "everything" encompasses a total vision of human social, moral, and religious life. Understanding what the heart means to Clarissa, and to Richardson, is central to understanding the novel.

What a heart is, what a heart does, how a heart works, who has or has not a heart and why: it is to questions like these that this chapter is dedicated. This chapter is partly a groundwork chapter, setting up the meanings of "heart" I use throughout this study. The sad conflict between Clarissa and her mother will be the touchstone image of the heart's confrontation with others, upon which these meanings will be tested. This conflict sets the pattern for all of Clarissa's conflicts with others—she must constantly defend herself, her motives, her feelings; she must do this because the prize in this conflict is Clarissa herself. As the heart continually battles against the controlling visions of others, its own shape and meanings come into clearer focus. So before I proceed with a reading of the sad conflict itself, I will define what is meant by heart and begin to unpack Clarissa's "everything."

Huge Quaggy Carcasses: The Meaning(s) of Heart

There are three meanings of heart in *Clarissa* that I discuss in this chapter. There are, actually, likely more meanings than this, possibly many more. Unlike a more self-consciously technical artist such as, say, William Blake, who devised not only his own mythology but his own language and consistently obeyed the logic of that language, Richardson does not appear inclined to infuse words with their own stable, technical meanings. Words such as "world," for

instance, or "penetration" or "duty" or even "love," have multiple meanings. These meanings shift in and out of focus as speakers change, locations differ, or attitudes and feelings alter. But while words appear unstable, or perhaps even bland and banal in their deployment, they gather, in their rolling patterns of repetition, a force of resonance and meaning,[12] so that what issues is not, perhaps, a work of fantastic technical virtuosity such as would be produced by Henry James, but is indeed one that opens up and examines the human heart with startling richness and accuracy. By over-loading the readers, by plunging them into the midst of several fictional minds, Richardson achieves his greatness. When accounting for the length of one of her letters—a length that seems at odds with the little she has to communicate—Clarissa may be able to say to Anne that "Six lines would have contained all that is in it to the purpose of my story" (1.144); and indeed, the action of the whole novel can be described in only a paragraph or two. Clarissa can claim six lines; Richardson certainly cannot. *Clarissa* achieves its heroine's apotheosis through sheer verbal immensity. Richardson buries his readers in her, sinks them entirely into her mind and heart through a staggering excess of verbiage. He writes her into existence, and the length of the work explodes her into psychic reality. Perhaps nowhere else in literature is a mind so completely realized.

In considering the massive text of *Clarissa*, Terry Castle suggests an odd image: Mrs. Sinclair, the demonic "mother" of Lovelace and tormentor of Clarissa, lies dying in bed; her "huge quaggy carcass" (4.382), bloated and variously coloured, becomes, Castle suggests, "the great summarizing image of Richardson's own problematic text" (37). The text of *Clarissa*, like Sinclair, is "Monstrously distended" and "fractured" (36).[13] Provocative as this image is, it points to a feature of *Clarissa* that emerges in the collision of form and theme: words and meanings are not stable; definitions are huge quaggy carcasses, capable of taking and imparting meaning as the

[12] A point Leo Braudy makes: "Richardson is not usually considered to be a writer who uses figurative language. He is a plain writer: steeped in common speech, unpoetic, unsoaring. But within *Clarissa* repetitions of certain words and their cognates build patterns that contain a force larger than any immediate context" (185). The term "plain writer" needs some qualification, I think, though Braudy does not seem to be using it pejoratively. When he says that Richardson's writing is "unpoetic, unsoaring," he does not necessarily imply an aesthetic impoverishment. The poetic and soaring, after all, as Braudy argued in his article's beginning, encountered its own formal and aesthetics limits when Pope wrote *The Rape of the Lock*; it is precisely the novel's—and Richardson's—prosaic mode that realizes the novel's potential: the dramatization of interior states.

[13] Whether one agrees with this assessment of the text as a whole, is, here anyway, not the point. But for that matter, I tend to disagree with Castle: long and "distended" as the text may be, it is not bloated or quaggy; not, at least, in the sense that it would be improved by an aggressive editor, or that it is too long, or undisciplined. It is in fact remarkable, given the novel's length, how unified and consistent it remains.

speaker idiosyncratically fills them with his or her own desires, hopes, and fears. They are subject to abuse, to misinterpretation, to reinterpretation and reinscription. It is not surprising, therefore, that “heart” could have more than one meaning; that it has more than one meaning is partly the point of the novel. And so words like “heart” are dropped in by nearly each letter-writer in the novel, often to the bewilderment of the unwary reader.

“Heart” and words like it become nearly invisible or banal,[14] so pervasive are their presences in the text. It is here, however, in the banality of unassuming language, that the hermeneutic conflict is most terrifying for characters in the novel, most frustrating for readers of the novel. In one sense, as critics like Terry Castle and William Beatty Warner point out, the drama of *Clarissa* is precisely the drama of words—of who deploys them, who uses them, who is allowed to use them, and who is allowed to give them meaning. This drama of words is part of the psychic battlefield and words become arms taken up against enemies. No one else in the novel, for instance, has a stronger sense of duty than Clarissa. It is precisely the word “duty,” therefore, filled up as it is with their own grasping and vengeful meanings, that the Harlowes deploy against Clarissa, to devastating emotional and spiritual effect.

Yet, despite these huge quaggy definitions, Richardson was no relativist; he was not, as Terry Eagleton reminds us, “bland in the midst of ambiguities” (24). And here lies one of the novel’s oddities—the distinction between what Richardson presents, his formal mode of fictional letter-writing and its attendant ambiguities and complexities, and what Richardson believes. In *Clarissa*, words are unstable; to Clarissa, however, and also to Richardson, they carry intrinsic meanings. Words are truth; they represent real things, actual realities. “Should not sisters *be* sisters to each other?” (1.62) Clarissa, complaining of Arabella’s harsh treatment of her, laments to Anna Howe. At another time, when she detects Mrs. Harlowe’s conflict between love for her daughter and duty to her husband, she writes that she “saw the *mother* in her softened eye cast towards me” (1.89). For Clarissa, words like “sister” and “mother” carry intrinsic meanings. They denote fixed and certain expectations of affection, sympathy, feeling. It is when words and truth are separated, when words are deliberately set against truth, that tragedy emerges. It is this separation of word and truth that Clarissa, in the early parts of the novel, is unprepared to

[14] By banal I mean that the word heart is, especially when its many instances are considered, almost a meaningless word, a word so seemingly innocuous as to fit without friction into almost every situation. It is difficult to read more than two letters together in *Clarissa* without tripping over some two or three or more usages of the word. It is one of those words that slips unexamined and naturally into everyone’s vocabulary.

encounter and combat. In these huge quaggy definitions Richardson unfolds not a vision of relativism, or even a vision of the unfixed arbitrariness of a plastic language; if we find this in Richardson we have read back upon him an anachronistic theoretical position alien to his sensibilities. Rather, in the competing meanings of words in *Clarissa* he charts the dark depths and sadistic impulses inherent in the denial of truth, the denial that words have meaning, the denial of the real and authentic.

But all this is by way of preface for saying there are three meanings of heart in *Clarissa* that attract my attention in this chapter.

Heart: Sympathy

The heart is the centre of feeling, and feeling in the world of *Clarissa* becomes the only legitimate foundation for community or society. "Feeling" is another huge quaggy carcass of a word, not much more stable or definite than "heart." Feeling, however, in its broadest sense, encompasses all three of the meanings of the heart I elaborate here, and this all-encompassing property is important. For while it is possible to play the anatomist and separate the motions of the heart into distinct activities, the way these motions overlap and blend into each other is just as important and just as central to Richardson's vision of the heart.

The first of these heart motions I want to highlight is sympathy. Sympathy, that "one poor word which includes all our best insight and best love" (553) as George Eliot will describe it in *Adam Bede*, is the sense of being bound in both love and duty to one another, a sense of shared meanings, shared hopes, shared fears. Sympathy is more than a shared set of common sentiments, however; sympathy is an act of imaginative transposition, of one consciousness entering another, of making my case your own, as Clarissa will say. It is sympathy, this ability to share other lives and "penetrate" the heart, that unites true friendship, creates true family.[15] All

[15] Robert Erickson writes something similar, though couches it slightly differently: taking into account the new scientific understandings of the heart that were emerging in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, he writes:

> The supreme goal for the Richardsonian correspondent was to transform human absence into presence by translating faithfully the life blood of intimate, natural, spoken conversation into written conversation... Hence familiar letter-writing is an ongoing expression of the heart of the writer and an impression on the heart of the reader, a circulatory system of receiving, expressing, and receiving again those impressions and ideas closest to the hearts of the individual correspondents. ("*Clarissa* and Scripture" 171)

I would expand Erickson's assessment, enlarging his "goal for the Richardsonian correspondent" to more simply the goal of the virtuous Richardsonian character, or the goal of the sympathetic character, since the desire for a

the old, staid, supposedly legitimate formulations of family and society—the hereditary, the hierarchic, the economic—prove, in the end, monstrous, prone to sadism, and implacably unfeeling. They are, in other words, "hard-hearted." The soft, "penetrable," sympathetic heart creates; all other hearts inevitably harden, seeing others as extensions of the ego, as objects to be bought and used like Sinclair's whores or to be sold into marriage like Clarissa. Clarissa's grandfather, benevolently though perhaps unwisely, attempted to build this new sort of family upon the foundation of feeling, breaking the conventions of inheritance by taking "the pleasure of considering her as my own particular child" (1.21) and bequeathing the greatest portion of his wealth to Clarissa, who had been "from her infancy a matchless young creature in her duty to me" and "the delight of my old age" (1.21). This attempt to create a new family through lines of affection and feeling rather than those of blood and heredity, however, activates all the insecurities of the overlooked Harlowes and transforms Harlowe Place into a gloomy anticipation of Sinclair's brother where members are unable to enter into even the most basic of sympathetic activities.

This notion of sympathy is related to the emerging larger idea of "sensibility," of which, since Richardson stands almost at the beginning of its development in English fiction, a few general words should be said. Sensibility (yet another large and unruly term not easily defined) arose from seventeenth and eighteenth-century materialist philosophy. The emerging empirical sciences, favoured by the children of the Enlightenment, saw the five senses and that which presented itself to them as the stable foundation of knowledge and experience, this more "objective" position replacing the older, time-worn but now undermined metaphysical and epistemological traditions. Consequently the human was redrawn. The long great chain humanity had hung from for centuries was clipped and the individual now floated as an independent focus of sensory activity—the "new philosophy" that John Donne worried "calls all in doubt." This was the objectively real. This was the new foundation of knowledge—what could be seen, touched, tasted, smelled, heard. The material senses acted in sympathy with the sensory stimuli; the surrounding world of experience pressed against the sensing human: that which could be seen activated the sympathy of the eye, that which could be heard the ear, and so on. Locke and Newton were the apostles of this good news. Ideas, and especially very large ideas, are, of

"circulatory system of receiving, expressing, and receiving again" goes beyond Clarissa's letter writing activities and operates in nearly all her relationships, written or not.

course, mobile, and this materialist science of the early modern period travelled into the moral and epistemological philosophies of Hume, Shaftesbury, Burke, where the "sensible" heart, capable of receiving an extra-sensory impression, became a force that could unite society in a common sympathy. The "sentimental" novels of Richardson, Sterne, and Rousseau dramatized this common sensibility (or lack of it). Translated into fiction, sensibility became the capacity to be moved by the "feeling" heart, by the heart that received not only sense impression but moral and religious impression. This sympathetic activity of the heart operated both inside and outside the novel: it was the subject of the novel but also the aim of the novel. In reading about the feeling heart, the readers themselves (it was thought/hoped) would develop, through their own sympathetic responses, a similarly "feeling" heart. Like the five senses that received their signals from the world around—that were "sympathetic" to certain sense impressions—the heart, too, could be sympathetic and was, like a lump of soft clay, able to receive impressions from that which pressed upon it.[16]

But fiction turns upon drama, and drama is hardly dramatic without conflict, and so the "feeling" heart must encounter the other "unfeeling" heart, as Clarissa encounters the hard-hearted Harlowes—an encounter that champions the merits of the sensible heart but also reveals the limits or dangers of sensibility. The "hard" and "insensible" heart is like a seared sense of taste or smell: a dead, useless thing, unable to receive the impression. In *Clarissa*, and in much of the sentimental fiction that followed it, the "feeling" heart always faces victimization; the world itself becomes an oppressive place. The feeling heart is over-sensitive: its own ability to feel subjects it to the tyranny of the hard heart. In Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, for instance, a novel that sets sentiment in overdrive, Emily St. Aubert's father, detecting her impressionability, attempts to teach his daughter to "restrain her sensibility" (19) because "all excess is vicious" (20). Sensibility is vicious, however, not in its own right; it is vicious in its vulnerability: the feeling heart can take a too strong impression from the forces oppressing it. Sympathy and sensibility present a double bind: that which creates the foundation of social or familial integrity also distorts or disfigures it.

[16] For more detailed discussions of the history of sensibility see G. J. Barker-Benfield's *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, John Mullan's *Sentiment and Sociability: the Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century*, R. F. Brissenden's *Virtue in Distress*, and Jean Hagstrum's *Sex and Sensibility: Ideal and Erotic Love from Milton to Mozart*.

At the end of the sad conflict with her mother, Clarissa, in agonizing pathos, cries out "O that they did but know my heart!" (1.143). Despite her attempts to disclose it to them, the Harlowes, in their own hard-heartedness, refuse to listen. To the Harlowes, Clarissa's heart is, to use their own vocabulary, "impenetrable," "obstinate," "perverse," "prepossessed." To Lovelace similarly she is a "proud beauty" (1.144) and a "charming frost-piece" with a "heart so impenetrable" (1.148). Her Uncle Antony declares he will "search your heart to the bottom" (1.160), but never once attempts to do so. Arabella vindictively hisses that she would "give a thousand pounds to know all that is in your little rancorous and reflecting heart" (1.231); Arabella, however, "has not a *feeling heart*" (1.218) and so could never know another's. Clarissa appeals to Arabella to "Make but my case your own" (1.139); she appeals to her, in other words, to perform that imaginative act of personal transposition—to see with Clarissa's eyes and to feel with Clarissa's heart. Clarissa assumes that such an act would obviate all the accusations and insinuations made against her. Arabella refuses. To enter into such an act of sympathy is to recognize another's humanity—that "most sublime act" of setting another before you, as Blake writes. Lovelace, too, will fail to enter into this sympathy. Upon ambushing Clarissa with an unexpected visit, he declares that "he cared not how much he exposed me to the resentment of all my friends, provided he could gratify his own impetuous humour" (1.176). More egregiously, he fails to recognize the turmoil Clarissa is in when he tricks her into leaving Harlowe Place:

> But seest thou not now (as I think I do) the wind-outstripping fair one flying *from* her love *to* her love? Is there not such a game? Nay, flying from friends she was resolved not to abandon to the man she was determined not to go off with? *The sex! the sex all over!*—charming contradiction! Ha, ha, ha, ha! (1.513)

To Clarissa, leaving Harlowe Place is "one of the most inexcusable actions I could be guilty of" (1.290); much later in the novel, she will look back and use the date of her leaving as the date of her death. Her leaving is a traumatic event; it marks, as far as she is concerned, her life's end. But to Lovelace, Clarissa's emotional turmoil is merely a "charming contradiction," something to be laughed over and enjoyed.

But while Clarissa is surrounded by hearts that cannot beat with even the most basic of sympathetic motions Anna Howe tells Clarissa that "Nothing less than the knowledge of the inmost recesses of your heart, can satisfy my love and my friendship" (1.188). Anna, unlike Uncle Antony, can make such a demand because hers is a "*sympathizing* love" (1.273) and

because her "heart... is a sincere sharer in all your distresses" (1.342). "You are me" (1.43), Anna writes; "we have but one mind between us" (1.128); she and Clarissa are united by "the sacred flame of friendship," which is the "sacred tie by which your heart and mine are bound in one" (1.455). Knowledge of another's heart, despite the Harlowes' failure to gain it, is not impossible to acquire. It requires a mutual submission and a mutual recognition; in this mutual relationship, any attempt to dominate another's heart invariably hardens one and closes the other. Making one's own heart opaque to others makes all other hearts opaque in return. The heart in *Clarissa* is often an obscure mass of hidden motives and secret desires; it is not so, however, because the heart is intrinsically closed; the heart is impenetrable to those who have reasons to deny the humanity, the *subjectivity*, the worth and value of another self. The heart is impenetrable, that is, to those without a sense of sympathy. Lacking sympathy, the only way to "penetrate" it is, the Harlowes and Lovelace agree, by the other meaning of "penetration"—force, violation, breaking.

Heart: Conscience

As the centre of feeling, the heart is not only the source of sympathy but also an epistemological organ of perception and communication. The soft heart, the feeling heart, receives the guiding light of inspiration, hears the voice of the deity; the heart is, in other words, an organ of conscience.

Richardson was far from the first to say so; he was, in fact, thoroughly within both the literary and the devotional mainstreams. In *Paradise Lost*, for instance, Milton's God says to his Son, while declaring his providential plan to redeem fallen humanity, that "I will clear their sense dark, / What may suffice, and soften stony hearts" (3.188-89).[17] Fallen humanity, though benighted with "sense dark," and though possessing hearts of stone instead of hearts of flesh, will nevertheless, if "endeavoured with sincere intent" (3.192), receive grace, and will possess a means of communication with the deity. For God declares that

> I will place within them as a guide
> My umpire Conscience, whom if they will hear,
> Light after light well used they shall attain,

[17] Jean Hagstrum provides an excellent account of Milton's imaginative influence on eighteenth century thinking, and especially on how Milton's Edenic sexual ideal translated into contemporary domesticity and thinking about romantic and companionate marriage. See *Sex and Sensibility* 14-15.

> And to the end persisting, safe arrive. (3.194-7)

Like Milton, both Richardson and Clarissa believe in this "umpire Conscience;" they believe it is rational, intrinsic to humanity, and natural. Natural for Clarissa means something very much like true. In *Clarissa* nature is paired against artifice, invention, and contrivance, all of which are attempts to subvert nature and truth and to dominate another person. They are attempts to warp reality according to a solipsistic vision. Conscience is a first means of preventing these warps. Something unnatural, such as James and Arabella's hatred of their sister, or Mr. Harlowe's abdication of paternal power, violates not only what is true, but violates what *should be*. Sisters *should* be sisters; mothers *should* be mothers; fathers *should* be fathers—this is the natural shape of things. An unnatural act or behaviour, therefore, such as Lovelace's rape of Clarissa, must be preceded by an overcoming—or, in Lovelace's case, an explicit killing—of conscience, the impulse in humanity that, when trained with proper education, both religious and liberal, naturally keeps it thinking and acting as it should. It cannot be said that the Holy Spirit, or a theology of the Holy Spirit, is explicitly present in *Clarissa*. But as John A. Dussinger writes, "Whether he calls it 'conscience' or 'feeling heart,' Richardson implies throughout the novel that man has within him an intuitive judge to which one must answer for all his actions and that furthermore this inner voice is directly related to the Holy Spirit" (238). Conscience is not the Holy Spirit; conscience communicates with the Holy Spirit.

This "intuitive judge," this "umpire Conscience," was much debated in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; the heart and conscience become important tropes. Robert South, for instance, in one of his sermons writes:

> There is an *innate light* in every man, discovering to him the first lines of duty, in the common notions of *good and evil*; which by cultivation, and improvement, may be advanced to higher and brighter discoveries. And from hence it is, that the schoolmen and moralists admit not of any *ignorantia juris*, speaking of *natural moral right*, to give excuse to sin. Since all such ignorance is *voluntary*, and therefore culpable; forasmuch as it was in every man's power to have prevented it, by a due improvement of the *light of nature*, and the seeds of moral honesty sown in his heart. (407)[18]

[18] Parts of South's sermon can almost be read as a commentary on *Clarissa*, though South wrote first; parts of *Clarissa*, it is more accurate to say, can be read as dramatizations of South's sermon. For instance, South writes:

This "*innate light*" continually operates within Clarissa. Her mind and conscience have, as readers are continually reminded, been shaped and instructed by her nurse Mrs. Norton and the reverend Dr. Lewen. She will submit to her conscience, judge her words and actions by it; she will condemn or exonerate herself according to its dictates and to "what offers to my own heart" (2.306). She will do this rigorously, often to the frustration of her readers, both in and outside the novel, who feel she takes moral and religious submission too far. One brief example of how Clarissa's conscience operates will suffice.

Hearing James and Arabella exult in their sister's desperate situation, Clarissa, finding "in my mind a rancour that was new to me" (1.431), deposits a letter for Lovelace declaring that he may rescue her from Harlowe Place. After depositing it, however, her conscience begins to work on her and she feels uneasy. "My mind so dreadfully misgave me" (1.431), she writes; she feels "increasing uneasiness" (1.431); and, most importantly, "my *inwardest* mind bids me," she finally admits, to "resume" the letter in the morning (1.432). Her options are, at this point in the story, limited: stay and brave the threats of the forced marriage, or flee her father's house with Lovelace, an event that, regardless of her motives, will admit only one interpretation—that she really is in love with Lovelace. Nevertheless, drawn and driven between two desperate choices, she resolves to retrieve the letter. Lovelace, however, acquires it first. He is ecstatic; she is torn and perplexed. As Wednesday, the day the marriage is to take place, approaches, Clarissa continually revolves her two options, finally deciding not to meet Lovelace but "to stand this one trial of Wednesday next" (1.459). Her reasons are simple: "My heart, in short, misgives me less when I resolve *this* way than when I think of the *other*: and in so strong and involuntary a bias, the *heart* is, I may say, *conscience*" (1.460). It is to her own heart that Clarissa will ultimately turn to judge her own actions; she will not take an action that violates her conscience. The world, the Harlowes, and Lovelace can have their own interpretations: "to acquit myself *to* myself" (1.120) will be her concern, "for that," she says, "is the test, after all" (1.201).[19]

> as all resistance whatsoever of the dictates of conscience, even in the way of natural *efficiency*, bring a kind of hardness of *stupefaction* upon it; so the *resistance* of these *peculiar suggestions of the Spirit*, will cause in it also a *judicial hardness*, which is yet worse than the other... The consequence of which is very terrible; as rendring [sic] a man *past feeling*. (415)

He could be sketching a portrait of James Harlowe. Indeed, one of the final images Richardson gives us of James Harlowe is of him looking at Clarissa's coffin with "marks of stupefaction imprinted upon every feature" (4.396).

[19] Clarissa's leaving Harlowe Place does not render her guilty of violating her own conscience. Her leaving has been called everything from an abduction to an elopement. Richardson is very careful, however, to set up the scene to protect Clarissa. Mark Kinkead-Weekes' reading of the scene is invaluable:

Later in the novel Clarissa explores these same ideas in a passage that ties together all that I have been saying about the heart and conscience:

> Be pleased then to allow me to think that my motives on this occasion arise not *altogether* from maidenly niceness; nor yet from the apprehension of what my present tormentor, and future husband, may think of a precipitate compliance, on such a disagreeable behaviour as his: but they arise principally from what offers to my own heart; respecting, as I may say, its own rectitude, its own judgment of the *fit* and the *unfit*; as I would without study, answer *for* myself *to* myself, in the *first* place; to *him*, and to the *world*, in the second only. Principles that *are* in my mind; that I *found* there; implanted, no doubt, by the first gracious Planter: which therefore *impel* me, as I may say, to act up to them, that thereby I may, to the best of my judgment, be enabled to comport myself worthily in both states (the single and the married), let others act as they will by *me*. (2.306)

If Richardson's pairing of the heart and conscience amounts to not much more than a common literary and devotional trope, the degree to which he intensifies it, dramatizes it, realizes it in an active and internal representation was unprecedented. Richardson does not merely describe the heart and its conscience, he makes them both manifest on the page.

Heart: Grain of Sand

These first two meanings of heart, however—sympathy and conscience—are not the only, or perhaps even the most important, meanings of heart in *Clarissa*. These two meanings of heart may be called social, or even philosophical—they both constitute operations of the heart

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> Richardson risks improbability to achieve an action both decisive and unwilled. What saves him is that the story is so consistent with Clarissa's psychology as we have now come to know it. She is highly strung, hypersensitive and emotional, very imaginative. Though she has great moral courage she can be a coward physically and emotionally, in the special sense in which one might apply the word to a man with no head for heights: in the situation he fears most his limbs become paralysed and his brain will not work, he becomes hysterical, he *cannot* obey his will. Clarissa knows this hysterical propensity in herself. This is why the (otherwise ridiculous) threat of a forced marriage seems wholly possible to her, and to be feared, not because of any lack of will, but because she may not be able to control herself. Her family also know it; hence the full assembly and the parson, though there is no evidence that they would actually have gone beyond the threat, and some evidence that the threat was to have been their final effort. Lovelace knows it: that is why he too fears the Wednesday, since tactics he expects to succeed by, might do no less for the Harlowes. Yet we must notice that Clarissa's terror affects only her limbs and the clarity of her understanding. Her will is unaffected, and she screams 'No' all the way between the gate and the carriage. (172-3)

that allow the social fabric to cohere; they both elaborate ways people may live with each other. But there is more to the heart than this. Feeling, after all, either in the sympathetic or conscience sense, cannot be "broken," or at least not broken by others (though consciences can be killed or seared by the self, like Lovelace's). There is another, much more personal, much more fragile, meaning of heart. Here, heart begins to share meanings with "self," and is linked to the individualism engendered by both Protestantism and emerging early modernity. Here also, the heart becomes an aesthetic imperative, one that English fiction will feel compelled to follow in the wake of Richardson's great novel. What breaks when Clarissa's heart breaks? What I suggest breaks is an entire vision of self and world.

The heart is not only an organ of conscience and sympathy; it is a synecdochal organ, an anatomical epitome; it is metaphor and metonym; it is the best and most bright symbol of self. What is Clarissa's heart? It is Clarissa herself. What do the Harlowes, and later Lovelace, try to break when they try to break Clarissa's heart? Clarissa herself.

This, it could be said, makes *Clarissa*—despite its length—a very small novel. Indeed, some critics have complained about this, judging the novel entirely too long, too self-important, too over-blown to account for its small subject matter, the rape and death of a solitary young girl. Dorothy Van Ghent, for instance, writes that "The central event of the novel, over which the interminable series of letters hovers so cherishingly, is, considered in the abstract, a singularly thin and unrewarding piece of action—the deflowering of a young lady—and one which scarcely seems to deserve the universal uproar which it provokes in the book" (47). The women at Mrs. Sinclair's feel the same; they tauntingly question Lovelace about why he should "*make so long a harvest of so little corn*" (2.363). And Mrs. Howe wonders "What is there in it... that all this bustle is about? Is it such a mighty matter for a young woman to give up her inclinations to oblige her friends?" (1.293). The answer, the novel resoundingly declares, is yes; indeed, it is a very mighty matter to sacrifice one's heart, especially to the narrow visions of the hard-hearted.

This "smallness," however—this "bustle" over one young girl; this long harvest of so little corn—is the entire meaning of *Clarissa*; it is also the meaning, if I might tentatively hazard a perhaps too large statement, of the novel as it was realized in the eighteenth and, even more heroically, later in the nineteenth century. William Blake will write about the importance of seeing a world in a grain of sand. In the grain of sand named Clarissa, an entire world blooms and dies, and this apocalypse is no less immense, no less harrowing, no less tragic than an

apocalypse of the whole wide world. Without this grain of sand vision, in which solitary persons, and, perhaps even more important, solitary female persons, become the great images carrying the meaning of human nature, the novel form collapses. This is the world redrawn, its meaning resized; it is the epic—not mocked by winking at "What mighty Contests rise from trivial Things" as Pope tells it—but scaled instead to individual human dignity. These trivial things are not trivial. Slight is *not* the subject in *Clarissa*; the "dire Offence" that "from am'rous Causes springs" is indeed dire. As the novel form develops, it is this grain of sand vision that comes into closer focus—the god-figures of epic poetry depart from literature; the psychologically and emotionally realized human figure steps into it. External action is supplanted by internal reality.

Richardson began building to this grain of sand vision of the heart in *Pamela*, though his attempts there were, I think, fumbling and often awkward, especially when compared with the achievement of his second novel. *Clarissa* entirely eclipses *Pamela* in almost every respect. The heart is important in *Pamela* but achieves its apotheosis in *Clarissa*. The pleadings of the heroine in *Pamela* turn on an externalized moral appeal;[20] the appeals of Clarissa turn entirely on Clarissa's self. Pamela, in attempting to save herself, pleads that Mr. B remember his religion, his morality, his class distinction, and spare her; Clarissa, when she pleads, appeals to the fact that she is a self with intrinsic value and worth. "But what law, what ceremony," Clarissa writes at the beginning of the sad conflict, "can give a man a right to a heart which abhors him more than it does any living creature?" (1.67). There is no law or ceremony that can dispose of a heart, for the heart is sovereign. In the long and traumatic interview near the end of her confinement, Clarissa pleads to Solmes, "Take my estate, sir, with all my heart, since you are such a favourite in this house! Only leave me *myself*" (1.399). Clarissa has fully internalized all that, at least grammatically, seems external to Pamela (and I say grammatically because the distinction between Pamela and external concerns may, in the end, be only a distinction in language and style, one that Richardson overcame in *Clarissa*); so that while in *Pamela* we find Richardson carefully delineating a revolutionary vision of selfhood and feminine equality through a dramatic and rhetorical appeal to too-often ignored or easily corrupted religious, hierarchical, filial, or

[20] Though perhaps this is not as externalized as it appears. The grounds of this external appeal—to virtue, to honesty, to religion, or to class distinction—are so closely united in *Pamela* to ideas of self that differentiating between them and the heroine—saying, for instance, "this is where Pamela ends and this is where religion begins"—becomes hair-pullingly frustrating, if one were inclined to try it. The point I am trying to make, however, is that in *Pamela* Richardson's heroine appeals to standards and expectations that are outside herself and her oppressor; in *Clarissa*, the self *is* the standard.

political establishments, in *Clarissa* we find Richardson committed to an internalized, fully realized selfhood, committed to the creation of a woman who, like *King Lear*'s Cordelia, is herself a dowry—is herself the final word on virtue and moral integrity. Clarissa is all merit. There can be no higher appeal in *Clarissa* than to Clarissa herself. Against Clarissa, all other characters fade into shadow; as Anna Howe says, "What shades does your full day of merit cast upon them!" (1.125). And while Pamela is praised for her dutiful obedience to virtue and honesty, Clarissa can be praised only for being Clarissa.

Above I mentioned that this third meaning of heart sets an aesthetic imperative that English fiction will follow for years after Richardson. Richardson's legacy is not only Clarissa Harlowe but nearly all the great female characters that follow her. This vision of the grain of sand heart, as I have called it, can be seen operating throughout most of the great fiction of the following century. In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, for instance, Thomas Hardy insists that

> Tess was no insignificant creature to toy with and dismiss; but a woman living her precious life—a life which, to herself who endured or enjoyed it, possessed as great a dimension as the life of the mightiest to himself. Upon her sensations the whole world depended to Tess; through her existence all her fellow-creatures existed, to her. The universe itself only came into being for Tess on the particular day in the particular year in which she was born. (182)

Hardy, like Richardson (though unlike in more ways than can be enumerated here), intuitively grasps the conflict between the individual heart and the surrounding world. Tess, he tells us, "was not an existence, an experience, a passion, a structure of sensations, to anybody but herself" (107). But *to herself* she is this "structure of sensation," *to herself* she is the grain of sand in which can be seen a universe, and her life, though seemingly small and insignificant, has "as great a dimension as the life of the mightiest to himself." Similarly George Eliot, in her last novel *Daniel Deronda*, writes,

> Could there be a slenderer, more insignificant thread in human history than this consciousness of a girl, busy with her small inferences of the way in which she could make her life pleasant?—in a time, too, when ideas were with fresh vigour making armies of themselves, and the universal kinship was declaring itself fiercely; when women on the other side of the world would not mourn for the husbands and sons who died bravely in a common cause, and men stinted of bread

> on our side of the world heard of that willing loss and were patient: a time when the soul of man was waking to pulses which had for centuries been beating in him unheard, until their full sum made a new life of terror or of joy.

"What in the midst of that mighty drama are girls and their blind visions?" Eliot asks. "They are the Yea and Nay of that good for which men are enduring and fighting," she answers. "In these delicate vessels is borne onward through the ages the treasure of human affection" (132).[21] *Middlemarch* becomes meaningless, *The Portrait of a Lady* pointless, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* a trifle if the importance of a grain of sand be denied. Dorothea Brooke, Isabel Archer, Tess Durbeyfield, along with so many others, are the true daughters of Clarissa and find their conception in the movements and convulsions of Richardson's great novel.

The *Supposal* and the Artillery of Hopes and Fears: the Heart and Others

All these, then—sympathy, conscience, and the apotheosized grain of sand self—are what I take to be the meanings of the heart; or they are, at least, the meanings of the heart with which I am concerning myself in this study. And with all this now established, I want to briefly return to the sad conflict between Clarissa and Mrs. Harlowe in order to read the conflict between the heart and others through the matrix of these meanings.

Early in this sad conflict Mrs. Harlowe sets a trap for Clarissa.[22] Discussing Lovelace, she asks her daughter, "are your affections engaged to this man?" (1.72). Clarissa hesitates—"I knew what the inference would be if I said they were not" (1.71). Having detected the trap, she is

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[21] There is perhaps a slight irony in this passage since the "consciousness of a girl" in question is Gwendolen Harleth's, a self-regarding young woman all-too capable of exploding the dimensions of her own life beyond proportion. I would suggest, however, that given the growth of Gwendolen in the novel, and given the way her story—private and personal, much like Clarissa's—is paired in Eliot's double-narrative alongside Deronda's story of a much larger consciousness that expands to include a social vision of the Jewish people, that Eliot herself is not being ironic when she invests "the Yea and Nay of that good for which men are enduring and fighting" in a single girl. The grain of sand vision I have been describing is structurally mirrored with the more universal vision and the two are invested with equal imaginative weight.

[22] The figure of Mrs. Harlowe is one of Richardson's great images of ambivalence. She provokes, both within the novel and outside it, both pity and outrage. In her annotations of the novel, for instance, Lady Bradshaigh, echoing some of Anna Howe's sentiments, harshly judges Mrs. Harlowe: "I think M[rs] Harlowe the worst person in the family. the rest act up to their characters, & their favourite motives. But she, against the dictates of her heart, out of cowardice, and with great cruelty to her child" (48). Exasperated with her in another passage, Lady Bradshaigh declares "The mother is dead & bury'd" (49). Eventually, however, by the novel's end, when Morden writes to Belford that the Harlowes are "greatly to be pitied," Lady Bradshaigh notes that "Not one can I pity but the mother, Unnatural. Yahoos" (132).

nevertheless powerless to avoid it. Upon her hesitation Mrs. Harlowe loses patience: "You hesitate—you answer me not—you cannot answer me. *Rising*—never more will I look upon you with an eye of favour—" (1.72). Clarissa pleads "I would not, I *need* not, hesitate one moment did I not dread the inference... Yet be the inference what it will, your threatened displeasure will make me speak. And I declare to you that I know not my own heart, if it be not absolutely free" (1.72). The trap that Clarissa has detected, the inference that will be drawn, is that "since *your heart* is free let your duty govern it" (1.74). Her heart apparently free, the Harlowes assume it is theirs to dispose. The trap is a piece of logic worthy of only the Harlowes: if she is in love with Lovelace, the Harlowes are justified in forcing her to marry Solmes; if she is not in love with him, there is nothing standing in the way of her duty and marrying him anyway.

Much later in part one, Clarissa overhears James and Arabella: the forced marriage plans are set; Lovelace by his well-designed threats has forced the issue; Mr. Harlowe has abdicated his paternal authority over Clarissa ("Son James, to you, and to Bella, and to you, brother, do I wholly commit this matter" (1.411))—"Now," James says, "must she be what we would have her be" (1.430). This is the conflict of the entire novel epitomized. Everyone wants Clarissa to be "what we would have her be." To be who they want her to be, however, would be to annihilate who she actually is, and the only possible way to do that is to break her heart. "Your heart," as Mrs. Harlowe says, "not your knees, must bend" (1.71); if it will not bend, as Clarissa makes clear it will not, it must break.

The Harlowes deploy several strategies to bend or break Clarissa's heart, nearly all of which find their first expressions in the sad conflict. The first of these strategies Clarissa detects early. "My father and mother," she writes, "industriously avoid giving me opportunity of speaking to them alone. They ask not for my approbation, intending as it should seem, to *suppose* me into their will" (1.32). The Harlowes, as Clarissa tells Anna, "have all an absolute dependence upon what they suppose to be a meekness in my temper" (1.37). When Mrs. Harlowe returns to Clarissa after delivering the command that Clarissa "think of being Mrs. Solmes" (1.71), she begins "in a strain as if she supposed I had made use of the intervening space to overcome my objections" (1.72). When Clarissa's father interrupts her and Mrs. Harlowe's meeting, he wonders why it is taking so long when "What you had to say lay in a very little compass" (1.76), but then adds that "perhaps you may be talking of the preparations. Let us have you soon down—your daughter in your hand, if worthy of the name" (1.76). Mrs. Harlowe tells

Clarissa that her father has thereby "kindly furnished us with an excuse for being so long together" (1.76) and invites her down to dinner. "Go down," Clarissa cries, "and let it be supposed we were talking of *preparations*!" (1.76). Mrs. Harlowe then offers to excuse Clarissa on grounds of her "modesty on the occasion" (1.76), which Clarissa likewise rejects as untrue. Later Mr. Harlowe questions Mrs. Harlowe about Clarissa's "*cheerful* compliance (for it seems, the *cheerful* was all that was doubted)" (1.77). "I see, my dear," Mrs. Harlowe says when Clarissa falls silent in another of their meetings, "that you are convinced" (1.81), and tells her that her opposition "shall be imputed to that modesty which has ever so much distinguished you" and that her objections were only "some little reluctances to subdue" owing to "some little natural shyness" (1.81). "With a good word," Clarissa says of James, "he shall have my consent for all he wishes to worm me out of" (1.106).

The strategy in all these instances (of which there are many more) is to avoid, at all costs, confronting Clarissa's true character. The Harlowes will "*suppose* me into their will;" that is, they will create their own character for Clarissa to play, impose it upon her, and then feign shock, dismay, and anger—"never was there so mixed a character" (1.272), Arabella says—when Clarissa acts out of their invented character and refuses to comply. This strategy reaches its climax when the Harlowes grant Clarissa a delay in their plans on the condition that she submit to an interview with Solmes. She complies, though she writes to her uncle that "I see not what end the proposed condition can answer" (1.324). Aunt Hervey eventually tells her that end: "your father, mother, uncles, everybody, respect this appointment as the first act of your compliance with their wills" (1.373), a construction that explains why everyone in the house, to Clarissa's puzzlement, had suddenly appeared to be gentler and kinder to her—"For, it seems, there was no occasion to dispute with me on the point I was to be *supposed* to have conceded to" (1.374). The refusal of those around her to recognize her true character will be a conflict that extends throughout the novel. Clarissa must constantly battle against the character written upon her by those who want her to be "what we would have her be." Lovelace, too, will do this, but in a slightly different, much more complicated and dangerous way. While the Harlowes are more or less explicit in their *supposals* (one of Clarissa's great words), Lovelace will invisibly *suppose* his misogynist, rakish view of female character upon Clarissa, while at the same time appearing, for a while at least, deferential, sincere, and respectful, if a little too earnest and impatient. He

keeps his *supposals* hidden from Clarissa, and this allows him to launch his devastating, and ultimately violent, "trial" or "test" against her without her even knowing it.

The *supposal* pre-empts the heart. It is an absolute refusal to engage in heart activity: it rejects sympathy, imposing a character rather than recognizing one; it ignores conscience, predicated as it is on a deliberate falsehood; it attempts to dismantle—to bend or break—another's self. It is an act of imaginative violence; it is, in fact, according to the novel's logic, a sort of psychic rape. When Lovelace rapes Clarissa in part two of the novel, he is attempting, as many critics have pointed out, to write a certain character upon Clarissa in order to, like James Harlowe says, force her to be "what we would have her be." But Richardson forces the reader to move backwards in his text, reading the meaning of the rape onto the events that come before it—the language of the broken heart that runs throughout the novel like a "blood-red ray," to borrow a phrase from Hardy, demands that these separate events be read as one large, continuous event. Long before Lovelace physically violates Clarissa, her family has emotionally and psychically violated her.[23]

Overlapping this strategy of supposing is another strategy—not only will they use her *supposed* character against her, they will use her known character against her, too. In the midst of the sad conflict, Clarissa receives one of Anna's letters; her own reply to this is a moment of heart searching. Clarissa begins to see aspects of not only her own personality, but of how her own personality can be used against her. She begins to feel the double bind to which the feeling heart is vulnerable. "My temper, I know, is depended upon" (1.93) she writes to Anna, and adds that "those who will bear much, shall have much to bear" (1.93). Clarissa knows her mother has borne much: having demonstrated a capacity to endure the dictates of her husband, those dictates increased in intensity, grew tyrannical, and eventually emerged as arbitrary and meanly despotic. Meditating on the example of her mother Clarissa writes,

> And often and often have I had *reason* (on her account) to reflect, that we poor mortals, by our *over*-solicitude to preserve undisturbed the qualities we are *constitutionally* fond of, frequently lose the benefits we propose to ourselves from them: since the designing and encroaching (finding out what we most fear to

[23] Robert A. Erickson writes something similar. Discussing the curse Clarissa's father will place on her after she leaves Harlowe Place, he suggests that "if the definition of rape can be extended beyond the historical meanings of abduction or sexual assault, to include the verbal stripping and degradation of one person by another, then Arabella, in her terrible letter, rapes Clarissa with the full approbation of the rest of the family, and particularly at the fervent desire and decree of her father" (*Mother Midnight* 135).

> forfeit) direct their batteries against these our weaker places, and making an artillery (if I may phrase it) of our *hopes* and *fears*, play it upon us at their pleasure. (1.93)

The Harlowes bring this artillery of hopes and fears against Clarissa with full force. They design each situation so that Clarissa's own nature seems responsible for her suffering. Affection is withdrawn from her and held hostage till she complies because she is now "undutiful," "obstinate," and "perverse." She can come down to dinner if she is worthy of the name of daughter. She can meet her mother if she appears as her mother would have her. Her confinement can be removed as soon as she complies. Etc, etc. Any one of these, as Clarissa says, is "a condition that amounts to a prohibition" (1.103). And yet, no one in the novel has a higher view of what it means to be a daughter, or to be dutiful, than Clarissa. She champions duty; she glories in obedience. She would, if she could, remain an obedient child-daughter her entire life, which is what her offer to live single amounts to.[24] The obedience that the Harlowes demand, however, the duty that they call her to perform, amounts to an act of self-immolation: Clarissa must destroy herself in order to be "what we would have her be."

Mrs. Harlowe places the ultimatum before Clarissa: "are you determined to brave your father's displeasure? Are you determined to defy your uncles? Do you choose to break with us all, rather than encourage Mr. Solmes? Rather than give me hope?" To which Clarissa answers:

> Dreadful alternative! But is not my sincerity, is not the integrity of my heart, concerned in my answer? May not my everlasting happiness be the sacrifice? Will not the least shadow of the *hope* you just now demanded from me be driven into absolute and sudden *certainty*? Is it not sought to ensnare, to entangle me in my own desire of obeying, if I could give you answers that might be construed into *hope*? (1.103)

[24] John Allen Stevenson offers an interesting, if not entirely compelling, discussion of Clarissa's offer to live single, and of the entire conflict that engages the Harlowes against her. Clarissa, he argues, desires to remain a child; the Harlowes, at least her mother and father, want her to remain their daughter; the marriage with Solmes is apparently supposed to be a way of keeping their daughter to themselves and not losing her in marriage to someone, like Lovelace, who would take her away from them. Solmes, after all, is more interested in money and agrees to let Clarissa remain at Harlowe Place until she is reconciled to marriage, which might never happen. Clarissa would therefore remain with her parents forever. The argument rests on the idea of excessive love and on an almost incestuous desire to keep the family unit self-contained. See "The Courtship of the Family: Clarissa and the Harlowes Once more."

Clarissa's family knows her, or at least knows her enough to be able to pin-point and target, with devastating accuracy, exactly those aspects of her character must susceptible to attack. They can make that artillery of her hopes and fears. Knowing she wants to obey, they can attempt "to entangle [her] in [her] own desire of obeying."

The Harlowes are not rational beings, nor are they consistent in their methods; nor, it seems, are they entirely unaware of these facts. They know they are cruel; they know they are guilty; they know that they cannot rationally answer Clarissa.[25] These two strategies—supposing her into their will and making an artillery of her hopes and fears—often collide and create contradictions which, when pointed out, baffle the Harlowes and leave them only able to sputter about duty and authority. During the sad conflict, for instance, Mrs. Harlowe, building much on Clarissa's declaration that her heart is free, attempts to overcome her daughter's objections to Solmes, objections Mrs. Harlowe chooses to interpret as merely "personal" (in the sense of appearance; Solmes is, after all, quite ugly). "But what is *person*, Clary, with one of your prudence, and *your heart disengaged*?" (1.74). "Should the eye be disgusted when the heart is to be engaged?" Clarissa responds. Mrs. Harlowe attempts to play upon Clarissa's known character—she is prudent, she is pious; external appearance can have no force with a mind above such consideration. "Thus," Clarissa responds, "are my imputed good qualities to be made my punishment" (1.79). But Mrs. Harlowe's attempts to prey upon Clarissa's "imputed good qualities" contradict how the Harlowes are treating Clarissa, and Clarissa detects this. She writes,

> And that I may be induced to bear this treatment, I am to be complimented with being indifferent to all men: yet, at other times, and to serve other purposes, be thought prepossessed in favour of a man against whose moral character lie *just* objections. Confined as if, like the giddiest of creatures, I would run away with this man and disgrace my whole family! (1.80)

Depending on the situation, Clarissa is at times prudent and at times giddy—whichever construction best suits the moment is the one the Harlowes will employ, reason and rationality be damned. What the Harlowes never allow her to be, however, is herself. Having refused at all

[25] Uncle Harlowe will write to Clarissa that "We are all afraid to see you, because we know we shall be made as so many fools" (1.305). The Harlowes are always conscious of their guilt. James and Arabella will maliciously affect mirth; everyone else, it seems, suffers diminishment, fragmentation; eventually, they will not even be able to tolerably endure the sight of each other. Harlowe Place will fall. The confinement of Clarissa during part one is really the removal of a guilt object from the Harlowes' sight—to see her is to know their own wickedness. This will, of course, reach its ultimate intolerable limit when Clarissa's body is returned to Harlowe Place, at the sight of which the Harlowe family essentially ceases to exist.

turns to penetrate Clarissa's heart—even when she invites them in the strongest possible terms to do just that—they have, effectively, already killed her, at least in their own hard hearts.

These, then, are the two strategies brought to bear against Clarissa in order to bend or break her heart. The Harlowe strategy is to use Clarissa's nature, or her supposed nature, against her. Doing so has, after all, worked in the past. Mrs. Harlowe, once apparently a lively woman, has been reduced to a shadow of her former self by her despotic husband. The Harlowes can have "an absolute dependence upon what they suppose to be a meekness in my temper" because they, blind as they always are, have never before seen in Clarissa anything that hints at her strength and determination—nothing, after all, in Clarissa's hitherto Edenic history has called for it.[26] Clarissa is, in some of the Harlowe eyes, "a gentle spirit"—that is, she is kind, dutiful, virtuous, generous; she is also incapable, or perhaps unwilling, to assert herself and her own will. She is pliable, bendable; she is "dutiful." She will, they hope, like her mother, climb up and lay herself down—"and cheerfully, too" (1.37)—on the altar of Harlowe ambition. But, as Clarissa tells Anna, "the gentlest spirits when provoked (causelessly and cruelly provoked) are the most determined" (1.63). The Harlowes have misread Clarissa; her heart is stronger than they realized; she is not who they thought she was and will not be what they would have her be.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that the heart in *Clarissa* is a thing of value, a thing of infinite worth and that it is the centre of "feeling," where feeling means both sympathy and conscience, a double foundation for friendship and family and the twin basis for moral and religious rectitude. I have suggested that Richardson's grain of sand vision of the heart, as I have called it, anticipates, if not actually sets, the direction of English novelistic literature for the next century. I have used the sad conflict to examine the methods and the strategies the Harlowes use in their attempts to bend and break Clarissa's heart. And throughout this chapter I have been drawing attention to the continuities between how the Harlowes treat Clarissa and how Lovelace will treat her in the second part of the novel. These continuities are important for they, along

[26] Clarissa is, and has been in the novel's pre-history (that is, in her life lived before the novel begins), blind to certain realities. She imagines the Harlowe family to have existed within an almost prelapsarian paradise. Anna Howe, we learn however, has never liked any of the Harlowes except Clarissa; Mrs. Harlowe, we are told, has been forced to bear much from her husband; Arabella has always felt eclipsed by her younger sister; James' hatred of Lovelace reaches back to their college days; the Harlowe household, in other words, has not been a pleasant place. Because of all the affection and admiration poured upon her, however, Clarissa did not realize any of this, which only makes her family's sudden turning on her all the more emotionally devastating.

with the language of the broken heart that threads through the novel, suggest that the heart's confrontation with the other is larger than a confrontation with individuals—the world itself becomes an other, a place of spiritual oppression, an amalgam of motives and desires that converge against a single young girl. This struggle against the "world" will be discussed further in chapter three, the heart and God.

But another struggle must come first. In the introduction to this study, I discussed the way Richardson juxtaposes the heart's confrontation with others and the heart's confrontation with itself and the ways the heart is engaged in a double activity of defending and knowing itself. In this chapter, the focus has been on the first of these confrontations. Throughout this struggle against others, however, Clarissa's heart has struggled with itself. Clarissa insists that her "heart is free" (1.72) and that she knows her own heart (1.404). But in her more introspective moments she wonders "Ought I not to suspect my own heart?" (1.92) and admits she has an "unexamined heart" (1.420), in which may lurk motives and desires her conscious mind suppresses. Clarissa slowly discovers that, despite her own sense of self-assurance, she does not know her own heart—not at first, at least. But the novel drives towards clarity. It moves toward revelation. But revelation in *Clarissa* is a painful process. It comes about only through a rigorous examination of the heart at bottom. It comes about, that is, when the heart confronts itself.

CHAPTER TWO: THE HEART AND SELF

Two Hearts

Lovelace has raped Clarissa. For almost a week she lies insensible. Her heart, like her body, is torn and tattered, trampled upon by a "savage-hearted monster" (3.196) and "the old dragon" (3.194). She is silent, unable to speak and hardly able to think—the lingering effects of the drug administered in "mercy" in order to "lessen the too quick sense she was likely to have of what she was to suffer" (3.202); but also the effects of a personal and spiritual devastation that has nothing to do with the narcotic assault. Words and speech have failed. Everything she trusted in has failed. In her silent anguish "she held up to Heaven, in a speechless agony, the innocent licence" (3.201). But Heaven is likewise silent; no lightning falls on Lovelace's damned head; that Heaven and that God so often invoked and provoked by Lovelace in his false vows yet lets this drama proceed. The damnation work started by her father's terrible curse, the curse that

Clarissa says broke her heart (2.169)—"that you may meet your punishment, both *here* and *hereafter*, by means of the very wretch in whom you have chosen to place your wicked confidence" (2.170)—seems about to be birthed and to come out of awful expectation and into even more awful certainty.[27] But this is not that birth; Clarissa's agony after the rape is not the first fruits of that Hell she fears. These are the agonizing contractions of the "womb of fate" (4.81), that obscure mystery of Providence. These are the terrible death throes of one heart and the painful birth contractions of another.

In the previous chapter I used part one of the novel to define the heart, to examine the heart in relationship to others, and to demonstrate the difficulties a heart has in making itself known to those others who, more often than not, have malicious designs against it. This chapter uses part two[28] of the novel to examine the heart in relationship to the self by first examining Lovelace and his "recreant" heart and then by examining Clarissa and her broken heart. Heart and self, interchangeable as the two terms often appear to be, are not quite synonyms. Heart is a part of the self. The "self," that vexed totality (but not necessarily unity) of competing hopes, fears, and desires that creates and designates an individual, is in *Clarissa* a fundamentally fractured, fragmented, and shapeless thing. It requires "composure." Both Clarissa and Lovelace are whirlwinds of competing desires, hopes, fears; both their natures are wild, unruly, large. The difference between them is their own attempts to compose themselves. Clarissa's life has been an eighteen-year long exercise in feminine and delicate and Christian education; Lovelace's has been an exercise in libertinism and unfettered appetite. Clarissa received her education from the "worthy divine" Dr. Lewen and from the "more than maternal" Mrs. Norton; Lovelace received his from whores and bawds. Both Clarissa and Lovelace are associated with nature. But nature for Richardson is something Miltonic—like Eden, the self is a wild and unruly thing, often terrifying in its shapelessness, prone to excess, overgrowth, and choking abundance; like Eden, the self must be a bounded thing. It is in constant need of cultivation and tending. Lovelace is nature untended, left to wild excess. Clarissa is nature tended, cultivated.

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[27] For a sustained discussion of the birth metaphors in *Clarissa* see Robert A. Erickson's *Mother Midnight: Birth, Sex, and Fate in Eighteenth-Century Fiction (Defoe, Richardson, and Sterne)*.

[28] In my division of the novel, part two is all the material from Clarissa's departure from Harlowe Place to her eventual second escape from Sinclair's house after the rape. See "An Apology for a Three-Part Method" in this study's introduction for a more detailed discussion and rationale of these divisions.

So the drama of part two is two separate dramas: the drama of Clarissa and her heart, and the drama of Lovelace and his heart. Though their two dramas are generated and activated by the friction produced by these great characters' proximity to each other, the actual points of contact between their hearts are relatively rare. When these moments of contact do occur—when, that is, both Clarissa and Lovelace "penetrate" each other, and catch glimpses of what might be called the naked heart, glimpses of who the other actually is at bottom—as in the famous fire scene, they are often explosive and violent moments. These moments of penetration often prompt twin revelations—sudden and terrifying glimpses both of the unknown depths hidden in the other and of those hidden in themselves. Those who would insist that Clarissa and Lovelace play out one of literature's great tragic romances,[29] or who read in their dramas a symmetry of character,[30] enlarge, almost to the point of distortion, this portion of the narrative. And I say this is a distortion because it removes the emphasis from what the novel naturally privileges. Part two of *Clarissa* is centered more around moments of personal self-awareness or ambivalence than on moments of mutual "assurance," "encouragement," or "friendship," to use Clarissa's great words for romantic love; it is centred more around these moments than on moments of "romping bouts" or "warfare," to use Lovelace's words for romantic love. It is not their mutual relationship, however dramatic and painful that relationship is, that Richardson emphasizes; it is their private, personal relationships with their own hearts.

For Clarissa, this drama of the heart is a constant process of growing self-awareness, of delving deeper into the recesses of her own heart, and a process which, in part two of the novel,

[29] Ian Watt, for instance, writes that "Clarissa and Lovelace are as completely, as fatally, dependent on each other as Tristan and Isolde or Romeo and Juliet" (238); John Allen Stevenson writes that "Clarissa and Lovelace do seem fundamentally joined, the yolk and white of one egg" ("Alien Spirits" 96).

[30] The assumption of a sort of symmetry between Clarissa and Lovelace is commonplace in Richardson studies. I would suggest, however, that uniting them in a close symmetrical relationship distorts the text. It is not at all clear that Clarissa and Lovelace are evenly matched, that they are opposites, that symmetry—even negative symmetry—exists between them. For instance, Clarissa does indeed seem to be Richardson's exemplary woman. She does indeed seem to stand for an ideal. In order to maintain a sort of interpretive balance, therefore, it often follows that Lovelace satisfies the equation by himself being an ideal, or perhaps a representative, or at the very least someone who carries enough imaginative weight to set him upon an equal footing with Clarissa—as her counterpart, her opposite, her nemesis. And so, for instance, Lovelace becomes "the representative of the Cavalier attitude to sex, in conflict with the Puritan one represented by Clarissa," as Ian Watt formulates it (227). Clarissa may be Richardson's ideal woman; Lovelace in no way equals her, however. He is not Man, as Clarissa is Woman; he is a rake. As a symbolic figurehead, his position is significantly smaller than Clarissa's, representing not a whole but a subset, and an odious one at that. To force a sense of symmetry upon Clarissa and Lovelace, therefore, is, as Terry Eagleton points out, simply slanderous: "To suggest a symmetry between Clarissa's partial, understandable self-deceptions and Lovelace's unremitting schizoid fantasies is to cast a slur upon Clarissa" (69).

takes on the shape of a self-lacerating—some have suggested almost masochistic[31]—series of self-accusations. For Lovelace, this drama of the heart is a constant process of revelation and concealment and of extreme personal ambivalence. But it is not to Clarissa that he will reveal and conceal—it is primarily to himself. If Clarissa's story is an attempt to understand her own heart, Lovelace's is an attempt to avoid, at all costs, such an awareness.

LOVELACE—the Recreant Heart

Clarissa, alarmed at her own inability to penetrate Lovelace, writes to Anna Howe, "I am strangely at a loss what to think of this man. He is a perfect Proteus. I can but write according to the shape he assumes at the time" (2.82). This moment comes early in part two, before Lovelace houses Clarissa at Mrs. Sinclair's brothel and long before Clarissa suspects the true character of her would-be seducer. But from almost her first moments with him, Clarissa detects his ambivalence. Lovelace *is* a perfect Proteus, or at least a nearly perfect one (he is never, after all, able to fully deceive Clarissa; at every turn she doubts him; her heart is never "assured," as she might say). He is a man of many shapes. He is a natural philosopher of the human heart; a Hobbist at war against all, and especially against all women; an Ovidian poet, lover, deceiver, capable also of Ovidian metamorphosis; a Rochester translated onto the page; a critic and enthusiast of the Restoration stage, himself almost a stock character (though considerably more developed) lifted from that stage; both actor and director in his own great "jest;" "name-father" and "goddess-maker;" he is all things, he thinks, to all people; a "perfect chameleon" (2.82).[32] In his own imagination he is *Robert the Great*, a general, a Grand Signor, Attila, Caesar, Jupiter, Apollo; he is a spider with a fly caught in its web, a strutting rooster, a lion and tiger, a hungry hound panting after a delicious morsel; and, in rare moments, he is Milton's Satan, Tarquin who stands guilty of Lucretia's rape, and Herod who jealously orders his wife Mariamne killed if he die. He is a rake. And it is under the title of rake that Richardson gathers these shifting elements; and it is against Clarissa's steadiness, her fixity, and her desperate attempt to maintain a strict unity of self that he deploys this shapeless antagonist.

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[31] For discussions of Clarissa's masochism see Wendt 487, Brissenden 162, and Watt 232-3.

[32] For Lovelace and Hobbes see Doody 123-125 and Harris 93-95; for Lovelace and Ovid see Erickson 116-121; for Lovelace and Rochester see Harris 98; for Lovelace and Restoration drama see Doody 99-127.

Many of these Protean convolutions are, however, evasions: they are the tricks and disguises of an imagination willing to contemplate nearly all things except itself.[33] Lovelace's mutable, expanding, shapeless sense of self; his ability to mimic, forge, disguise; the ease with which he adapts himself to both polite and impolite society, mark him in Richardsonian terms as one unable, or perhaps unwilling, to confront his own nature. Lovelace *must* be Caesar, *must* be Apollo; he *must* project as many fictions and put on as many shapes as possible; he *must* declare war an everything and everyone around him; the alternative is that he do as Clarissa does and sit down to "examine my own heart," a terrifying prospect for a Lovelace.

The drama of Lovelace's heart is not found in the mounting inevitability of his plot against Clarissa—in that doom that the "womb of fate," that remarkable and difficult Richardsonian phrase, slowly births against Clarissa. The drama is found in just how long that doom hangs suspended and in what Lovelace's ambivalent hesitation and the "involuntary commotions" of his "recreant" heart imply about him. Hamlet waits; Lovelace hesitates. For both, it is the long deferment of action that defines the struggles within them.[34] In other words, what gives the drama of Lovelace's heart its meaning and power is not that he rapes Clarissa, but that he waits so long to rape her. Part two of the novel does not work unless we recognize the titanic contest of competing possibilities in Lovelace's breast. It is a drama because the outcome of this contest could go either way; it is a tragic drama because it does not.[35] To borrow from another novel, one separated from Clarissa by both time and space, there is something "Karamazovian" in Lovelace, something "capable of containing all possible opposites and of contemplating both abysses at once, the abyss above us, an abyss of lofty ideals, and the abyss beneath us, an abyss of the lowest and foulest degradation" (Dostoevsky 699). And yet there is perhaps a more obvious comparison than Dostoevsky's family of contradictions. For if Lovelace can contain in his heart the two abysses, he, like Milton's Satan, greatly prefers the abyss of the

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[33] Terry Eagleton writes something similar: "Thoroughly narcissistic and regressive, Lovelace's 'rakishness', for all its virile panache, is nothing less than a crippling incapacity for adult sexual relationship. His misogyny and infantile sadism achieve their appropriate expression in the virulently anti-sexual act of rape. It is this pathetic character who has been celebrated by the critics as Byronic hero, Satanic vitalist or post-modern artist" (63).

[34] An admittedly awkward comparison, yes. For while Hamlet eventually arrives at an almost transcendent understanding of the self, and so acts, Lovelace eventually acts, and so terribly contracts, mutilates, and fixes his own sense of self.

[35] I am speaking here of the possibilities contained in Lovelace's heart, not of the aesthetic, didactic, or systematic tendency of the novel, which makes the rape inevitable.

lowest and foulest degradation. It is only in his confrontation with Clarissa, as in Satan's first encounter with Eve, that Lovelace will stand abashed and feel how awful goodness is.

As protean as Lovelace often appears, his character is surprisingly limited. Lord M tells Lovelace he could be anything he wanted to be, such as a member of parliament, so large is his capacity, or perhaps rather his potential. But Lovelace does not want to be a member of parliament; "my predominant passion is girl" (2.20), as he tells Belford. There is a sense of contraction here—a sense that Lovelace, in his single-minded pursuit of sensuality and sexual conquest has disfigured himself, diminished his own capacity. For while Lovelace has an "extravagant volubility" (1.509), the coordinates of his own soul, the motions that define him, can all be plotted within a very small compass, and fall often into two divided regions. Richardson presents Lovelace in a number of lights; all of these lights, I suggest, are merely mirror images of the same nature, separate performances of the same drama, so that for all his protean pretensions Lovelace is, in the end, very small. Most importantly for this discussion of the heart and self, each of these lights—which I will discuss under the separate aspects of the angel and the woman, the thought and the anti-thought, the famous and infamous—demonstrate the deep ambivalence of Lovelace's character and the divided nature of his heart. These aspects all perform the central division between the feeling and the hard heart, a contest of sensibility present not only in a heart's struggle against others but also in a heart's struggle with itself.

The Angel and the Woman

Lovelace begins part two of *Clarissa* by setting out to test and try the heroine in order to see if she be woman or angel; to see, in other words, if there is in her, as there is in Pope's Belinda, "An earthly Lover lurking at her heart." This test will run throughout part two and will culminate, tragically, in his rape of Clarissa, his final sordid attempt to "awaken the woman in her" (2.42). Lovelace is convinced, or maybe rather attempts to convince himself, that there is no such thing as virtue; that what is called virtue is really the product of pride and of education. Virtue is a trick or a "plot," to use Lovelace's terms; it is the fabricated veneer not of a true desire to be good, which does not exist, but rather of female pride. In Lovelace's view, the sexes can only be at war; in this war, "virtue" is one of the sharpest female weapons. (Richardson, I think, has absorbed the lessons of Pamela, sublimating Henry Fielding's Shamela's "vartue," a sort of militantly manipulative and seductive sense of virtue, as an element not of his heroine's

but of his anti-hero's thinking.) As Clarissa is the most virtuous, or "vartuous" if Lovelace is right, she is also the most artificial and the most proud, and therefore the most attractive and meaningful target. "To the test then," Lovelace declares, "and I will bring this charming creature to the strictest test" (2.36). "Has her virtue ever been proved?" (2.36), Lovelace asks; "Pride is perhaps the principal bulwark of female virtue" (2.36). How long Lovelace had been planning this trial is not clear. Importantly, however, he tells Belford of it only after he has tricked Clarissa away from Harlowe Place, and after he confesses to him that "I hardly know what to make of the dear creature yet" (2.16). For all his ecstatic joy at having tricked her away from her home and so carried off "a rape worthy of a Jupiter" (1.175), he remains at a loss to explain her character and her behaviour to him. In his very first letter of the novel, early in part one, Lovelace wonders how Clarissa can "have an heart so impenetrable" (1.148), which to him means having a heart apparently impervious to romantic or sexual compromise—he cannot "get into" her heart. Getting "into" Clarissa's heart is, of course, an underlying motive in the rape. But here impenetrable also carries its other meaning: he cannot know her. She is a mystery to him. When he dies hundreds of pages and letters later Lovelace will have penetrated no deeper into her heart than he has here. Lovelace does not understand her; her behaviour does not fall in with what he has come to expect from "the Sex." His philosophy and metaphysic are too small. The trial therefore is Lovelace's attempt to fix Clarissa's identity, to force her into his small philosophy. It is both an hermeneutical and almost ontological exercise—it is a mixed attempt to both examine and interpret Clarissa's behaviour and, more importantly, to fix and define her nature.[36]

But this trial is double-edged. Clarissa's trial is Lovelace's trial too, though he himself is hardly aware of this. This is a position Lovelace often occupies. Often he comments on Clarissa, unaware that what he has said applies more directly to himself than to her. The identities Lovelace offers to Clarissa, woman or angel, betray an unhealthy mind obsessed with fixing the identity of his beloved in a brutally restrictive relationship to himself—she can be only all-angel or all-woman, be an almost asexual purity or an affected and vain tangle of lurking sexual

[36] Margaret Doody similarly writes: "The rape has a symbolic significance to himself; sexual penetration of an unconscious woman gives him little if any erotic pleasure (his simple lust is not as perverse as his personality) but he thinks that the act of possession, an act of sexual insult, revenge, and triumph, will give him perfect mastery and secure possession" (103-4). Terry Eagleton, with a little less tact, writes that Lovelace rapes Clarissa "so that Lovelace may finally come to inscribe Clarissa with his penis rather than his pen" (48).

appetites, be just another in the long line of women he has "subdued" or be the one that finally forces him into the "shackles" of marriage. Lovelace's polarized terms, however, project the two forces struggling within his own heart.[37] Will he be honest or will he plot? Will he be a husband or a rapist? Lovelace keeps up this trial long after Clarissa has proven herself and her virtue to be real. The trial remains in suspense for so long, however, because more than one doom hangs in the balance, and though Lovelace perhaps feels the self-reflective nature of the trial he cannot, or will not, properly articulate it. But Belford can articulate it and tells Lovelace to "consider how much more generous and just to her, and noble to thyself it is, to overcome thyself" (2.231). To cancel the trial without bringing it to its conclusion, however, seems to Lovelace like an admission of failure, and so Lovelace evades and responds, "I do intend to endeavour to overcome myself; but I must first try if I cannot overcome this lady" (2.326).

The Thought and the Anti-Thought

When Lovelace tells Belford of his plan to test Clarissa, he tells him that "I will proceed fairly. I will do the dear creature not only strict, but generous justice; for I will try her by her own judgment, as well as by our principles" (2.36-7). By "our principles" he means his rake's creed, the set of assumptions and operating principles that allows Lovelace, and all the members of his "confraternity," to wage "amorous war" against "the Sex." This creed, however, represents a deliberate subversion, or replacement, of moral behaviour; it is a substitute for rational thought, a set of contrary definitions, and an attempt to alter the real. It also, quite explicitly, a rejection of all the appeals of a feeling heart: "Hard-heartedness," he tells Belford, "as it is called, is an essential of the libertine's character" (2.315). But "Our honour," Belford reminds Lovelace, "and honour in the general acceptation of the word, are two things" (2.158).[38] This creed, so often

[37] Allan Wendt, for instance, writes that "Lovelace represents the appeal of the flesh, which Clarissa must deny; to Lovelace, Clarissa represents the appeal of the spirit, which challenges his fleshly kingdom" (485). Wendt's point is that both Clarissa and Lovelace tempt each other with opposing views; such a temptation is only possible, however, if both views are already present and in conflict within the hearts of each.

[38] Belford's confession of double meanings seems, to my thinking at least, seriously to trouble, or at the very least destabilize, the deconstructionist reading of *Clarissa*. Terry Castle, for instance, writes about "the underlying semantic struggle between" Clarissa and Lovelace (22), and Warner suggests that "Lovelace's ability to challenge other realities allows him to engage in the most pointed subversion of Clarissa's values" (30). But as Belford admits, the subversion, the semantic struggle, is between "*Our honour*" and "the *general acceptation* of the word." The struggle is between the pretended and the real, the false and the true. For neither Belford nor Lovelace disbelieve the true and the real, they only hope to ignore it for a while.

appealed to by Lovelace in his self-justifying responses to Belford's pleas on Clarissa's behalf, is highly formulaic, brutally reductive, and deeply misogynistic; it is the distillation of the knowledge gained from Lovelace's long campaign of revenge waged against "the Sex;" it is an interpretive scheme into which he can slot every woman. Lovelace is (he thinks) the great observer of human nature, especially female human nature. It is this knowledge of human nature, the fact that he knows that "human nature is a rogue" (2.498), that allows him, like Satan, to "suit temptations to inclinations" (2.35). His plots and contrivances are "All pure nature, taking advantage of nature, as nature tends" (2.491). "It is all in their hearts," Lovelace tells Belford, explaining how he turned the Harlowes against Clarissa; "I work but with their materials... the cause is in their malignant hearts" (2.100). Human nature, Lovelace says, requires only a push in the right direction and all the impulses that education or religion or polite society have taught people to repress are activated. When it comes to sex, the rake's creed is that push.

Here, then, are the major features of the rake's creed; this is the logic of Lovelace: "Every woman is a rake in her heart" (2.55). "*Importunity* and *opportunity* no woman is proof against" (2.35). A woman will "*If once subdued*, be *always subdued*" (2.41). "An *acknowledged* love sanctifies every freedom; and one freedom begets another" (2.102). Deception, plotting, intriguing, even a small degree of "force" (Lovelace's evasive term for sexual assault), is permitted, "For are we not devils to each other? They tempt us; we tempt them" (2.185). Force is indeed permitted, Lovelace argues, because "there may be *consent in struggle*; there may be *yielding in resistance*" (2.245). Any woman, even a Clarissa, can be "*domesticated* by her disgrace" (2.253). And all women, from queens to beggars on the streets, are the same to a Lovelace who is "so well acquainted with their *identicalness*" (2.370).[39]

But Lovelace is not really a "natural philosopher," because Lovelace does not really believe the things he says.[40] Despite his insistence on the hard-hearted character of the libertine, and despite his constant appeal to his rake's creed, he is never able to rise above his own heart—not in the sense, at least, that it does not plague him. His insistence that "*human nature is a*

[39] Not all the above passages are explicitly referred to in the novel as parts of the rake's creed. The logic of Lovelace, however, is built around this creed, and some of his most outrageous statements are, I think, natural extensions of the creedal statements. For instance, the creed, as apparently accepted by Belford, does not explicitly allow for the use of "force." But Lovelace justifies force with the idea of "once subdued, always subdued."

[40] This is, of course, a difficult thing to say with any certainty, for when it comes to Lovelace the lines between deception and self-deception are often frustratingly blurry.

rogue" does not, I think, amount to a sort of Hobbist declaration, as some have suggested. Hobbes' natural man does appear to form a part of Lovelace's world-view, but not in a sincere or serious way. His Hobbist appearance is really, I think, as with so much of his personality, a carefully crafted front, a part of his protean nature, another of the shapeless emanations emerging from his divided heart. In the novel, the Hobbist war of all against all (which is not really a war of all against all but of all against Clarissa) is known to be wrong; it is evil, and everyone knows this. One cannot both be a "natural" man at war against all and still, as Lovelace pretends to do, sit above the human condition and comment on it. The philosophic ability to perceive the war raises the philosopher above the battle and above excuse, making him morally culpable for his own actions. He can no longer be the rogue without acquiring guilt. Or, to put it as Mrs. Howe puts it to Anna when discussing Clarissa's behaviour, "what excuse could be offered for a young lady capable of making such reflections... if she should rush into any fatal mistake herself?" (1.296). So no one involved in these contests—not the Harlowes, and certainly not Lovelace—believes that they are doing the "right" thing or even a "natural" thing, only that they are doing a permitted or licensed thing, no matter the terms (such as the rake's creed) that permit such a license. The Hobbist smokescreen is only thrown up like dust in the eyes, a pseudo-philosophical feint that justifies these brutal contests. Lovelace might insist that human nature is a rogue; Lovelace would very much like this to be true.

That Lovelace and the rakes do not believe their own creed amounts to an assault, as Belford comes to see it, not only on all of society but on the self as well. The rake with his creed and his deliberate attempts to substitute his own set of counter-definitions in place of the "*general acceptation*" of things places his soul in the precarious position of tempting fate, of flirting with damnation. In his first letter to Lovelace, Belford writes,

> Wicked as the sober world accounts you and me, we have not yet, it is to be hoped, got over all compunction. Although we find religion against us, we have not yet presumed to make a religion to suit our practices. We despise those who do. And we know better than to be even *doubters*. In short, we believe a future state of rewards and punishments. But as we have so much youth and health in hand, we hope to have time for repentance. (2.161)

"We hope to live to sense," Belford writes, "when we can sin no longer" (2.161). Lovelace agrees with Belford, always claiming he will, as he grows older, reform and put aside his rakish

ways, not out of some new-found awareness of guilt but because such a reformation satisfies an aesthetic need in Lovelace. He likes the idea of a wild young man growing eventually into wisdom; the idea neatly caps the comedy of his life. But he refuses such growth at the present. After another letter from Belford Lovelace petulantly writes,

> I am sensible that my pleas and my reasonings may be easily answered, and perhaps justly censured; but by whom censured? Not by any of the confraternity, whose constant course of life, even long before I became your general, to this hour, has justified what ye now, in a fit of squeamishness, and through envy, condemn. Having therefore vindicated myself and my intentions to YOU, that is all I am at present concerned for.
>
> Be convinced then, that *I* (according to *our* principles) am right, *thou* wrong; or, at least, be silent. But I *command thee to be convinced*. And in thy next be sure to tell me that thou art. (2.253)

Richardson, I suggest, wants his readers to see the rake's creed as what I will call an anti-thought, an anti-reason—as a substitution of true and reasonable thought. "Be convinced," Lovelace says, regardless of how convincing it is. Belford cannot be convinced, however, because "we believe" and "we know better than to be even *doubters*." As Belford's own reformation progresses his attempts to convince Lovelace to give up his trial become both more reasonable and more desperate, founded as they are on his newly emerging sense of sympathy and conscience. Lovelace's responses to these pleas grow more unthinkingly insistent. In other words, as Belford moves further away from the rake's creed, its tenets and suppositions become increasingly nonsensical and irrational to him, and Lovelace, now deprived of his own sympathetic reader, is left to justify the unjustifiable with only the flimsy appearance of an exposed pretence. Lovelace knows this and so attempts to dismiss all Belford's reasoning as "wambling nonsense" (2.326). Rational thought itself becomes an enemy to Lovelace, and so he confesses "I must banish reflection, or I am a lost man" (2.460).

As defined in the previous chapter, the heart is an epistemological organ of moral perception and an organ of divine communication. Set against this, the rake's creed is a demonic attempt to sever that communication, to cut off that perception. The rake's creed attacks the heart. Morden, in his too-late-arriving letter warning Clarissa of the dangers of associating with a rake, says "A libertine, my dear cousin, a *plotting*, an *intriguing* libertine, must be generally

remorseless—unjust he must always be" (2.259-60). Lovelace agrees with Morden. "*Hard-heartedness*," after all, "is an *essential* of the *libertine's character*" (2.315). A rake must be hard-hearted; he must be inhumane, "*remorseless*," "*unjust*;" he must silence that still small voice and dull all sense of sympathy if he hopes to subdue or break that grain of sand vision of the heart. The Harlowes' *supposals*, I suggested in the previous chapter, pre-empt sympathy and attempt to impose a fictional character upon another heart. As emotionally devastating as the Harlowe *supposal* was, the rake's creed intensifies this devastation. The *supposal* of the rake's creed grips Clarissa in a static construction, not merely writing a fictional character upon her but insisting it is the only character possible.

The Famous and the Infamous

In this trial of self—this internal contest between the feeling heart and the hard heart—there is another set of coordinates, yet another set of competing opposites, upon which this contest may be plotted. Lovelace's character constantly reiterates itself in new terms but the essential nature of that character remains the same. The divided nature of Lovelace's heart is also represented by the two women most important to him: Clarissa and her repulsive opposite, Sinclair—the inversion, perversion, and dark parody of the virtuous heroine. And here it is important that Lovelace, the self-styled "name-father," gives Sinclair her pretended name, almost as if he were aware (even if only ironically) that the two women represent two possible fates for him. Both names derive from Clair, *clare*, Latin for bright, famous. Clarissa is the most bright, most famous; Sinclair is therefore the dark light, the darkest light, the infamous.

It is Sinclair, however, as Belford tells Lovelace late in the novel, who is "the true mother of your mind" (4.445). Lovelace refers to Sinclair as "the mother," and Sinclair, it seems, is used to referring to Lovelace as "son" (3.286). The whores of Sinclair's house are her "daughters" and "nieces," and Sinclair's sister, Mother H, is also a bawd. This brothel pretends to be a family—or a parody of a family, a family of a "dragon and serpents" (3.421)—and it is to this family, much more so than to his own, that Lovelace feels the deepest ties.

In a novel so concerned with the creation of the self as *Clarissa*, it is possible to trace the growth, the "education," and the imaginative lineage of the characters. Clarissa's education is well known: nursed and raised by Mrs. Norton, and trained by Dr. Lewen, Clarissa's education has been an eighteen-year study in the delicate, feminine, and ultimately humane arts. But while

Lovelace can be puzzled by the mystery of generation and wonder how "the active gloom of such a tyrant of a *father* should commix with such a passive sweetness of a will-less *mother*, to produce a constancy, an equanimity, a steadiness, in the *daughter*" (3.151), no such reproductive reflections are possible for the reader regarding Lovelace. He seems simply to have appeared, ready-formed, in this world. Little to nothing is known of his parents—his mother spoiled him, and raised him unable to bear control; nothing is ever said of his father. Lord M, an old peer and reformed rake, is unable to control his riotous nephew, is in fact often entertained by tales of Lovelace's exploits, and likely provided no good example. His aunts and cousins fear him as much as they love him. In the absence of real parents or family, Lovelace's imaginative, or I might say spiritual, parentage comes to the fore. And it is Sinclair—the bawd, the procuress, the "old dragon" and "reverend mother"—who educates Lovelace; it is she who instils, and activates, the libertine.[41]

Lovelace, then, and his rake's creed, are the mental product and partner of a procuress, of one whose very livelihood is the trade and commerce of female bodies. No wonder, then, that Lovelace is baffled by a Clarissa, and knows not what to make of her. This harlot vision can recognize the virgin purity, as Lovelace does, but its only response to such a recognition, as Sally and Polly, the spiritual children of Lovelace's and Sinclair's imaginative union,[42] demonstrate, is

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[41] For a detailed and helpful discussion on Lovelace and Sinclair see Erickson's *Mother Midnight* 138-47. Erickson draws upon some of the social and economic underpinnings of prostitution in eighteenth-century England to suggest that Lovelace's relationship with Sinclair, besides being that of demonic son-to-mother, is also one of partners in crime. Lovelace, "as an active associate in their organization" (146), is obligated to, if he does not marry her, give Clarissa over to the whores for them to "break" and make one of their own, something that, as the histories of Sally Martin and Polly Horton demonstrate, he was all too willing to do. For a more detailed discussion of prostitution in eighteenth-century Britain see Laura J. Rosenthal's book *Infamous Commerce: Prostitution in Eighteenth-Century British Literature and Culture*.

[42] A word about whores in *Clarissa*: the figure of the whore operates, I think, on the allegorical level, and has very little, or only an accidental, active political meaning. In the novel, the characters of Sally Martin, Polly Horton, and Mrs. Sinclair do not function as part of the normal social machinery. Circumstances have forced them into their positions; Lovelace, and men like him in general, have "created" them, inasmuch as they are responsible for their "ruin." But it is important to note that Sally and Polly as whores represent potential fates for Clarissa. Belford, presumably because he knows Lovelace's history with women, fears a design to hand Clarissa over to Sinclair; the whores want Clarissa for themselves and say to Lovelace that "You owe us such a lady" (2.189); Clarissa herself takes seriously the idea that she could fail her trial (not the trial Lovelace sets for her, but the trial of, to speak largely, life itself, the continual trial or test of endurance that is watched over and judged by Providence) and so become, if not actually a prostitute, then nevertheless a fallen woman, fallen in both circumstances *and* moral or religious sentiment. And if this is the case—if Clarissa could have become a Sally or a Polly—then *their* ruin is internal to themselves, as it would have been for Clarissa. Their ruin is a ruin of the self. "What mind is superior to calamity?" (2.36) Lovelace asks as he outlines his plans to test Clarissa. But the mind of a Clarissa *is* superior to calamity, and this steadfast devotion, even in the face of circumstance and necessity, is the terrible standard of Richardson's moral vision. In a novel where the moral standard is raised as high as humanly possible (higher, in

virulent antipathy, and an abiding desire to debase, to level, to bring down. This trial of Clarissa is indeed, as Belford says, not a fair trial. Because though there is a contest in Lovelace's heart between the angel and the woman, the thought and the anti-thought, the famous and the infamous, it is the latter—at every turn and in every sense—that Lovelace greatly prefers. There is a "Clarissa" and a "Sinclair" in Lovelace's heart, an impulse towards purity and an impulse towards villainy, a life-impulse and a death-impulse—he can, however, only imaginatively unite himself to one of them.

An Approach to Rape: the Recreant Heart

Lovelace spins in the axis between the famous and the infamous, the thought and the anti-thought, the angel and the woman. At each critical moment in his plot against Clarissa the contest in his heart takes on a greater aspect and its "involuntary commotions" become extreme spiritual turbulence. "Yet this vile recreant heart of mine plays me booty" (2.276), Lovelace tells Belford. For Lovelace, the heart, with its calling to imaginative sympathy and its pangs of conscience, is a "recreant"—it is something treacherous, something unfaithful to his purposes, something to be defeated, to be overcome. But the heart, like Clarissa, is resilient and only dies hard; he is "so little its master." Clarissa told Anna "that my motives on this occasion arise... from what offers to my own heart" (2.306). What offers to Lovelace's heart is all that was discussed in the last chapter—feeling; conscience and the special knowledge of, and communication with, the divine; a recognition of the personhood and value of the woman he loves—and it is the heart's impulse towards these things that he must overcome before he can attempt to overcome Clarissa. He must "subdue" his heart, in a sense rape his own heart and his better nature, in his approach to actual rape. Belford appeals to Lovelace "to overcome thyself" and be honest to Clarissa. It is precisely himself, however—or rather, his still-beating heart, the part of him that recognizes the purity in Clarissa, and longs for the possibility of reformation she offers him—that he will overcome, to the devastation of Clarissa's earthly happiness and to the damnation of his own soul.

This overcoming or subduing of his own heart is part of the pattern for all Lovelace's major movements against Clarissa. Before housing Clarissa at Sinclair's, before the attempted

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fact), no external blame is allowable. If Clarissa falls, she falls because of herself, not because of Lovelace, and not because of necessity or calamity. Richardson is testing the limits of moral and religious endurance.

rape during the fire scene, before the deceptions and the plots to trick her back to Sinclair's after her escape to Hampstead, before the actual rape—before all of these, Lovelace must contend with his recreant heart, a heart that, despite his long courses in deception and violence, is still able to stir up a sense of sympathy and conscience.

This contest is most remarkably found in the passage where he kills his conscience. Clarissa has escaped to Hampstead; Lovelace has pursued her and found her out, and now exerts all his power of deception to trick her back again to Sinclair's house. But the conflict within him has reached its fever pitch and his recreant heart, almost in a fit of automatic writing, gets away from him and begins to write against his own violent purposes, prompting Lovelace to "kill," or at least mortally wound, this emerging sense of conscience. As I mentioned above, there is a "Clarissa" in Lovelace's heart; and in this passage, the "Clarissa," with its appeal to the feeling heart, is explicitly his conscience. Lovelace writes:

> Lord, Jack, what shall I do now! How one evil brings on another! Dreadful news to tell thee! While I was meditating a simple robbery, here have I (in my own defence indeed) been guilty of murder! A bloody murder! So I believe it will prove. At her last gasp! Poor impertinent opposer! Eternally resisting! Eternally contradicting! There she lies, weltering in her blood! Her death's wound have I given her! But she was a thief, an imposter, as well as a tormentor. She had stolen my pen. While I was sullenly meditating, doubting, as to my future measures, she stole it; and thus she wrote with it, in a hand exactly like my own; and would have faced me down that it was really my own handwriting. (3.145-6)

This passage comes immediately before his conscience, the "she" who "had stolen my pen," the "Clarissa" in his heart, writes a long meditative passage, contemplating giving up his plot. But this "Clarissa," no more so than the real Clarissa, is not allowed to live. The "Sinclair" returns after this meditative reflection, and Lovelace concludes:

> Thus far has my *conscience* written with my pen; and see what a recreant she had made me! I seized her by the throat—*There!—There*, said I, thou vile impertinent! Take *that*, and *that*! How often have I given thee warning! And now, I hope, thou intruding varletess, have I done thy business.
>
> Puling, and low-voiced, rearing up thy detested head, in vain implorest thou *my* mercy, who, in *thy* day, hast showed me so little! Take *that*, for a rising

> blow! And now will *thy* pain, and *my* pain from *thee*, soon be over. Lie there! Welter on! Had I not given thee thy death's wound, thou wouldst have robbed me of all my joys. Thou couldst not have mended me, 'tis plain. Thou couldst only have thrown me into despair. Didst thou not see that I had gone too far to recede? Welter on, once more I bid thee! Gasp on! *That* thy last gasp, surely! How hard diest thou! (3.146-7)

How do passages like this exist? How can Lovelace in a single letter go from an appeal to the heart to killing his conscience, which he identifies with Clarissa, in such visceral terms? Richardson is always conscious of the fictional realization of his letter-writers' activities. These passages, as the "editor" of *Clarissa* tells us, have been "*Wafered on, as an after-written introduction to the paragraphs which follow*" (3.145). The "*paragraphs which follow*" are those workings of the not-quite-dead but long-suppressed conscience that has now been brought to life by Clarissa's presence. The "roving" pen, in the act of writing, has revealed too much. In these conscience paragraphs, the Clarissa-as-conscience part of Lovelace reflects on his position—on how "The blow is not struck;" on how he can yet be honest; and on how he is sorry that he has been "such a foolish plotter" as to put it "out of my *own power* to be honest" (3.146). "I am a machine at last, and no free agent" (3.146), he tells Belford in this rare moment of self-awareness. In Lovelace's mind, the conscience that wrote these paragraphs *is* Clarissa. The contest between the "Clarissa" and "Sinclair" of his heart—between the thought and the anti-thought, the feeling heart and the hard heart—is here made explicit. But the Clarissa-conscience is a "thief," an "imposter," and a "tormentor." The "intruding varletess" would "have robbed me of all my joys." And so Lovelace edits his own letter, effaces his own heart, an act that, especially when compared with the "scraps and fragments" written by Clarissa after her rape, appears to be a sort of self-mutilation. The desperate conscience is trapped; immediately "*wafered on*" around it is the claustrophobic imposition of the hard heart that will not let the feeling heart survive; like Clarissa, Lovelace's conscience has had a brief escape to a Hampstead of seeming freedom and rational reflection, only to find the "Sinclair" closing in around it on both sides. Editing here is both a spiritual and a literary act: it mirrors the Clarissa-Sinclair contest in his heart and foreshadows the now inevitable rape and death of the actual Clarissa.

In the moments immediately prior to the rape, Sinclair, "the old dragon" (3.195), confronts Clarissa, terrifying her with "her huge arms akembo" and her "masculine air" (3.195).

Lovelace rebukes Sinclair "with a look of indignation" for frightening Clarissa, and Sinclair, in what surely must be one of the novel's most absurd images, "throwing herself into a chair, fell a blubbering and exclaiming" (3.196). "And the pacifying of her," Lovelace writes, "and endeavouring to reconcile the lady to her, took up till near one o'clock" (3.196). There is no reconciling the "Clarissa" to the "Sinclair," however; there is no pacifying the "Sinclair" to the "Clarissa;" Lovelace cannot be both rapist and husband. Here is the crux of the test of Lovelace's heart. Here, in one dramatic moment, the "angel" and the "woman," the thought and the anti-thought, the famous and the infamous, are brought to stand next to each other. In Lovelace's heart one must die, the other rise; there is no reconciling them.

"Clarissa lives" (3.196), Lovelace tersely writes to Belford after the rape. But she does not live, not really. Clarissa is dead, and this is true in two senses, one important to Clarissa herself, the other important to Lovelace: the real Clarissa, the Clarissa-that-was, is dead; the new Clarissa, the Clarissa-that-will-be, is suffering the birth pains of the womb of fate. But in another sense, the "Clarissa" in Lovelace's heart—the "Clarissa" who is conscience, who is the thought, who is the feeling heart—is dead. In between Lovelace's attempt to "reconcile" Clarissa to Sinclair and his statement that Clarissa lives—in that terrible blank of *un*narrated, of *un*narratable time: the rape—"Clarissa" has died. In Lovelace's heart "Sinclair lives." The trial is over.

After the rape that was supposed to "fix" Clarissa's meaning but only terribly fixed his own, Lovelace writes,

> I thought I had killed my conscience, as I told thee, Belford, some time ago. But conscience, I find, though it may be temporarily stifled, cannot die; and when it dare not speak aloud, will whisper. And at this instant I thought I felt the revived varletess (on but a slight retrograde motion) writhing round my pericardium like a serpent; and in the action of a dying one (collecting all its force into its head), fix its plaguy fang into my heart. (3.266)

And it is here, with a mortally wounded conscience's plaguy fang fixed in his heart, that the novel essentially leaves Lovelace. He never recovers from his own act of spiritual mutilation. Clarissa will revive and be reborn from this trial's painful contractions; the womb of fate will bring forth for her a much larger birth than a Lovelace could ever conceive; but Lovelace is now fixed, the womb of fate has delivered him only a monstrous still-birth. Part three of the novel is almost as long as part two. But Clarissa's "triumphant" confrontation of Lovelace and Sinclair

before her effectual escape from the house will be the last time Lovelace sees her. Against his own wishes he gradually recedes from the action of the narrative until he is left only a screaming, delirious, detached voice. He diminishes to the point of inconsequence.

Lovelace's story is one of contraction. Through his own actions Lovelace reduces himself. The seemingly infinite variety that initially expands his character, and that has attracted so much attention (both inside the novel and out), gradually, as his obsession with Clarissa drives him to commit more extreme and brutal actions against her, contracts, and his identity, once so protean, becomes fixed, diminished. Lovelace, the great actor and director, becomes merely a "machine," an "implement" (the role he hates most), in a drama much larger than his own. Lovelace always misunderstands his role in Clarissa's life. He intends to graft Clarissa to himself, to make her an extension of his own libertine ego, to make her the "*cypher*, to give him significance" (2.264); instead, he is not only grafted into, but completely subsumed under and transcended by, Clarissa's own regenerated and apotheosized self. Clarissa's identity expands; her apotheosis through death at the novel's end enlarges her into a nearly mythic figure. Lovelace, on the other hand, dies in a foreign country, surrounded not by friends or family but by strangers; he dies without a will or executor, his soul troubled and impatient, his memory now eternally fixed as nothing more than Clarissa's rapist, the man who pursued and harassed her until she was dead. In Richardsonian terms, he, like Milton's Satan, forever lies in the dust and bitter ash, a fate he chose for himself.

In the first half of this chapter I have discussed the heart's confrontation with itself as dramatized by Lovelace's ambivalences and divided nature. In this contest of heart and self, Lovelace attempts to kill and subdue his heart's better motions, and refuses to listen to its appeals to sympathy, to conscience, and to a recognition of Clarissa's sacred personhood. Lovelace's drama of the heart is not the only interior drama in part two of the novel, however. Clarissa also confronts her own heart. But while Lovelace's confrontation with his heart is an attempt to avoid the heart and its motions, Clarissa's confrontation is an attempt to engage fully the heart, to know who and what she is, and to maintain a unity and integrity of self even after her enemy has broken her heart.

CLARISSA—The Broken Heart

The first thing Clarissa does when she begins to recover from the rape is try to write. But she no longer knows how to write. She no longer knows who or what she is. "I am no longer what I was in any one thing" (3.205) she scribbles in a first fragment, never sent but addressed to Anna Howe and signed with only "Your true—," her name no longer even a cipher but only a terrible blank. "My name is—I don't know what my name is!" (3.206), she cries in her next, this one addressed to a father who has damned her and whose curse, Clarissa now feels certain, is coming into terrible fulfillment. Writing in *Clarissa* is always an expression of the heart, and letters an extension of the person; as John Preston suggests, letters in the novel "embody some vital quality of the writer" (50). This is the "closeness" of body and letter that I have previously discussed. To send or receive a letter is to engage in a form of intercourse, almost a sort of sexual intercourse,[43] the awareness of which forms the foundation of Clarissa's self-accusations for carrying on a "guilty" and "prohibited" correspondence with Lovelace. The written letter is deeply and mysteriously connected with both the body and the heart. But Clarissa's heart is broken, and nowhere in the novel is that brokenness more clearly and poignantly represented than in her post-rape "scraps and fragments."[44]

Lovelace provides the central image of the broken heart in part two of *Clarissa*. After the rape and after Clarissa begins to write again, he tells Belford:

> Just now Dorcas tells me that what she writes she tears, and throws the paper in fragments under the table, either as not knowing what she does, or disliking it: then gets up, wrings her hands, weeps, and shifts her seat all round the room: then returns to her table, sits down, and writes again. (3.204)

In the first part of the novel, Clarissa refers to "my written mind" (1.470) and asks Anna to forgive her for "these undigested self-reasonings" (1.46). Early in part two she writes,

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[43] See Eagleton 50-55 and Preston 38-62 for discussions on the sexual dimensions of correspondence.

[44] The letters that Clarissa writes, or rather attempts to write, after her rape, those remarkable spasms of a dying and new-birthing self, have conventionally and traditionally been called her "mad letters," a designation I am not at all comfortable with. Lovelace writes that these letters "show thee how her mind works now she is in this whimsical way" (3.204), as if their pathos and agony were merely the results of a female hysteria, or the result, as he writes, of Clarissa's too punctilious and sensible a response to "a cause so common and so slight" (3.203) as rape. But even he is forced to admit that "there are method and good sense in some" (3.210) of the letters. Clarissa is not "mad;" she is certainly not "whimsical" or hysterical. I will therefore refer to these letters as the post-rape "scraps and fragments," a designation that refers not only to the physical letters themselves but to the state of Clarissa's mind and heart as she writes them.

> And indeed, my dear, I know not how to *forbear* writing. I have now no other employment or diversion. And I must write on, although I were not to send it to anybody. You have often heard me own the advantages I have found from writing down everything of moment that befalls me; and of all I *think*, and of all I *do*, that may be of future use to me; for besides that this helps to form one to a style, and opens and expands the ductile mind. (2.128)

For Clarissa writing is not only, or even primarily, an act of communication but rather an act of self-creation. In composing letters she composes herself. The mind is ductile; it is flexible, malleable, formless. It requires composition, "style." The uncomposed ductile mind, the mind without style, is Lovelacean—protean, shapeless, meaningless. To a Lovelace who not only lives but glories in this shapeless multiplicity of meanings, the robbery of one identity might not be felt as all that tragic; to a Clarissa, however, who has only one identity and who strives to bring all things into unity and harmony with that identity, such a loss is terrifying and tragic. It is the loss of everything.[45] Her identity has been raped away from her, and so "what she writes she tears." As discussed above, Lovelace edits his own letter in an attempt to kill a recreant heart; in her post-rape scraps and fragments, Clarissa begins the long process of writing a new heart. What we see in the post-rape fragments is a wounded spirit, a shattered mind, a broken heart desperately gathering about her the pieces of a tattered, almost dismembered life and trying, unsuccessfully, to stitch back together and re-compose what no longer exists.

But before the broken heart can be properly treated, it is important to move backwards a little in the text and consider Clarissa's internal struggle before the rape. As I have been arguing, Richardson constantly juxtaposes the heart's confrontation with others with its confrontation with itself. The previous chapter dealt with Clarissa's confrontation with others in part one of the novel; this second half of the present chapter deals with her confrontation with her own heart, a confrontation that has long been developing but which Lovelace's presence and antagonism intensify. But though the two confrontations are treated separately in this study, and though the two chapters that deal with the material of these confrontations are structured in a way that places the discussions within specific divisions of the novel, it is important to remember that the two conflicts are concurrent—that Clarissa's struggle with her own heart happens at the same

[45] Recall Clarissa's comment that if Lovelace wants a heart, "he wants everything" (1.202) discussed at the beginning of chapter one.

time that she struggles with others. These two struggles are not only concurrent—in the rape, they collide, compounding the emotional and spiritual devastation felt by Clarissa.

The Unexamined Heart

Part two of the novel immediately begins a new operation in Clarissa's heart, an operation that begins long before the rape. In her very first letter of part two she tells Anna that "Self-accusation shall flow in every line of my narrative where I think I am justly censurable" (1.473). And it does flow. After being tricked away from Harlowe Place she refers to herself as a "fugitive daughter" (1.474), writes that "I am sunk in my own opinion" (1.487), and describes how Lovelace took "the just measure of my weakness" (1.498). When Lovelace becomes angry and threatening to her she writes that "You have given me an ill opinion of mankind; of yourself in particular: and withal so bad a one of myself, that I shall never be able to look up" (2.389). After the fire scene, where Lovelace extorts a promise of forgiveness for attempting to rape her by actually threatening to rape her if she does not forgive him, Clarissa writes to Lovelace that "you have made me vile to myself" (2.15) and that "I hate myself" (2.513). These moments are, it seems, the moments in which Clarissa feels herself "justly censurable," though why they should be so is not always obvious. "My blame was indeed turned inward" (1.500), Clarissa tells Anna. And inward is the natural direction of all her blame, even when others are more blameable than her. But even Lovelace says "No one is to blame for suffering an evil he cannot shun or avoid" (3.176). The point, however, is not that Clarissa actually feels guilt, though to a certain extent she does feel culpable for her own situation, having removed herself from her father's protection; the point is that in a drama turned as inwardly as Clarissa's, everything revolves around the heart and the self. To blame others is to shy away from the heart's confrontation with itself, to displace the heart in favour of an exterior explanation. Clarissa's self-laceration, though extreme, is really her heart's first attempt to understand itself at bottom.

As discussed in the last chapter, the heart in *Clarissa* is the centre of conscience, the centre of sympathy, the solid centre of Richardson's apotheosized grain of sand self. But, as the discussion of Lovelace's heart demonstrates, the heart is also unruly, can be a recreant, and it can go, to use Clarissa's word, "unexamined." Throughout part one of the novel Clarissa is accused, by everyone from the hard-hearted Arabella to the sympathetic Anna Howe, of concealing secret motives, hidden desires. Her heart, they all tell her, is not what she pretends it is. The Harlowes

accuse her of being "prepossessed" by Lovelace; she denies this, both to them and to herself, but Anna suspects it is true. Arabella says she is "*indeed* a very artful one for that matter... one of the artfullest I ever knew!" and that hers was a "bewitching *meek* pride, and *humble* significance" (1.215, 216). When she does finally leave Harlowe Place, all the Harlowes take her departure as full proof that underneath all her reserves and "punctilio," all her appearances of virtue and humility, all her affectations and declarations to the contrary beats the proud, artful, vain heart of a sexually engaged woman. Critics of the novel, likewise, both contemporary and current, have accused her of not being what she claims to be, of projecting, either consciously or unconsciously, a carefully fabricated persona that conceals her true heart. Samuel Johnson famously said that "You may observe there is always something which she prefers to the truth" (Hill 297). William Beatty Warner wonders if she is "hiding something unsavory beneath her garments" (26).[46] But Clarissa is not hiding anything from those around her, at least not in the sense her accusers mean. What she hides from others is hidden from herself; her heart is impenetrable to those around her to the same degree that she herself has not yet penetrated it. Throughout part one of the novel, these hidden depths of her own heart are, in painful and searching moments, revealed to her though a long process of self-examination. This process of self-examination leads Clarissa, in part two, to her self-lacerating series of self-accusations.

Pride and Prepossession

Of what does Clarissa have to accuse herself? To understand Clarissa's confrontation with her own heart it is important to look back at some of the material from the novel's first part.

[46] Too much can be said on this point, so I defer to Terry Eagleton's remarkable summation:

> Effectively ignored throughout the nineteenth century, Richardson stages a comeback when a more sophisticated criticism comes to discern that Clarissa is not all she is cracked up to be. Suavely "knowing" analyses become possible once Clarissa's faults are triumphantly unmasked—once it is seen that she is after all spiritually proud, dangerously unclear about her own deeper feelings, prey to a certain moral *hauteur* and self-admiration, irritatingly inflexible at unpropitious moments and prone to masochistic self-abasement. Once the spicy news is out that the Madonna has feet of clay—that she is, after all, a woman, with sexual impulses and moral failings—an avenging male iconoclasm moves in. The way is then clear for the cavaliers, deconstructionists and debunking liberals to insinuate that Clarissa is only a little less reprehensible than Roxana. In this, as usual, Richardson pre-empted his critics: he writes that he had deliberately given his heroine moral defects to make her more convincing. Clarissa is indeed far from a Madonna: her treatment of Lovelace can be exasperatingly perverse, her moral self-assurance repellent, her denial of her own sexual instincts seriously damaging. But even when the most damning evidence has been gleefully summoned for the prosecution, it remains, on balance, remarkably feeble. (71-72)

It is one of the bitterest ironies of *Clarissa* that the spite-filled, hate-fuelled Harlowe invective launched at their daughter is, in the end, tragically accurate, or at least close enough to the mark to cause Clarissa considerable pain. Much of what they warn her about Lovelace comes true; much that they accuse her of is accurate.

Clarissa *is* proud. Early in part one Clarissa writes, "But let me examine myself: is not vanity, or secret love of praise, a principal motive with me at the bottom? Ought I to suspect my own heart?" (1.92). Clarissa *ought* to suspect her own heart. She it not proud in the sense that the rest of the Harlowes are proud; she is not proud in the way that Lovelace is proud. She is proud of being a Clarissa—proud of the real fact that she is better than all those around her. Hers is a spiritual pride, that most dangerous of prides that sneaks in and, like a cancer, turns the good thing against itself. Clarissa refers to "the secret pleasure" she takes in thinking herself "able to reclaim such a man to the paths of virtue and honour," and of being "a *secondary* means... of saving" Lovelace (1.200). Arabella mocks Clarissa and says, "How natural it is for people, when they set their hearts upon anything, to think everybody must see with their eyes!" (1.221). Clarissa, young as she is, thinks much of herself, thinks, as Arabella says, that everybody must see with her eyes. That her eyes are the clearest in the novel is not really the point. Clarissa has in the past, we learn from Anna, taken it upon herself, while "personating an anonymous elderly lady" (1.295), to write a letter giving advice to a mother regarding her daughter.[47] "But why should you," Anna writes to Clarissa, "by the nobleness of your mind, throw reproaches upon the rest of the world?" (1.363). In all this Clarissa gloried. She gloried in the idea of being "a *secondary* means;" she gloried in the fact that she was able to see as others should see; she gloried in the role, young as she was, of advisor to her elders; she gloried in the "nobleness of her mind." But as the trials at Harlowe Place increase and she is forced to examine her own heart, she begins to think: "I am afraid I have thought myself of too much consequence" (1.413).

Clarissa *is* prepossessed. Whether or not Clarissa loves Lovelace is one of the first major questions of the novel and a subject that takes up much of Clarissa's and Anna's early correspondence. "Don't you find," Anna teases Clarissa "at your heart somewhat unusual make it go throb, throb, throb" (1.46). "My heart *throbs* not after him. I *glow* not but with indignation," Clarissa responds with irritation; "Indeed I would not be *in love* with him, as it is called, for the

[47] And that she does "personate an anonymous elderly lady" is, especially in this novel where the letter and the heart are so closely associated, meant to trouble the reader. A Clarissa does not personate; a Lovelace personates.

world" (1.47). Clarissa, however, nevertheless wants to know Lovelace's relatives' opinion of her, though she assures Anna that "Curiosity at present is all my motive" (1.122). Anna teases Clarissa about passages of her letters that "affect reserve" and that "give new words for common things" (1.188), such as Clarissa's admission of "a *conditional kind of liking*"(1.135) for Lovelace. Clarissa's anger during the Rosebud affair, in which Lovelace's affections seem to be directed at a poor country girl, reveals her capacity for jealousy. She is attracted to his person and says "it is impossible that any disguise can hide the gracefulness of his figure" (1.446). All of these are, however, as Clarissa herself learns, and as Anna guesses, evasions of the heart. Clarissa says she "would not be *in love* with him... for the world;" loving someone, however, is rarely a reasoned position, as much as Clarissa would like it to be.

In part one of the novel, Clarissa often attempts to evade a direct confrontation with her own heart when it comes to Lovelace. But in part two, the long series of temptations and trials offered by him forces her into this confrontation and she eventually writes to Anna:

> Let me tell you a secret which I have but very lately found out upon self-examination, although you seem to have made the discovery long ago: that had not my foolish eye been too much attracted, I had not taken the pains to attempt, so officiously as I did, the prevention of mischief between him and some of my family, which first induced the correspondence between us, and was the occasion of bringing the apprehended mischief with double weight upon myself. My vanity and conceit, as far as I know, might have part in the inconsiderate measure: for does it not look as if I thought myself more capable of obviating difficulties than anybody else of my family? (2.277)

Passages like this one entangle Clarissa's pride with her prepossession so that parting the two becomes almost impossible, so mixed are her motives. For though she is prepossessed, she is not prepossessed in the way the Harlowes assume or Lovelace hopes. The "*conditional*" part of Clarissa's liking must always be taken seriously; her hopes of being the "*secondary* means" always inform her attachment. Though reason may not have the upper hand when it comes to love, her heightened sense of right and wrong never allows her to fully engage her affections; her spiritual pride, the pride of being good, will not allow this. Nevertheless, these two motives lurk in her heart and it is these—her pride and her prepossession—that she confronts.

Of Lions, Lapdogs, and the Post-Rape Fragments: The Broken Heart and the Self

Lovelace's heart dies in a sort of suicide; Clarissa's breaks in a sort of murder. Lovelace edits; Clarissa tears. The post-rape "scraps and fragments" that Clarissa writes immediately upon her recovery from her drug- and rape-induced week of silent, insensible anguish, remain a profoundly affecting reading experience. The wounds suffered both in heart and body terribly translate to the page.

There are ten fragment letters—eleven, if we count the "odd letter" that Clarissa actually delivers to Lovelace. Since it is not possible to treat them all here,[48] I will focus my attention only on one, *Paper III*. Clarissa writes:

> A lady took a great fancy to a young lion, or a bear, I forget which—but a bear, or a tiger, I believe it was. It was made her a present of when a whelp. She fed it with her own hand: she nursed up the wicked cub with great tenderness; and would play with it without fear of apprehension of danger: and it was obedient to all her commands: and its tameness, as she used to boast, increased with its growth; so that, like a lapdog, it would follow her all over the house. But mind what followed: at last, somehow, neglecting to satisfy its hungry maw, or having otherwise disobliged it on some occasion, it resumed its nature; and on a sudden fell upon her, and tore her in pieces. And who was most to blame, I pray? The brute, or the lady? The lady, surely! For what *she* did was *out* of nature, *out* of character, at least: what it did was *in* its nature. (3.206)

The allegory Clarissa attempts to spin here is, at best, tangled and vexed, as many of the allegorical retellings of events in the novel, and there are several such retellings, often are, a point I will come back to in the next chapter. What, for instance, is this "lion, or a bear... or a tiger"? Well it is Lovelace; that is the standard reading.[49] But as an allegorical retelling of her own history with Lovelace the fragment does not fit the facts of the story: Lovelace never "was

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[48] See Kinkead-Weekes 231-42 for a discussion that treats each fragment and that places them each within a context of growing awareness. His summary statement of the fragments—"What we have been watching is a personality disintegrated and remade" (240)—is useful, though I would argue that by the end of the fragments Clarissa has not "remade" herself, only bound her wounds, so to speak. The process of remaking, or rewriting as I have been calling it, is the subject of the third movement of *Clarissa* and of the next chapter of this study.

[49] Ian Watt, for instance, writes, "Lovelace, being a man, had done only what was to be expected: but Clarissa had acted out of nature in toying with him" (233). Watt's "being a man" is troubling. Lovelace is not "Man," as Clarissa is "Woman;" Lovelace is "Rake," a much more limiting, less symbolically significant position.

made her a present when a whelp" and Clarissa never "nursed up the wicked cub with great tenderness." But he is a rake, and rape is "*in* [his] nature." This lion-bear-tiger is therefore Lovelace and not Lovelace, and if this seems muddled it nevertheless fits with Clarissa's emotional state at the time. It seems to me that, along with being Lovelace, the lion or bear or tiger represents an invention in Clarissa, a feature of her own thinking. In many places, the post-rape fragments echo what has been said to Clarissa—things Anna has said, things Arabella has said, things her father has said. Long ago in part one Anna teasingly wrote, "let me congratulate you, however, on your being the first of our sex that ever I heard of who has been able to turn that lion, Love, at her own pleasure, into a lap-dog" (1.49). Lovelace is not the lapdog; love is the lapdog, which changes this allegory considerably. It makes this not an allegory of Clarissa's relationship to Lovelace but an allegory of her relationship with her own heart.

"Clarissa," as discussed above, represents a part of Lovelace's heart. And just as there is a "Clarissa" in Lovelace's heart, so there is a "Lovelace" in Clarissa's, though in a different way. Lovelace divides his soul into the "Clarissa" and the "Sinclair," and then locates in the "Clarissa" all the angelic purity he cannot, or rather will not, aspire to. There is always a difference between Clarissa and "Clarissa": one is a real flesh-and-blood woman, troubled with all the frailty and partiality of human existence; the other is an asexualized abstraction. In a similar way, there is a Lovelace and a "Lovelace." The "Lovelace" in Clarissa's heart, however, represents her hopes. As Jean Hagstrum reminds us, despite Clarissa's seeming "frost," she is a deeply romantic woman. It is unfortunately almost commonplace to assume a sex-death equivalence, or at least association, in Clarissa's mind.[50] But as Hagstrum writes, "the point needs to be stressed that Clarissa... dreamed of a man who would combine virtue with physical charm and that she hoped Lovelace would fulfill all the moral conditions as persuasively as he did the physical" (201). Hagstrum continues:

> In Clarissa's experience there has been no poisoning of the root of love. *Agape* rises naturally and without hindrance from erotic denial. No unhealthy asceticism succeeds Clarissa's sufferings. Her dignity as a woman, as a human being, has

[50] John Allen Stevenson, for instance, argues that sex and death are essentially the same thing in *Clarissa*. "We must begin," he writes, "with the recognition that, where Clarissa is concerned, sex is always bound up with death" (89). Ian Watt writes that in *Clarissa* "sexual intercourse, apparently, means death for the woman" (232). Clarissa herself seems to provide several reasons for reading this association, such as her dream of being murdered by Lovelace, her frequent declarations that she would rather die than marry Solmes, and, of course, the fact that she does die after the rape. This association of sex and death, however, I find unconvincing for a number of reasons, the most obvious of which is that Clarissa is never offered sex, only rape.

> been affronted, and she cannot possibly marry her persecutor. But she can and does forgive him, and she does not turn away retchingly from love and marriage. We are to feel the deepest pity that she is denied the love she desired, not relief that she has escaped it. And that tragic pity is simply not possible unless we perceive that Clarissa was indeed in love with the person of Lovelace and contemplated a deeply satisfying union of body and soul. Such love is only hinted at, but the hints are unmistakable. (201-2)

What Hagstrum does not emphasize here, but what I would like to suggest, is that Clarissa's love for Lovelace is really a love for "Lovelace," for an idealized invention—an invention that was sadly reinforced by the real Lovelace's continued promises of reformation, by her own proud hopes of being "a *secondary* means" for that reformation, and by the sexual attraction created by her "foolish eye." Lovelace, I think, only occupied—and very roughly at that—a position created in Clarissa's mind. It need not be Lovelace that Clarissa loves, not in any particular way, but rather the idea that Lovelace seemed to embody and, for a few moments at least, seemed to promise. In this sense Clarissa's vision of Lovelace is similar to Lovelace's of her—it has more to do with herself than with him.[51] It is a projection of the ego, a type of wish-fulfillment. Clarissa had hopes. She is a figure made to love and be loved. Like Jane Eyre, she longs to give herself, to *adhere* herself (to use Jane's language), to that which she loves and adores. Hers is a heart meant to be held by a lover. For a moment, this lover could have been Lovelace—not really Lovelace, but the image of lover that Lovelace, under disguise, presented to her and that she, having long cherished, held in her mind.

But in the moment that Lovelace permanently fixes his own identity the lapdog again becomes a lion; the "Lovelace" of invention, and the hope that it represents, disappears from Clarissa's mind, along with the rest of her hopes for worldly happiness. The lapdog of fantasy and hope that "resumed its nature" becomes the "pernicious caterpillar" of another fragment "that preyest upon the fair leaf of virgin fame" and the "eating canker-worm, that preyest upon the opening bud" (3.207). "What now is become of the prospects of a happy life" (3.207) Clarissa scribbles in another, betraying that she had indeed, though she declared to the contrary,

[51] The inability to truly perceive another human being, the inability to penetrate past one's own inventions and self-deception about who another person is, will become an abiding preoccupation in English fiction. See, for instance, Thomas Hardy's *The Return of the Native* and *Tess of he D'Urbervilles*, where the inability to penetrate self-invented images in romantic relationships leads to tragedy and death.

still cherished a hope of Lovelace's reformation and of happiness with him. "At first," she writes in another fragment, this one an attempt to confront Lovelace, "I saw something in your air and person that displeased me not... Thus prepossessed, all the rest that my soul loved and wished for in your reformation, I hoped!" (3.208). And it is hope, ultimately—hope in this world and the possibility of happiness it seems to offer—that dies in the rape.

"To Be Where You Are:" The Broken Heart and Others

The way I have read the rape, with an extreme focus on the dramas of hearts in conflict with themselves, the burden lying more heavily upon interior realities than on external actions, may suggest that Clarissa's heart breaks because of the devastation of a fiction—because the "vain" and "prepossessed" Clarissa who invented a fictional "Lovelace" to occupy her imagination had her hopes dashed. It may suggest, in other words, that Lovelace actually does fulfill his hopes for the rape—it has revealed who Clarissa really is. As uncomfortable a position as this is (it does, after all, seem to blame Clarissa, and not Lovelace, for her own broken heart), it nevertheless is part of what why her heart breaks. It is not, however, the whole reason. While Richardson privileges the internal spiritual and psychological drama of the heart, he is never so single-minded in his vision as to neglect the external drama of bodies. In the confrontation of the heart with itself, the confrontation of the heart with others proceeds. In Lovelace's rape of Clarissa, these two dramas collide: the confrontation with others reaches its almost murderous climax. It would be an injustice, both to Clarissa and to Richardson, not to mention the ways in which Lovelace's physical actions against Clarissa break her heart.

In the introductory chapter I discussed the fire scene as a drama of beds and doors and locks and keyholes, a drama in which Clarissa's physical situation mirrors her heart's. The images that Richardson deploys in that scene—Clarissa's bedroom door being opened, Lovelace coming in to assault and terrify her, doors being locked again, Lovelace squatting at the keyhole—return in the rape, though each of these images is now monstrously enlarged. Ever since the fire scene, Clarissa has attempted to bar Lovelace from her; she has attempted to preserve the integrity of that bedroom-like space of her heart and her physical body. But Lovelace breaks in, invades both her person and her heart, and the result is a disintegration, a dismembering of who Clarissa is and who she wants to be. In her "odd letter" sent to Lovelace

after the rape, Clarissa, grasping for ways to understand an event that is beyond words to her, describes the rape using the now-familiar terms of the external drama. She writes:

> O Lovelace! If you could be sorry for yourself, I would be sorry too—but when all my doors are fast, and nothing but the keyhole open, and the key of late put into that, to be where you are, in a manner without opening any of them—O wretched, wretched Clarissa Harlowe! (3.210-11)

This passage is one of the most remarkable passages in a novel filled with remarkable passages. The agony of the phrase "to be where you are," with its terrible and persistent present tense, is the agony of a broken heart, the agony of a heart that feels the constant presence of its enemy and murderer. Lovelace not only *was* inside her, he *is* inside her. Clarissa's body, which she has tried so hard to preserve, has become someone else's. Her own mind has been displaced, evicted from her own body, and now seems to float detached, present if anywhere only on the "scraps and fragments" on which she hopes to keep some part of her stitched together in a last-gasp attempt to maintain a sense of cohesion. But cohesion has been lost. Because Lovelace raped her, because the "key" was forced into the "keyhole," to be in her own body is not to be herself but "to be where you are." Her body is no longer her own.

Reading this remarkable passages, Mark Kinkead-Weekes comments,

> Richardson has moved behind sex, behind "character", behind morality. His imagination told him here that what was really the issue in the situation he had created was the sacredness of a human being's innermost self—whether we use the new word "psyche" or the old word "soul". What is really unforgiveable about Lovelace is not the raped virginity, ruined reputation, the moral turpitude. It is that he cannot conceive or respect the essentially private inner core of personality that each individual has a right to dispose of as only he or she may wish. He has not treated her as a human being but as a mere object, a function of his ego, and this she will never accept. (241-2)

What Kinkead-Weekes describes here as "the sacredness of a human being's innermost self" I have been describing in this study as Richardson's grain of sand vision of the heart, a vision of the apotheosized self that has value and worth in and of itself, regardless of its position or relationship to others. It is this self, this meaning of heart, that Lovelace has broken in Clarissa. Clarissa may be, in her own eyes, vain and proud; she may have more pride in her "unexamined

heart" than she realized; the rape and disintegration of her former heart may open the way, as the next chapter will explore, for the rewriting of a new and better heart; none of this, however—not the harrowing of an old heart nor the opening for the way of redemption—excuses the actions of this "savage-hearted monster" against Clarissa. He has trampled upon that sacred vision of the heart, has killed a vision of self that animated Clarissa.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have read the long second movement of *Clarissa* as a double drama of two hearts in conflict with themselves. Lovelace's drama of the heart, a conflict I have described as a contest between the impulses of the soft and hard heart, constantly reiterates its own terms; all of the protean expansiveness of his character diminishes to the point that his character only moves within the same dull round until it finally fixes itself with only one meaning. Clarissa's drama of the heart, which I have described as a painful process of self-awareness, is a struggle to understand the ways her "unexamined heart" has deceived her both about who she is and who Lovelace is. But while these hearts confront themselves they also confront each other, and the devastation this produces, especially for Clarissa, is the devastation of an entire vision of self and the breaking of her heart.

"Look into ourselves, and fear" (2.236) Clarissa tells Anna. Richardson's long investigation of the heart and the self in part two of *Clarissa* is a painful and at-times bleak and hopeless-seeming trial that ends in suffering, rape, and a spiritual murder-suicide. The severity of Richardson's religious vision is astonishing; it is a vision that, if taken as seriously as Richardson wants it to be, should cause anyone to fear and tremble. Clarissa is the one character in the novel, and perhaps in all of literature, least in need of redemption. Of all the major characters, she has the strongest desire to be good, to be righteous, to be holy; she is the one who strives for the unified self, for sexual integrity, for moral and religious perfection. And by nearly every conventional standard, she is perfect—never having performed a bad action, never having desired what was not permitted, committed to virtue, duty, obedience, and charity. Yet it is her that Richardson tests, she that must bear the almost-stigmatic sufferings of a full weaning from this world. It is she whose heart must break. But it is because her heart is broken, because all her worldly hopes of happiness have been ruined, because there is nothing left for her in this life,

that she can step away from all this, can begin her arduous task of rewriting a better heart, and can gain her final apotheosis in a confrontation with God.

CHAPTER THREE: THE HEART AND GOD

The Traveller, Part 1

Clarissa has finally escaped from Lovelace and Mrs. Sinclair. But she has not escaped in time. “Once more have I escaped,” she writes frantically to Anna, “—but, alas! *I*, my *best self*, have *not* escaped!” (3.321). Her virginity and sense of identity have been raped away from her; the integrity of her physical and spiritual self has been torn; the brutal actions of Lovelace have left her spiralling through a purgatory of doubt, confusion, and despair. Her heart is broken and she is dying. The desperate attempt to mend her mutilated heart started in those first deliriously scribbled post-rape “scraps and fragments” now begins in earnest during this third and final movement of *Clarissa*.

In the aftermath of the rape, when there is hardly any self left to discover or define, Clarissa’s first letter to her friend is a reflection of her heart—it is all “rambling” and “wild incoherence” (3.322); the association of the heart and the written page produces a fragmented, confused, disjointed letter. Anna, after Clarissa has painfully written her story to her, attempts to comfort her friend. She writes:

> Like a traveller who has been put out of his way by the overflowing of some rapid stream, you have only had the fore-right path you were in overwhelmed. A few miles about, a day or two only lost, as I may say, and you are in a way to recover it; and, by quickening your speed, will get up the lost time. The hurry of your spirits, meantime, will be all your inconvenience; for it was not your fault you were stopped in your progress. (3.416)

“Think of this, my dear,” Anna adds, “and improve upon the allegory” (3.416). As well-meaning and as hopeful as Anna’s intentions are, her allegory reveals the smallness of metaphor; it also reveals the figurative’s ability to force meaning. Metaphors are too small; or, at the very least, *this* metaphor is too small. Anna is, along with Belford, Clarissa’s most sympathetic reader. Even she, however, fails to understand the nature of Clarissa’s wound. Anna’s heart would not break for a rape; she, like Tess Durbeyfield, has an “invincible instinct towards self-delight,” and

would, like Hardy's heroine, survive the wound given her by a Lovelace or an Alec. She is, as she tells Clarissa, "fitter for this world than you" (1.43). Anna therefore, judging others by her own heart (something Richardson's characters often do), cannot understand why Clarissa should die. But for Clarissa the world has been poisoned; the rape has revealed its fallen nature to her; virtue has not protected her as she thought it would. Her heart is broken. And so the allegory spun by Anna—with its "day or two only lost" that tries to contain the hundreds of pages of doubt, fear, uncertainty, the devastation of all Clarissa's worldly hopes for happiness, the mutilation of a "*best self*"—is too small. A metaphor can devour. It contracts the real, recasting it into an easily managed piece of poetry. Having reduced Clarissa's history to a small allegory, Anna has, like the Harlowes and Lovelace, attempted to force a construction upon her, one that leaves Clarissa tightly bound within a prison of definition.[52]

Clarissa is perhaps the most prosaic novel in English. Richardson wrote in the mundane, vulgar language of the real; he is "unpoetic, unsoaring," as Leo Braudy mentions (185). But Richardson, I think, has run up against one of the problems of metaphor, the same problem Anna runs up against here: a metaphor, however beautiful it may be, does, like a sort of opiate, dull the pain. Any attempt to use metaphor to comprehend something like a rape smoothes the ragged edges, dulls the sharp points, makes the devastation of a life an exercise of imagination. It turns a rape into "a day or two only lost." Richardson does not allow this. Richardson does not want his heroine's pain dulled; he wants it felt. Anna's allegory is a reduction, or if not a reduction at least an evasion—any allegory, I suggest, would be. Richardson could not write in metaphor for metaphor cannot accomplish *Clarissa*. Clarissa is dying. Any evasion, any construction used during the approach of death, prevents her from understanding her heart. Death is a final inquisition of the heart; and in this final inquisition, clarity and self-awareness—the ability of the heart to confront both itself and God—make the difference between damnation and salvation.

[52] Compare this with Lovelace's allegory of the miser and the thief, in which Clarissa becomes blameable for hoarding up and hiding her virginity from Lovelace who is "unable to *live without it*" (4.452). There is violence in the very act of figuring. As soon as life is cast in trope, life—and its meaning—is placed at a distance, comfortably conventionalized or violently redefined. The meaning of something is therefore left in the hands of anyone who can create the most compelling construction. Lovelace loves figurative language. It allows him to manipulate reality in the same way that he manipulated the credulous women of Hampstead. If Lovelace can cast Clarissa in language he will, because only in language, he finds, can he control her; in the real, she is beyond his comprehension. He must make her small in language in order to make her his.

Anna tells Clarissa to "improve upon the allegory." Clarissa *will* improve upon it in the only appropriate way. She will expand it to almost apocalyptic levels. Whereas Anna attempts to compel Clarissa to see the rape, and the disappointment of all her worldly hopes for happiness, as "a day or two only lost," Clarissa will "improve" the traveller metaphor to comprehend the world and her whole experience of it. Clarissa *is* a traveller. But it is through this world, not just one experience in it, that she is travelling.

I have called this last movement of the heart and this third chapter "The Heart and God."[53] This may seem misleading, however, since I do not appear to discuss God in much detail. God's presence in *Clarissa* is often obscure, even if it hovers above nearly everything. *Clarissa* is incomprehensible, however, unless certain assumptions are granted it. Without recognizing its implicit commitment to a future reality of reward or punishment, for instance, it is simply a novel in which a young girl is abandoned by her family, raped, and dies alone. Richardson, severe as he is, is not this gloomy. The movement I have been describing through this three-part division of the novel—a movement of the heart in confrontation with others and with itself—ends in a final confrontation with God, a confrontation that forces the heart into an absolute self-awareness. In a sense, this final confrontation could be considered a continuation and intensification of the drama of heart and self. But as death approaches the self stands *sub specie aeternitatis*—"under the aspect of eternity." Under this aspect the heart's relationship to God is all that matters. Everything else is stripped away. And so I have called this chapter "The Heart and God."

The Problem of Death

"Her heart's broken," the doctor who attends Clarissa during her stay at the Smiths' house tells Belford; "she'll die… there is no saving her" (4.177). In a letter to Mrs. Norton, who, after the rape and during this long process of departure from the world, becomes the person to whom Clarissa will most freely open her heart to pour out all the grief inside, Clarissa writes, "indeed my heart is broken! I am sure I shall not live" (3.345). She tells Mrs. Norton that "my

[53] In my division of the novel, the third part of *Clarissa*, and the third movement of the heart, is all the material after her effectual escape from Sinclair's. This material includes her false arrest and imprisonment, her writing her meditations, her preparations for death, her death itself, and her eventual posthumous return to Harlowe Place to be buried. Though the narrative, especially as presented in the third edition text, includes a considerable amount of material after her death (such as the effect her death has on her family, the execution of her will, and Lovelace's death), this material, as it does not directly relate to Clarissa's heart, is not examined here. See the section "An Apology for a Three-Part Method" in chapter one for a detailed discussion on the three-part divisions of the novel.

heart is *so* weak!—it is *very* weak" (3.326), that she has "a bleeding heart" (3.337), "a bursting heart" (3.338), and a "poor sick heart that yet beats with life drawn from your own dearer heart" (3.346). Mine is "a ductile heart" (3.337) Clarissa tells her surrogate mother, her true mother in affection; it is a heart too "sensible" and therefore capable of receiving a too-strong impression from the persecutions she has suffered, both from Lovelace and, what is worse to Clarissa, from the cold, implacable, "hard-hearted" Harlowes.[54]

Why does Clarissa die? It is a fair question, one that critics ponder and that baffles most of the characters of the novel. From a strictly realist perspective, Richardson does not satisfy on this point. There is no obvious reason for Clarissa to die. For Richardson it is enough that Clarissa's heart is broken. In this Richardsonian world of heightened sensibility where the innermost realities of the heart are dramatically performed upon the body—"My countenance," Clarissa tells Belford when he is shocked at her declining health, "is indeed an honest picture of my heart" (4.9-10)—a broken heart is a death sentence. Yet characters in the novel debate the reasons for Clarissa's decline. Mr. Goddard, Clarissa's apothecary, pronounces "her case to be grief" (3.459) and "apprehended her disorder was in her mind" (3.468), while her doctor likewise diagnoses hers "A love case" (3.468) and tells her she "will do very well, if she will resolve upon it herself" (4.13). But despite this advice, offered by those who, for the first time in the novel, genuinely want to preserve her, Clarissa's health slowly deteriorates. While under arrest Clarissa "complained of her head and her heart" (3.436), a description that recalls her anguished delirium after the drugging and rape and also the disorder she suffered after receiving her father's curse; she experiences "shortness of breath" (4.215) and "a weakness and a dimness in her sight" (4.288); she is finally unable even to write and must dictate her last letter to Anna (4.329). Throughout part three Clarissa is visibly dying. Lovelace, of course, who cannot tolerate even someone's dying without his consent, rejects all this. He insists that "*nineteen* cannot so soon die of grief" (4.216); *nineteen* especially cannot so soon die of grief for a rape, a "common case" (3.496) and the "slightest of evils" (3.150). Her heightened delicacy, he admits, so ready to take impression, "will make a reality of a jest at any time" (4.268). And besides, Lovelace sneers at Belford, the language of broken hearts is "the true woman's language" (3.471)—it is affected, deceitful, manipulative, stubborn; "thou hast seen and heard," he reminds Belford, "of so many *female deaths* and *revivals*" (3.472). If Clarissa does die, Lovelace insists, she dies not because

[54] See the section "Heart: Sympathy" in chapter one for a brief discussion of sensibility.

of any crime committed against her by himself, but because she, with true Harlowe stubbornness, broke her own heart out of spite and malice (4.30) and chose rather to die than forgive him. But Belford, more than any other character, understands Clarissa's situation; or, if he does not actually understand it, he nevertheless sees it most clearly. Everyone in the novel may have a theory or opinion on Clarissa's decline and eventual death; "But, noble-minded as they see this lady is," he writes, "they know not half of her nobleness of mind, nor how deeply she is wounded; and depend too much upon her *youth*, which I doubt will not do in this case, and upon *time*, which will not alleviate the woes of such a mind" (4.10).

In critical discussions there is even less consensus about the meaning of Clarissa's death. Ian Watt, formulating what has now become a familiar *topos* in *Clarissa* scholarship, equates sexual penetration with death in Clarissa's mind. "By having equated sex and death," Watt argues, "and having been violated by Lovelace, her self-respect requires that the expected consequence ensue... anything else would prove her deepest self to have been wrong" (233). Richardson, Watt adds, "has contrived to give Clarissa's death all the appearance of an act of the will" (219). Though it is not quite the Lucretia-like suicide Lovelace fears she will commit, it is a deliberate ending of life, and Clarissa embraces this option in order to preserve her sense of self. Faced with a choice between a life as a "fallen women" and a death as a sort of martyr to virtue, Clarissa wills herself dead and out of this world.

Margaret Doody argues that Clarissa's death combines the heroic-tragic elements of the stage, where "a particular elaborate gesture in murder or suicide" is embraced "by almost superhuman persons" (151), and the deathbed trope developed in the devotional literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which "deals with the death of the average human being" (152).[55] The actual cause of Clarissa's death, Doody goes on to suggest, is immaterial to Richardson's concerns. It is enough simply that she is dying. Doody compares *Clarissa* to Henry James' *The Wings of the Dove*, a novel haunted, it seems to me, by Clarissa's ghost (though Clarissa, unlike Milly Theale, never turns her face to the wall, even if she is tempted to do so). James, Doody suggests, like Richardson, "takes it for granted that a mortal illness can be a datum for which specific causes and medical details need not be supplied" because "in both cases, the heroines are... too good for the world in which they find themselves" (171). The world is too

[55] This combining of the traditionally heroic and the devotionally average fits, I think, with the argument I have been making for Richardson's grain of sand vision of the heart.

small for such spirits, spirits that benevolence and virtue expand beyond the narrow spaces defined by the Lovelaces and the Harlowes, the Merton Denshers and the Kate Croys. "In each case," Doody concludes, "it is the reaction to the knowledge that she is dying that lets the character reveal herself more fully" (171-72).

William Beatty Warner suggests an entirely different reading of Clarissa's death. "Struggle," Warner argues, "is the matrix out of which the novel emerges, and all things are subdued to struggle. For this reason we shall find nothing in this novel that we can call neutral, objective, or true. Instead we shall uncover ingenious and elaborate pieces of artifice, inventions designed for warfare" (5). In Warner's reading, nothing is "neutral, objective, or true," not even things like rape and death. Instead they take their meanings from participants eager to control the interpretive field. After the rape, therefore—after, that is, Clarissa's own sense of meaning has been subverted by Lovelace's—Clarissa's ability to control the narrative is significantly damaged. So she writes back; she writes in an attempt to regain control of meaning and to impose, in a reversal of the rape, her own interpretation onto Lovelace. Death is her final argument. Warner argues that "Clarissa dies so that she may produce the book that will guarantee her triumph." "If Clarissa dies in the right way," he adds, "with the right blend of pathos and reproach then she will be able to solicit the tragic code that gives life a mysterious meaning through death" (76). Even death, is seems, is not "neutral, objective, or true," but just another rhetorical device deployed upon the interpretive field in order to secure a triumph of meaning.

Absent from these interpretations of Clarissa's death, however, as the comparison between what characters in the novel say and what the critics say hopefully suggests, is any language of the heart. Though Clarissa's broken heart haunts almost all the discussions about her decline and death in the novel, many interpretations elide this heart language, either ignoring it or sinking it, like Lovelace does, into the murky realm of rhetoric. While sex, or rather rape, plays a part in Clarissa's death, to say as Watt does that she dies because she was raped is too small an answer and disparages the triumphant elements in Clarissa's death. Margaret Doody is almost certainly right when she suggests it does not matter what the specific cause of death is since the important part is how Clarissa responds to her approaching death. And Warner, though I tend to disagree with the direction of his argument, is right when he suggests that Clarissa's primary activity is writing, though I would suggest that her writing in part three is more directed at herself than at achieving a triumph over her enemies.

John Donne wrapped himself in a winding sheet and posed for a portrait. Clarissa purchases a coffin and decorates it with emblems (4.257). Donne, one feels, would have approved. Clarissa says her coffin "teaches me" (4.258). The question of death in *Clarissa* is not a question of *why* but of *how*. Clarissa is learning *how to die*. And though she eventually dies in such a way "as seemed to manifest her eternal happiness already begun" (4.347), the path she is required to travel to arrive at such a death is long, painful, and perilous.

Clarissa's Agon

As Belford is writing a letter to Lovelace a messenger arrives from Mrs. Smith telling him to come immediately to their house but warning that "she knew not if the lady will be alive" (4.259) when he arrives. Clarissa, though extremely weak, had been to church and, as a result, "had two very severe fits" (4.260). Belford hastens to the Smiths and then reports:

> She was tolerably recovered by the time I came; and the doctor made her promise before me, that, while she was so weak, she would not attempt any more to go abroad; for, by Mrs. Lovick's description, who attended her, the shortness of her breath, her extreme weakness, and the fervor of her devotions when at church, were contraries which, pulling in different ways (the soul aspiring, the body sinking), tore her tender frame in pieces. (4.260)

This image, I suggest—"the soul aspiring, the body sinking"—is the central image, emblematic in its intensity, of part three of *Clarissa*. Part three of *Clarissa* is a long and, at least according to some, protracted affair.[56] And in a certain light this is true. It is, after all, perhaps the least dramatic conclusion to any novel in English. Nothing really happens here. In terms of dramatic action, Clarissa's false arrest at the beginning of part three is more or less the last thing that happens to her. After this, the novel quietly devotes hundreds of pages to preparing Clarissa for her death. This preparation, however, *is* the central concern of part three, and if we find it dramatically unsatisfying it is because this drama of the heart is, in a very real sense, *un-dramatisable*. *Clarissa* moves always deeper, always further inside. A contention between a daughter and her family forces the heart to confront others; warfare between lovers forces the heart to confront itself; an approach of death finally forces the heart to confront its position

[56] Ian Watt suggests that "To devote nearly one-third of the novel to the heroine's death is surely excessive" (216), though what exactly constitutes "excess" in a novel like *Clarissa* is a good question.

before God in a space that both language and drama can only dimly suggest. This is Clarissa's spiritual agon—her final and most difficult confrontation with herself; her confrontation with the aspiring and sinking forces competing inside her; her confrontation with God.

Belford, as I mentioned in my introduction, is the primary letter-writer during the novel's conclusion. There I suggested that Belford's voice assumes primacy because he, being caught between two imaginative positions, must, like readers, make a choice between Clarissa and Lovelace. There is another reason Belford takes over, however. Mark Kinkead-Weekes suggests that in the final part of the novel,

> We are deliberately removed for the most part from immediate experience of Clarissa's mind. Where we occasionally get more than a glimpse, in her Meditations for example, her consciousness is expressed in the words of the Bible and it may not occur to us to read between the lines. This means that she grows away from our imagination; becomes someone we cannot know, and whose experience we can only infer, no longer share. (260)

As Clarissa "grows away from our imagination," Belford fills the narrative void opened in her progress. But Belford cannot enter into Clarissa's imagination any more than we can; he must rely on observation and suggestion, letting a generous sympathy take hints from her behaviour and words in order to guess at what these probably mean and at the suffering that lies just under the surface. But he is still essentially kept in the dark about her.[57] This means that we, through Belford, constantly "see" Clarissa. We see her in prison, we see her meditating on her own coffin, we see her reunite with Morden, and we see her surrounded by her new family of the heart on her deathbed. But her heart is closed to us in ways that it never was before. The part of her that we do see, and which Sally Martin and Polly Horton see when they taunt her in prison, is her "strange composure in such distresses" (3.436). But, as Clarissa quietly tells Sally and Polly, "I have no small difficulty, notwithstanding the seeming composure you just now took notice of, to bear, as I ought to bear, the evils I suffer" (3.437). This "strange composure" is not a

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[57] John Preston writes much the same thing about Belford: "He is really present on the scene to *read* it for us. Though he appears, ironically, to have changed places with Lovelace he cannot be said to be involved with her at all as Lovelace was. In no sense has he entered her life. Paradoxically, by giving him proximity to Clarissa, Richardson has heightened our sense of being separated from what is going on" (60). The "he cannot be said to be involved with her at all as Lovelace was" seems, to me at least, to be unnecessarily sexually charged. Belford is, after all, Clarissa's executor and the protector of her memory; and in many ways Belford knows and understands Clarissa much better than Lovelace ever did. But the point about the distance created by readers and Clarissa's inner experience is important.

deception; it does conceal, however, the contest being waged within Clarissa's heart. The remarkable thing about the image of Clarissa's tender frame being torn in pieces and about the image of her strange composure in prison is that they are the same image. Belford, closer to her imaginatively, is able to detect the struggle being waged in Clarissa's breast; the whores, nearly alien creatures to her, see only a calm outer composure. But for all its suggested pathos and all its invested sympathy, Belford's view of Clarissa is nevertheless obscure and mysterious; the disturbed water only hints at the titanic contending forces beneath the surface. Belford's view of Clarissa is only the glimpse of an outsider witnessing the birth of a spiritual creature.

To turn once again to the "womb of fate" image, part three of the novel is parturient. Clarissa's death is really a birth. And like a birth, and especially an eighteenth-century birth, it is painful—an agony that may produce life or death. "Belford," Robert Erickson suggests, is Clarissa's "literary midwife; he knows what the 'womb of fate' brought forth to her, and he is responsible for delivering and preserving her account and estimate of that painful burden of experience" (105). But though Clarissa may have a literary midwife to act as her executor and "the protector of my memory" (4.78), she does not have a spiritual midwife. The struggle is her own; her spiritual agon cannot be shared.

In her posthumous letter to Lovelace, Clarissa writes "My doom is unalterably fixed: and I am either a miserable or a happy being to all eternity. If happy, I owe it solely to the Divine mercy: if miserable, to your undeserved cruelty" (4.435). But why should she be miserable; how can hell be the doom of a Clarissa? To everyone else in the novel, the idea of Clarissa's damnation seems impossible. It is a terrifying thought. For if a Clarissa cannot be happy, as several characters note, there is little hope that anyone else can be. Clarissa, however, takes seriously the idea of spiritual failure. But her doing so has little or nothing to do with sinful action. When the officers arrest her and tell her "they had an action against her" (3.426), she says, and says with absolute sincerity and truth, "*Action!*... What is that? I have committed *no bad action*!" (3.427). But it is not only action that matters. It is the internal reality that becomes the main battlefield—and this is a field that, though able to take an influence from outside actions and actors, depends primarily on the conditions of the heart.

The outcome of this contest between aspiring and sinking forces is by no means certain. The trial of Clarissa's virtue is not over though its scope has expanded far beyond a test of sexual integrity and its judge is no longer a vicious egomaniac bent on gratifying his pleasure: the trial

is now the heart's response to suffering and the judge is a God that opens the innermost folds of the heart. This is Clarissa's agon—a struggle between a sinking desire to give in to grief, bitterness, and resentment and an aspiring desire to overcome those sinking motions and find repentance, resignation, and happiness.

The Final Inquisition of the Heart

Clarissa reaches out several times to her family, longing for reconciliation, hoping her father's curse may be removed. After a particularly vicious and insinuating response from her Uncle Harlowe Clarissa falls into a "violent fit of hysterics." The next day she determines, "weak as she was," to go to church in order "to calm her mind" (4.95). Belford writes:

> She was brought home a little better; and then sat down to write to her uncle. But was obliged to leave off several times—to struggle, as she told Mrs. Lovick, for a humble temper. "My heart, she said to the good woman, is a proud heart, and not yet, I find, mortified to my condition; but, do what I can, will be for prescribing resenting things to my pen." (4.95)

From the earliest parts of *Clarissa*, writing has always been, as I have been arguing throughout this study, a double activity that both finds and creates as much as it communicates. Writing is not the transparent communication of the heart that it sometimes appears to be; often it is a process of self-examination and creation, the writer stumbling upon some secret desire hidden deep within the recesses of the heart. Clarissa often wonders "whither roves my pen?" (1.61) as her writing takes her deeper into those recesses. In her spiritual agon, writing takes on a soteriological significance. The Pauline exhortation to "work out your own salvation in fear and trembling" makes its way onto paper. What Clarissa finds is that—raped and humiliated as she has been by Lovelace; abandoned and cast off as she has been by her family—she still has "a proud heart," a heart "not yet… mortified to my condition."

It is important to understand what her condition is because much depends on how Clarissa's self-awareness is interpreted. The condition she refers to is not the one Lovelace and his whores have placed her in; it is not a social condition. Though immediately after the rape Clarissa seems to enrol herself in the ranks of fallen women—she has been "Ruined in my *own* eyes" and wonders how Lovelace, who ridiculously continues to press for marriage, can think Clarissa "will give a harlot niece to thy honourable uncle… and a cousin to thy cousins from a

brothel?" (3.232)—this sense of self-identification as a whore, as Mark Kinkead-Weekes suggests, is not a clear-minded classification of herself but "a spasm of physical and psychological self-disgust at his classification of her" (246). This false sense of her own harlotry departs soon after her escape and after her head, "killed" by the overdose given to her, begins to clear. The mutilated and dismembered heart written out in pieces on the post-rape fragments begins to mend and Clarissa's instinctual reflex to lacerate herself for the crimes of others begins to abate as a stronger, clearer vision of herself replaces it. So the condition she now finds herself in is not a social condition that demands she temper her expectations. It is rather the condition of dying, a condition that, in Richardson's world, forces the heart into self-knowledge and an awareness of its own relationship to God. It is a condition that forces the heart to know itself *sub specie aeternitatis*. Death is the final, inevitable inquisition of the heart, a trial of self performed before the mostly silent God who allows the individual conscience to acquit or condemn itself; a drama in which the self, no longer able to evade, obscure, prevaricate, or palliate, stands in the awful light of self-awareness. As Clarissa says, "For, believe me, sir, that now, in this last stage, very few things will bear the test, or be passed as laudable, if *pardonable*, at our own bar, much less at a more tremendous one, in all we have done, or delighted in, even in a life not very offensive neither, as *we* may think!" (4.300).

Clarissa, as I mentioned above, is learning how to die. She is not the only one. Several characters die in part three of the novel. Of these deaths, three are given the force of example: Belton's, Clarissa's, and Sinclair's.[58] These three deaths form of an emblematic triptych. Belton, a rake, has killed a man in a duel, kept a woman, and, as Belford writes, probably "came *too soon* into his uncle's estate" (4.169). As death approaches him he tells Belford, "I can neither repent nor pray as I ought; my heart is hardened, and I can do nothing but despair" (4.149). He is tormented by the remembrance of past crimes and hallucinates the apparition of the man killed by the duel. "I *cannot* die," he later cries; "I cannot *think* of dying" (4.165). He nevertheless does die, and dies with "not one ray of hope darting in upon his benighted soul; his conscience standing in the place of a thousand witnesses" (4.148). Mrs. Sinclair, "who no doubt," Belford

[58] Margaret Doody provides one of the best readings of the several deaths in *Clarissa*. She demonstrates the ways that Richardson adapts the seventeenth and eighteenth century divine and devotional literature on dying, such as *Drexelius on Eternity*, *Practice of Piety*, and *Francis Spira* (all books mentioned in important scenes in *Clarissa*), and illustrates the ways that "Richardson has created a dramatic scene from the traditional descriptions of deathbed remorse and terror" (163). See *A Natural Passion* 151-87.

says, “has numbers of souls to answer for” (4.383), also declares that she “can neither cry nor pray!” (4.383). She suffers the agonies of a “wild impatience” (4.383) and wishes “that indeed I never, never had had a being” (4.383). “I know not *how* to die!” (4.384), she howls at Belford, who encourages her to have patience and attempt to compose herself. But Sinclair, along with numberless other crimes, has her role in Clarissa’s rape and death, “the most crying of all my sins” (4383), to answer for and Belford, exasperated and disgusted, leaves her to die with “a hell already begun in her mind!” (4.390).[59]

Belton’s and Sinclair’s deaths, with their almost Dantean grotesqueries, provide an inverted index against which Clarissa’s death can be measured. Death throws the soul into full relief and shines a light on all the thoughts and actions that the rush and apparent vitality of everyday life lets lurk in the dark corners of the heart. But, like Belton’s hallucinated victim, the remembrance of past crimes, the stains that mark their souls, return, are magnified, and envelope the mind with horror in the moments when that rush ceases. Under the weight of this self-consciousness, neither Belton nor Sinclair are able to compose themselves and so suffer the agonies of impatience, a spiritual condition that hurries the soul and makes it incapable of achieving the repentance and resignation required for death’s final inquisition.

Clarissa, to use one of Lovelace’s favourite evasions, is comparatively innocent when measured against the studied criminal behaviours of a Belton or a Sinclair, or, to use her own formulation, is one who has led “a life not very offensive.” It is one of the remarkable features of this novel that even a Clarissa must undergo a similar confrontation with the contents of her heart. It is even more remarkable that Richardson would put something like pride or resentment on a level with killing an uncle or trading in female flesh and souls. But it is not the weight of the

[59] Lovelace’s death, on the other hand, remains ambiguous. The deaths of Clarissa, Belton, and Sinclair are given *time*; that is, each of them have sufficient warning of death’s approach to prepare for it and learn “how” to die, even if Belton and Sinclair refuse to do so. Lovelace, however, dies by hurrying himself into a duel, and his state of mind after receiving his mortal wound is only hinted at darkly by the observations of a man far removed from the events of the novel. What sort of self-awareness he achieves is questionable. Harold Bloom, in his Bloomian way, suggests that “Lovelace dies in his own acquired religion, which is the worship of the blessed Clarissa, whom he personally has converted into something considerably more than a saint or even an angel” (4). Given Lovelace’s invincible need to see everything around him as an extension of his ego, this reading has merit. Missing from this reading, however, is the Richardsonian Christian dimension: Lovelace dies in his own acquired religion; he dies, in other words, a damned soul. But there is another dimension to Lovelace’s death worth mentioning. After Clarissa dies, the narrative continues to move forward, each passage adding new meaning to her death. Each grief and conscience-stricken actor in the drama that has killed Clarissa is left to meditate on the meaning of it all. The novel abruptly halts, however, with the death of Lovelace. In a sense, then, Clarissa’s death has great and terrible meaning that extends into the imaginations of all involved; Lovelace’s is meaningless. It is as if he simply vanishes from the stage. He has become a footnote in the history of Clarissa, and so it is in a footnote that I will leave him.

stone, so to speak, that sinks the aspiring heart down but the way the heart is bound up with it—the way it prevents clarity of self-examination. To be chained to a mountain or to be chained to a stone is still, in the end, to be chained. In this light, pride and prostitution are of a piece: both entangle the heart and prevent it from seeing itself *sub specie aeternitatis*.

This is why, for example, Clarissa often works so hard to forgive and exonerate the Harlowes for their cruelty to her (an activity that the reader concerned about justice often finds bewildering and frustrating). She detects in her heart an impulse to resentment and impatience, which if indulged could leave her in a state much the same as Belton's and Sinclair's. Clarissa's self is large; and as with any large self, it commits itself wholly to something. To vent her frustrations even a little bit would be to unleash a landslide of bitterness that would, in its gathering force, crush beneath it all hopes of overcoming or subduing herself. This gathering force, however, though held back, often does break out in small fissures, as when she bitterly inveighs against her mother for having abandoned her to the rest of the Harlowes because "her heart... is in their measures!" (4.110). Such breaks of resentment often appear. When Belford attempts to convince Clarissa of Lovelace's repentance, for instance, she tells him,

> you may let him know… that I reject him with my whole heart—yet that, although I say this with such a determination as shall leave no room for doubt, I say it not however with passion. On the contrary, tell him that I am trying to bring my mind into such a frame, as to be able to *pity* him [poor perjured wretch! what has he not to answer for!]; and that I shall not think myself qualified for the state I am aspiring to, if, after a few struggles more, I cannot *forgive* him too. (3.500-1)

Later, in a letter to Mrs. Norton, she writes about her family's agonizing delays at reconciliation:

> All then that I will say further to it, at this time, is, that were the intended goodness to be granted to me but a week hence, it would possibly be too late—too late, I mean, to be of the consolation to me that I would wish from it: for what an inefficacious preparation must I have been making, if it has not, by this time, carried me above—but above what? Poor mistaken creature! Unhappy self-deluder! that finds herself above nothing! Nor able to subdue her own faulty impatience! (4.195)

The interruptions here, her breaking out into exclamation, seem relatively benign, seem hardly censurable at all given her situation; these and breaks like them, however, reveal the lingering

resentments Clarissa fears may poison her heart; they show how she has not yet brought her "mind into such a frame" as she hopes she can yet attain. Clarissa tells Anna "I *have* resentments, strong resentments, but not unreasonable ones" (3.519). Their reasonableness, however, is not the point. Certainly Clarissa has reasons to resent; few characters in fiction have been as thoroughly or as unjustly abused as her. But in this final inquisition of the heart, there is no "other," no one to point the finger at, no one to blame. There is only self and God.

Clarissa's agon of the heart would, Richardson suggests, end much as it does for both Belton and Sinclair—end, that is, with Clarissa being a miserable being for all eternity; the sinking body claiming the aspiring spirit—if it were not for one very important distinction between her and her inverted indices: Clarissa, unlike Belton and Sinclair, avails herself of "*religious duties*," as she calls it. *Clarissa* has often been described as a novel that celebrates the self and the individual's triumph over the world. Leo Braudy, for instance, suggests that "Self-sufficiency and self-creation is the general message of the novel" (205). I do not find this to be the case, however. It is exactly self-sufficiency that Clarissa must conquer. And she will conquer it by appealing to a power outside herself—by appealing, that is, to God.

"*Her* for *him*:" Clarissa's *Book of Meditations*

Belford describes the scene at the Rowlands' house where he finds Clarissa imprisoned after her arrest. He has only seen her once before, at Lovelace's collation, and the meeting left a permanent impression on him. This second meeting leaves no less an impression. He writes:

> She was kneeling in the corner of the room, near the dismal window, against the table on an old bolster (as it seemed to be) of the cane couch, half-covered with her handkerchief; her back to the door; which was only shut to [no need of fastenings!]; her arms crossed upon the table, the forefinger of her right hand in her Bible. She had perhaps been reading in it, and could read no longer. Paper, pens, ink, lay by her book on the table. Her dress was white damask, exceeding neat; but her stays had been cut when she fainted away at her entrance into this cursed place; and she had not been solicitous enough about her dress to send for others. Her head-dress was a little discomposed; her charming hair, in natural ringlets, as you have heretofore described it, but a little tangled, as if not lately combed, irregularly shading one side of the loveliest neck in the world; as her

> disordered, rumpled handkerchief did the other. Her face [oh, how altered from what I had seen it! Yet lovely in spite of all her griefs and sufferings!] was reclined, when we entered, upon her crossed arms; but so as not more than one side of it be hid. (3.445-6)

Belford's sense of Clarissa is highly visual, almost like Lovelace's. This is an external view of Clarissa; it is Belford's view at first meeting her again. It is through his eyes that we most often see Clarissa in the novel's final movement; and though Belford grows in both understanding and sympathy, his eyes are not as deep as Clarissa's expanding nature. She is opaque, impenetrable; our imaginations, like Belford's, run up against appearances as Richardson entangles us in descriptions of her "exceeding neat" dress, her "charming hair, in natural ringlets," and "the loveliest neck in the world." But the appearance of any person conceals the depths beneath it; the surface is a tissue-thin but often-impervious membrane separating inside from out. The appearance of Clarissa, with her "strange composure" remarked by Sally and Polly, and her seemingly invincible beauty that is, even in this prison, "illuminating that horrid corner" (3.446), conceals the agon, glosses the sinking and aspiring struggle. And it is here in this "horrid corner" that Clarissa writes the first of the meditations that Richardson includes in the novel.

The meditations are extracts copied from Old Testament and apocryphal wisdom literature: from the Book of Job, the Psalms, the Wisdom of Solomon, and Ecclesiasticus—the books of the Bible Clarissa most often reads.[60] Clarissa, almost like an editor, extracts passages from this literature, sometimes clusters of verses and sometimes just a phrase or two, and stitches them together. As I suggested in the previous chapter, the post-rape "scraps and fragments" that Clarissa scribbles and tears are attempts to mend and put back together a sense of self and identity that Lovelace and the whores dismembered by rape. The meditations continue and complete her rewriting. But the material she stitches together now is no longer just the tatters of

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[60] There are five Meditations included in the third edition. Only four were included in the first and second. Richardson/Clarissa, however, composed many more of these Meditations, however—thirty-six of them. These Meditations Richardson collected and printed separately as *Meditations Collected from the Sacred Books*; though the collection was distributed among friends, most of whom urged him to make the book available to the reading public, Richardson never published *Meditations*. This Book of Meditations is the same book that Clarissa mentions in her will. The first meditation included in the novel is written in her prison room after her arrest. This is actually the eighth that she writes; she begins to write meditations immediately after her recovery from her delirium, making them, I think, an extension of her post-rape "scraps and fragments." For clarity's sake, I will use meditations to refer to the material that Clarissa writes and *Meditations* to refer to this supplemental book.

her own heart—the material of Scripture is sewn into her. It is a symbiotic exercise, a grafting together. Clarissa becomes one with Scripture.

Nearly everything written in *Clarissa* is written by characters conscious of an audience. The meditations, however, are written for private use. Their audience is the self and God, the final and best Reader of the heart. Richardson is careful to describe how each of the meditations that appear in the novel has been included in the narrative—Clarissa does not volunteer them, transmit them, or offer them while she is alive, at least not to Belford, and not to us her readers. The first meditation in the novel, for instance, Clarissa shows to Mrs. Lovick, who becomes a spiritual advisor and surrogate mother to Clarissa in Mrs. Norton's absence; Belford requests and receives a copy of it from Mrs. Lovick but tells Lovelace "The lady is not to know that I have taken a copy" (4.6). Another meditation "*was stitched to the bottom of this letter*" (4.100) she received from her Uncle Harlowe, presumably only found when Belford, in his role as executor, gathered together Clarissa's correspondence. There is a sense of trespass here, almost voyeuristic, and a sense that Belford and we as readers are covertly approaching that sacred bedroom-like centre of the self and peering, almost like Lovelace, through the keyhole.[61]

These meditations written from and for the heart are Clarissa's final and successful attempt to overcome herself, to subdue her heart, and to achieve "the state I am aspiring to" (3.500). They check her propensity for resentment; put a hold on her tendency to despair. They are the "method she takes to fortify her mind" (4.96), as Belford says: "On every extraordinary provocation she has recourse to the Scriptures, and endeavours to regulate her vehemence by sacred precedents" (4.120). They do this by relocating and reshaping Clarissa's sense of self. Throughout the novel, Clarissa has been tempted—partly because of her pride, partly because others have constantly held her up as an example—to think of her situation as extraordinary, to think of herself as someone marked by fate for particular suffering. This sort of thinking, however, distorts her view of herself. This distortion of self, perhaps oddly enough to those unfamiliar with the courses of spiritual pride, takes the form of a self-lacerating accusation, an exaggerating of her own fault that is also a species of vanity. Clarissa constantly abuses herself. The archetypes she applies to herself during this time of distortion are images of exile

[61] A trespass that would be awkward if Richardson did not need to include these meditations as part of the novel. There are throughout *Clarissa* several breaks with the realization of the novel that Richardson is forced to make in order to include certain materials about his characters that a correspondence between letter-writers would not, in strictly realist terms, likely include.

consequent to disobedience—she, the tempted daughter, was expelled from an Eden named Harlowe Place; she, the murmuring chosen, wanders about in a desert after an exodus.[62] Clarissa has a psychological need to identify powerfully with established archetypes, or "sacred precedents," as Belford calls them. After the rape, however, and more specifically after her arrest, the archetype Clarissa draws upon changes—it is no longer to images of disobedience and punishment that she turns but to sentiments drawn from the wisdom literature of the Bible, especially (but not exclusively) the Book of Job. Clarissa identifies deeply with the impatience and suffering of Job. It is the situation of the individual soul in confrontation with the will and design of God that Clarissa uses to rewrite herself.[63]

"In some places," Clarissa says in the preface she writes to the *Meditations*, "I have taken the liberty of substituting the word *her* for *him*, and to make other such-like little changes of words. A liberty that I hope will be thought pardonable, as the Collection was made for my own particular use" (*Meditations* viii). The liberty Clarissa takes, "substituting the word *her* for *him*," appears, especially in a post-Puritan and post-Evangelical context where religious faith and experience are often dislodged from institutionalized practices and made highly personal, fairly unremarkable; it was probably unremarkable and "thought pardonable," too, in an eighteenth-century devotional context in which believers were encouraged to collect extracts of Scripture and apply them to their lives.[64] The remarkable thing, then, is not the practice, but what the practice means to Clarissa. In a very real sense it means salvation. Clarissa, by "substituting *her* for *him*," writes herself into salvation. As she rewrites Scripture, it rewrites her. It is important to note that two different meanings of "rewrite" operate here. In her meditations, Clarissa rewrites Scripture in the sense that she literally re-writes it—she transcribes extracts, stitching together various passages into devotional units "made for my own particular use." She does not rewrite Scripture in the sense that she alters it. Scripture, however, *does* rewrite her in this sense. Her heart becomes a sort of palimpsest—her old self effaced, a new Biblical self scripted over the

[62] That the expulsion from Eden and the exodus from Egypt represent two very different sorts of leaving—one a banishment, the other a liberation—reveals the conflicted way Clarissa sees her departure from Harlowe Place: it is in her mind both a severe punishment and a release from bondage. The release, however, is not uppermost in her mind; rather the Hebrews' wandering in the desert is what fills her imagination.

[63] For an extended treatment of the *Meditations* and of the way Clarissa appropriates and adapts the Biblical wisdom literature, especially the Book of Job, see Thomas Keymer's article "Richardson's *Meditations*: Clarissa's *Clarissa*."

[64] Sally Martin mocks Clarissa, "I make no doubt but you have doubled down the *useful places*, as honest Matt. Prior says" (3.439); devotional practices such as this were commonplace enough that a prostitute could mock them.

remains. This re-scripting allows her to achieve the state she is aspiring to. This change in character is noticeable in as short a span of time from Clarissa's confrontations with Lovelace after the rape to her time of imprisonment after her arrest. The indignant, frantic Clarissa that "held forth a penknife in her hand, the point to her own bosom" (3.288-9), has become the quiet, resigned Clarissa who says "*Now*, have I nothing to do but acquiesce" (3.431). Sally's taunting her that "they should take care not to be frightened again by a *penknife*" (3.429) is ironic; this new Clarissa would not offer a penknife to her own breast. Clarissa in the prison-room is still far from where she will be closer to her death; a sense of despair heavily colours her desired resignation. The important feature of the prison-room scenes, however, is that the change *of who Clarissa is* has begun—she is rewriting herself; she is being rewritten.[65]

The Traveller, Part 2

At the beginning of this chapter, I briefly discussed Anna's traveller allegory. I there suggested that the allegory is too small and that it forces a construction designed to compel Clarissa to re-embrace life on the world's terms. In the final inquisition of the heart, however, any construction that contracts is an evasion and any attempt to involve the heart with the world, or to indulge in some "hankerings after life" (4.306), as Clarissa calls them, only adds weight to a heart struggling in the sinking and aspiring agon. Anna tells Clarissa to "improve" the allegory. Clarissa does improve it—she improves it by expanding it to comprehend not just her experience

[65] In "Richardson's *Meditations*: Clarissa's *Clarissa*," Thomas Keymer suggests something similar, though his discussion frames the meditations and their importance for Clarissa in terms of modes of discourse. Keymer, too, links the meditations with the post-rape "scraps and fragments;" the fragmentation after the rape, he suggests, "attests a crisis in which language can no longer encompass life" (92), a twin linguistic and epistemological crisis that leads Clarissa to distrust and relinquish "conventional narrative media" in "her quest for purer and less vulnerable forms of discourse" (93). The fragments "open the way to new modes of composition" (93)—the meditation, a "new literary form, marking the point of a shift from realism to abstractions, and from epistolary narrative to meditation" (94). "Having virtually abandoned the effort to document her life in epistolary narrative," Keymer argues, "she discovers in biblical wisdom a form that replaces the 'minute particulars' of circumstantial realism with a luminous and cogent symbolism, and thus makes available a newly emphatic medium in which to define her wrongs and vent her grief… In sum, her chosen texts provide patterns of understanding, conduct and language by which she is able to reconstruct a sense of her life as coherent, and thus bring it to is exemplary conclusion" (94). Keymer's article is valuable; I would suggest, however, that Clarissa's turning aside from the "minute particulars" of the epistolary form coincides not only with the fragmentation and breaking of "conventional narrative media" but also with her heart's turning from confrontation with others to confrontation with herself and God, which in fact may be the same thing only said differently. As an aside, if Keymer is right, and I think he likely is, then Richardson's literary achievement is indeed great: not only did he create a new form of writing but he at the same time encountered and incorporated into the narrative that form's limits. The epistolary novel begins and ends with Richardson.

of rape but her experience of the entire world. Anna's "a day or two only lost" becomes Clarissa's whole life. Clarissa writes:

> All my prospects of felicity, as to this life, are at an end. My hopes, like opening buds or blossoms in an over-forward spring, have been nipped by a severe frost! Blighted by an eastern wind! But I can but *once die*; and if life be spared me but till I am discharged from a heavy malediction, which my father in his wrath laid upon me, and which is fulfilled literally in every article relating to this world: that, and a last blessing, are all I have to wish for; and death will be welcomer to me than rest to the most wearied traveller that ever reached his journey's end. (3.507)

A few pages later she writes that death is "but a cessation from mortal life," "the finishing of an appointed course," and "the refreshing inn after a fatiguing journey" (3.521). Clarissa writes these things shortly after her release from prison. She writes them in hope, for she has not yet achieved the sense of resignation they suggest. She must first suffer the agon of the heart and rewrite herself with Scripture in order to arrive at the state she is aspiring to. But writing such hopeful and anticipatory things is part of Clarissa's rewriting project. She writes them in order to attain them; she writes, to recall a passage discussed earlier, to form her "ductile mind" to a "style." The long process of painful rewriting eventually produces a new understanding and she is able to look at herself in a new light.

The improved traveller allegory becomes part of Clarissa's rewritten heart and helps her understand the world. The world, Clarissa has long sensed, is a "strange" place, a "mixed" place. Henry Fielding, Richardson's great literary rival, may be able to write that "A single bad act no more constitutes a villain in life, than a single bad part on the stage" (261). But Fielding, unlike Richardson, never pushes the limits of characterization as far as they can go, never fully develops the interior life, never probes the dimmer depths of the heart; he covers these mixed impulses with the fuzzy gloss of the human being and cheerfully insists that "good nature" can harmonize the contraries. But then, there is no "single bad act" in *Tom Jones* as savage as Lovelace's rape of Clarissa, and permanent psychic and spiritual damage plays no part in Fielding's vision of the human. For Clarissa, however, and for Richardson too, this mixed nature reveals a deep, profound wound in the world—a schism running also through the human heart. This schism divides a set of contraries as irreconcilable as Clarissa and Sinclair in the moments before the rape, and while both may exist in the same heart, one will inevitably emerge as the

preferred. Both Clarissa's and Lovelace's hearts crack along the strange fault line of sinking and aspiring impulses. It is the indulged and nourished impulse, however, and not the strange mixture itself, that ultimately defines the heart before God. In this strange, mixed, schismatic, broken world Clarissa is an alien contending against the "genuine sons and daughters of that earth" (3.383); she is an alien because she has written a better heart than others, one that hopes to aspire rather than sink. At the beginning of the novel, Clarissa's heart, innocent and naively proud of that innocence, was not prepared for the warfare she would encounter in a mixed world, was in fact not even aware that things as bad as rape could be perpetrated against her—"But can the heart of man be so very vile?" (2.72), she wonders to Anna after Anna warns her of Lovelace's possible insincerity. And so the world, "showing me early, even at my first *rushing* into it, its true and ugly face" (4.20), "seized upon my heart... before it was so well fortified by *religious considerations*" (3.522).[66] The world, through its agent Robert Lovelace, broke her heart. But in breaking it the world allowed her to rewrite her heart, claiming the status of an alien traveller in a strange land—a world that is merely "a transitory state of probation" (3.435), a "school of affliction" (4.2), a place where there is "no such thing as perfect happiness" (4.277); it is a place of trial, test, and inquisition.[67]

Clarissa, now very near her death, says,

> what a gradual and happy death God Almighty (blessed be His Name!) affords me! ... But see how little and little it has come to this. I was first taken off from the power of *walking*: then I took a *chair*. The prison was a large DEATH-STRIDE upon me—I should have *suffered longer else*! Next, I was unable to go to *church*; then to go *up* or *down stairs*; now hardly can move from one *room* to

[66] World here is the amalgam wide world of spiritual oppression. In this quotation Clarissa does not use the word "world." What has "seized upon" her heart is "The strong sense I have ever had of my fault, the loss of my reputation, my disappointments, the determined resentment of my friends, aiding the barbarous usage I have met with where I least deserved it" (3.522)—the sum of her experience, in other words, which "world," in the Christian sense that I am using here, covers.

[67] In a sense, Clarissa's rape shares several features with the doctrine of the so-called fortunate fall, the idea that original sin had to be committed in order for the divine soteriological plan to be enacted, that sinning was in fact part of the plan and a necessary precursor to redemption. This is sort of true in *Clarissa*. However, though the rape allows Clarissa to rewrite a better heart, there is never a sense in the novel that the rape itself was Providential. The rape remains, even after Clarissa has transcended its devastation, a crime of the highest order. Richardson's focus is not so much on Clarissa's "needing" to be raped in the fortunate fall sense in order to rewrite her heart (which Lovelace himself attempts to posit several times, such as when he complains that she shines but does not thank "the man to whom she owes the shine" (2.376)) but on how she responds to it. To put it in terms almost offensive in their blandness, the rape was a test of the heart, a test Clarissa painfully endured and overcame.

> *another*; and a *less room* will soon hold me. My *eyes* begin to fail me, so that at times I cannot see to read distinctly; and now I can hardly *write*, or hold a pen... And thus by little and little, in such a gradual sensible death as I am blessed with, God *dies away in us*, as I may say, all human satisfactions, in order to subdue His poor creatures to Himself. (4.299)

Clarissa is describing her physical decline since her arrest but she may as well be describing her entire history up until this point, all of which has been a "little by little" stripping away of all the things she cherished. Her story has been one of increasing isolation. This isolation and stripping down of Clarissa was necessary, partly because Richardson, to return to that long-ago mentioned comparison with William Harvey, almost like a novelistic anatomist, wanted to examine the human character in its essential form but also partly because of the theological truths that Richardson wanted to express. "*God will have no rivals in the hearts of those He sanctifies*," Clarissa says; "By various methods He deadens all other sensations, or rather absorbs them all in the love of Him" (4.302). "God," as she explained in the long passage quoted above, "*dies away in us*... all human satisfactions, in order to subdue His poor creatures to Himself." She begins to see all her sufferings and her dying as "a weaning-time from this world" (4.258). The "*rags of mortality*" (4.305) are stripped away from her in preparation for a translation that, she tells Mrs. Norton, will leave her "divested of the shades of body" and "unalloyed" (4.328).

In what is perhaps her most poignant image, especially given the experience of rape and poisoned sexuality she has suffered, she imagines her death as a marriage to God: "never bride was so ready as I am," she tells Mrs. Norton:

> My wedding garments are bought. And though not fine and gaudy to the sight, though not adorned with jewels and set off with gold and silver (for I have no beholders' eyes to wish to glitter in), yet will they be the easiest, the *happiest* suit, that ever bridal maiden wore, for they are such as carry with them a security against all those anxieties, pains, and perturbations which sometimes succeed to the most promising outsettings. (4.303)

Death will be a consummation, and Richardson intends for us to notice the sexual component in the image. The soft blurring of sensual images with death recurs several times during Clarissa's "long time a dying," but always in quiet, meditative ways. Belford mentions that she talks of "death... as if it were an occurrence as familiar to her as dressing and undressing" (4.215); when

her coffin is brought into the house, "a blush overspread her sweet face" (4.254) because it pertains to her body, "this earthly part" (4.255); she desires, as she states in her will, that after she is dead no male hands might touch her. These soft blurrings of the sensual and the deathly (soft because they never insist in any glaring sort of way but are present to be detected), have the combined effect, I think, of restoration. The "fallen" woman Clarissa has been rewritten as a renewed maiden bride with a restored virginity. She is again pure and she now departs this world she has painfully travelled through for a better husband.

Conclusion

If all these metaphors seem mixed and jumbled together—the up and down of the sinking and aspiring soul; the forward movement of a traveller; the stripped Clarissa clothed in a newly rewritten heart; rebirth; the maiden bride going to her bridegroom—it is because they are just that, metaphors: imperfect attempts to figure in language an experience beyond language. The metaphors of movement are especially important. Throughout the novel metaphors of vertical movement appear in moments of extreme distress. Clarissa dreams Lovelace stabs her and buries her in a pit with other bodies, a downward movement of the sinking, encumbering body. Lovelace dreams he grasps Clarissa as "the most angelic form... all clad in transparent white" lifts her into heaven, leaving him holding only "her azure robe" (4.136), another softly blurring image as Clarissa ascends naked into heaven. The whores at Sinclair's want to "level" Clarissa down with them in their dirt. Images of lateral movement likewise pervade the text, often appearing during more introspective moments—Clarissa is, in both Anna's and her own improved version of the allegory, a traveller moving through the world; she is, as Mrs. Norton says, "in the direct road to glory" (4.108). But this mixed movement of down and up and forward is the basic movement of all epics and allegories—from *Odyssey* to *Aeneid*, *Commedia* to *Paradise Lost*, *The Faerie Queene* to *Pilgrim's Progress*. The heroic soul suffers, goes down to an underworld, goes up to a paradise, moves forward to arrive home. Richardson *is* writing an epic. But it is an epic without extended metaphors or elaborate analogies. It is an epic not in a poetic sense but in the explanatory sense of a story that comprehends the world and the soul. And it is with a brief and final discussion of these matters that this study ends.

CONCLUSION: THE WOMB OF FATE

I read *Clarissa* as a species of allegory, even though allegory is, as my discussion of the traveller allegory that frames chapter four suggests, a word that must be carefully deployed.[68] Metaphor is not a much better word, however; neither is analogy. But calling it a novel of religious experience—that is, a "realistic" novel that describes the redemptive experience of Clarissa Harlowe—is too small: it elides the larger, mythic features of the novel. But since finding better words is difficult, I will settle on allegory and explain what I mean by it. The novel is *not* allegorical, at least not in the traditional sense. It is not an allegory like Dante, Spenser, and Bunyan writes—*Clarissa* is not a metaphoric reimagining of the heart in the world, nor is it wrapped in figurative language. There are no extended metaphors or analogies that form a imaginative centre; no this-for-that stories with hidden meanings; there are no vehicle elements to line up with a corresponding set of tenors. When these things are present in the novel they are supplied by characters within it attempting to make sense of the world around them. Anna Howe, for instance, may see things allegorically; the novel does not. In fact, in many ways *Clarissa* is un-allegorical to the extreme. The novel often seems sceptical of allegories. When characters spin allegories or metaphors, such as when Anna suggests the traveller allegory or Lovelace his Bunyanesque world-as-a-fair allegory, the results are small, slightly mean, more often than not evasive—they do not elaborate but rather contract our sense of the world. These spinners of allegories attempt to impose meaning on events much larger and more complex than their poetic flights can contain. Even the allegories that Clarissa writes in her post-rape fragments, such as the lion and lapdog or the "pernicious caterpillar" allegories, are small and represent not a total vision but a desperate attempt to find meaning when meaning is lost. *Clarissa* is, however, in what is perhaps a more ambiguous, broader sense of the term allegory, an extended image of the heart in trial, in test, in persecution. It is, in other words, an image of the soul in the world as understood by Christian doctrine, though even "image," too, is a word that Richardson's novel resists, if for no other reason than that Richardson intends for it to feel more real than an image.

In what possible sense, then, is *Clarissa* an allegory? It is an allegory in a very specific sense, one that Clarissa herself discovers through her meditations. It is an allegory in the sense that two stories join together, overlap, and become one. In an allegory, one story is two stories:

[68] However unsatisfying allegory may be as a word to describe *Clarissa*, Edward Copeland notes that "critics do tend to allegorize... From Richardson himself to the present day, critics have been telling us what the novel is 'about'" (256). So I will add my own allegorizing account and suggest what I think the novel is "about."

the literal meaning and the figurative or spiritual meaning. Redcross Knight kills the dragon; the righteous soul through perseverance triumphs over evil. In *Clarissa*, two stories become one: Clarissa's own story of suffering and abuse is, through a process of rewriting, absorbed into a larger drama of redemption. Neither story is figurative. In writing her meditations, Clarissa finds a story that explains her life. She writes this story onto herself, claiming it, performing it.

I am not quite alone in this sort of allegorical reading. Robert A. Erickson writes that

> the central dynamic of this enormously comprehensive novel is a parable of the redemption of the heart, a new version of the traditional Christian account of how the Old Testament law of the father God gives way... to a new covenant echoing the one first articulated by Jeremiah in the apogee of Hebrew prophecy and reformulated by St Paul in 2 Corinthians, a covenant written not in stone but in the tables of the heart. ("*Clarissa* and Scripture" 174-5)

Calling *Clarissa* "a parable of the redemption of the heart" is something I would agree with. I would want to trouble Erickson's use of "new," however. *Clarissa* is not new, not in the sense of version or covenant that Erickson mentions, both of which are words that, to me at least, suggest a soteriological shift on the scale of that between Old and New Testaments.[69] Erickson previously mentioned William Blake as a perhaps appropriate comparison to Richardson in terms of religious vision.[70] But Richardson is not Blake. Blake recast the Christian religion in his own imaginative mythology, and he did so with an eye to theological revolution. Richardson's vision, however much more intensified it may be in its dramatic realization than commonplace eighteenth-century religious sentiments, does not represent a radical departure or reimagining, even if it does call for a revolution of the heart, so to speak—a call to engage in the heart's better motions. Instead, Richardson, to use the language of the novel, "tests" and puts to a "trial" already established religious sentiments. If virtue is a good thing, Richardson asks, what are the limits of virtue and how much can it endure? What does it mean to be Christian in a world that ignores Christian feeling? Through his characters he distils religious convention to its purest

[69] And in one sense this is true of *Clarissa*. Richardson has created something "new." Clarissa Harlowe is without precedent. Aesthetically, she is "a new Eve for eighteenth-century woman," as Erickson later puts it (*Clarissa* and Scripture 195). Richardson's "new Eve" will becomes the mother of an English tradition of female characters, something for which literature is indebted to him.

[70] A comparison that—if comparing the most prosaic of prose writers with the most imaginative of imaginative writers can be called appropriate—I am particularly fond of, as my use of the phrase "grain of sand" suggests.

form in order to find what he hopes will be the essential truths. He then puts further pressure on these truths, seeing how much they can bear under excruciating circumstances. He is severe in his religious vision. But he is not new.

Instead of describing it as "new," I would suggest that there is, to introduce yet another word into this discussion, a sort of typology operating in *Clarissa*, one that the meditations allow Clarissa herself to see.[71] Clarissa comes to realise that her life is reiterating a religious struggle centuries old; that what is happening to her has happened to others; that though the specifics of her experience are unique to her they are not unique in what they mean—there are "sacred precedents" for what is happening to her. But this is not the sort of typology that looks forward, that foreshadows great events with smaller ones, that sees Clarissa as a new *telos*. Clarissa is not the fulfillment of a religious expectation; she is not a Christ figure, or at least she is no more so than any other Christian.[72] The typology in *Clarissa* is a repeating typology, a redemptive pattern, a mythic performance of individual religious experience in which the macrocosmic events of redemption are inscribed upon, and performed within, the microcosmic individual. The drama of redemption in *Clarissa* is deeply personal. It is performed, time and again, over and over, by individuals who—if they are careful to see it and willing to write themselves into it—witness the soteriological narrative operating within them individually. Clarissa does not write herself a *new* salvation; she writes herself *into* salvation. She is not creating something new; she is writing herself into something very old. By "substituting the word *her* for *him*," Clarissa writes herself into this typology, claiming the repeating cycles of redemption as her own.

Since the rape, Clarissa has been stitching herself together, re-inscribing a vision of self not only onto paper but upon the tatters of a broken heart. Unable to fulfill this demand, however, and feeling the sinking propensity of a body that "encumbers," she transcends the limits of self-sufficiency. As powerful as Clarissa's sense of self is, and as powerfully realized as Richardson presents it to us, it is not enough, and she must reach outside herself to achieve a final apotheosis. She again stitches. But instead of attempting to stitch together the pieces of her own life, she stitches those torn pieces of herself into an established narrative. She sublimates her heart into God. The Bible becomes Clarissa's interpretive matrix—by placing her own life in a

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[71] Thomas Keymer also uses the word typology, employing it to describe Clarissa's relationship to Job in the *Meditations*. ("Richardson's *Meditations*" 100).

[72] For discussion of Clarissa as Christ figure see Erickson's "'Written in the Heart': *Clarissa* and Scripture" as well as Peggy Thompson's "Abuse and Atonement: the Passion of Clarissa Harlowe."

subordinate position to a higher authority her small story is absorbed into that larger story and she learns to understand herself under a new aspect, in a new light. But this is not just a matter of self-awareness or understanding. This typological interpretive matrix is not just a way of seeing things. It is no accident that the novel begins in January and that Clarissa dies in September. The new Clarissa gestates during a nine-month ordeal of suffering and affliction in order to be reborn. So this Biblical matrix is a matrix in another sense: it is the matrix-womb. It is once again the "womb of fate," where fate now means God, into which Clarissa has written herself in order to be reborn as a new spiritual creature.

I call *Clarissa* an allegory because it strikes with the force of an allegory—it particularizes the universal. But it reverses the figurative bias of the Spensers and the Bunyans. The allegorists made the mundane life fantastic, populating it with spiritual heroes and monsters. Richardson makes the fantastic mundane, clothing a universal story of spiritual redemption in the drama of a persecuted young girl. This tension between the fantastic and the mundane is part of what William Hazlitt felt, I think, when he wrote that Richardson

> seemed to spin his material entirely out of his own brain, as if there had been nothing existing in the world beyond the little room in which he sat writing. There is an artificial reality about his works, which is no where else to be met with. They have the romantic air of a pure fiction, with the literal minuteness of a common diary. The author had the strongest matter-of-fact imagination that ever existed, and wrote the oddest mixture of poetry and prose. (117-18)

Hazlitt parses part of the tension that runs throughout Richardson's novels. The "romantic air of a pure fiction," the mode of the allegorist, converges with "the literal minuteness of a common diary," the mode of the realist. This convergence is what I have been calling Richardson's grain of sand vision of the heart—a vision that gives all the grandeur and importance of the most elevated heroic figure to the small, trembling, soft heart of a young girl.

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