

REPRESENTATIONS OF THE BODY AND THE SELF IN  
SAMUEL RICHARDSON'S CLARISSA  
AND  
SELECTED WORKS OF SUCCEEDING WRITERS

By  
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## Abstract

Ever since its first publication in 1747-48, Richardson's Clarissa has generated a variety of critical responses, in spite of the author's claim of transparency in his characterization and his attempts at directing the novel's reception. It is the objective of this thesis to expose and explore the contradictions and ambiguities which are inherent in Richardson's novel, to determine their origins, and to trace them in selected works of subsequent writers.

Informed by Foucauldian methodology, this thesis concentrates not only on the examination of the novel's discursive context and cultural-historical background but also on the investigation of particular, occasionally neglected, themes, such as gender, the body, power, technologies of the self, and friendship. Such an approach provides a new way of looking at Clarissa, as it presents the novel as located within a specific cultural context while at the same time influenced by various literary traditions as well as mythological notions and concepts; it further shows that Richardson's characterization fails to convey the author's professed didactic intentions.

The scope of the research extends to three areas of investigation. First, the thesis explores a variety of discourses, fictional and non-fictional, which preceded Clarissa or were written at about the same time and points out the way in which

Richardson appropriated them and the degree to which they influenced his work. These different, at times, conflicting, discourses assisted in rendering the novel complex and occasionally led to contradictions in the text. Second, concentrating on the protagonists of Clarissa, the thesis explores, in a textual analysis of the novel, issues of characterization. The notion that Clarissa and Lovelace are strict binary opposites -- Richardson had designed them as such -- is exposed as problematic. Instead, it will be seen not only that the contradictions and ambiguities within the two protagonists work against their depiction as transparent, clear-cut characters but also that Clarissa and Lovelace are in many ways similar. They are similar because both are placed within the same discursive systems -- such as the medical or the religious -- and because Richardson could not resist his personal involvement with his creation. Third, the thesis shows that the complexities of Richardson's novel become further apparent through the different ways in which successive writers responded to this work. Concentrating on selected novels by Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Sophie von La Roche, and Mary Wollstonecraft, the thesis contends that subsequent novelists expose problematic areas in Clarissa, either by following in Richardson's footsteps or by responding to his work in an innovative fashion.

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Abbreviations of Works by Michel Foucault

- CS        The Care of the Self: Volume 3 of The History of Sexuality, 1978
- EC        “The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom” (printed in Final Foucault, 1988)
- DP        Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, 1979
- GE        “On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress” (printed in The Foucault Reader, 1984)
- HS        The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction, 1978
- MC        Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason, 1965
- OT        The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences, 1973
- PK        Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings, 1972-1977, 1980
- TS        “Technologies of the Self” (essay printed in a book of the same title)
- UP        The Use of Pleasure: Volume 2 of The History of Sexuality, 1985

## Note on the Texts

Richardson published the first edition of Clarissa during the years 1747-48. In the following years he repeatedly revised his novel, primarily in order to improve its style, but also in order to control and direct the response of his readers. Since the first edition of Clarissa is endowed with an exceptional immediacy and dramatic quality, I have used that version as my primary text. References to Angus Ross's 1984 edition (Penguin), the first edition of Clarissa, will appear in the text of my thesis (in brackets after quotations) and will be followed by references to the four-volume Everyman edition (the third edition of the novel).

For Wollstonecraft's Mary; A Fiction I used a facsimile reprint (1788), published in 1974. All quotations from Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's novel are taken from Edouard Guitton's 1989 edition of Paul et Virginie. For Sophie von La Roche's Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim, I consulted Barbara Becker-Cantarino's 1983 German edition and Christa Baguss Britt's 1991 English translation. References to all these editions will appear in the text (in brackets following the quotations).



## Chapter 1:

### Theoretical Framework: An Introduction to Foucauldian Methodology and Its Application to Eighteenth-Century Novels

The oeuvre of Michel Foucault provides the theoretical framework for my analysis of several eighteenth-century novels and the fictional and non-fictional context in which they were written. In his History of Sexuality, Vol. I, Foucault draws attention to various themes, related to sexuality, which the literature of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries tries to suppress but which are evidently present in the texts of the time. An application of Foucault's methodology may then reveal that what appears to have been marginalized does actually have its true place at the centre of the discourse. Tracing marginalized themes such as, for example, the relationship between the body and power, or the construction of gender categories, not only in Richardson's Clarissa, the central text of my investigation, but also in a variety of discourses, only partially or even un-related, may provide new insight into Richardson's work. Apart from Foucault's notion of discourses on sexuality, two other aspects of his work, namely his analysis of relations of power and his examination of the technologies of the self, are of importance for an understanding and new reading of Richardson's Clarissa and successive fictional works.

## I. Discourses on sexuality

A central point of Foucault's work is the notion that sex, understood by him as "a heterogeneous ensemble of things: the body, the sexual organs, pleasures, kinship relations, interpersonal relations, and so forth" (PK, 210), was "put into discourse" (HS, 11) toward the end of the seventeenth century. Significantly, literary scholarship in the field of English fiction has shown that early realist fiction, which was used as a vehicle for the distribution of new ideas affecting both society in general and the individual in particular, matches approximately the time frame Foucault assigns to the rise of sexuality as a discursive apparatus.<sup>1</sup> In disagreement with the long-held view that the coming into power of the bourgeoisie, who were strongly influenced by Puritan beliefs, also marked the beginning of the progressive suppression of matters related to sexuality, Foucault argues that

the "putting into discourse of sex," far from undergoing a process of restriction, on the contrary has been subjected to a mechanism of increasing incitement; that the techniques of power exercised over sex have not obeyed a principle of rigorous selection, but rather one of dissemination and implantation of polymorphous sexualities. (HS, 12)

In contrast to the previous romance literature, set either in a far-away world or closely associated with the life of the aristocracy and therefore largely inaccessible or alien to middle class readers, realist fiction placed the bourgeoisie at the centre of attention. In fact, many of the non-fictional texts of the time and a great number of the prominent and popular novels of the age problematized concerns that were of common interest

and often related to sexuality: the question of how to dispose of a young woman who has reached marriageable age; the necessity of establishing and maintaining a successful marriage, free of adultery, domestic conflict, or indifference; the difficulties a young woman faces in finding her place in society; and the need for individuals to display desirable social behaviour, that is, to avoid extremes such as libertinism or self-imposed virginity, in order to be beneficial to society. Both fictional and non-fictional discourses not only served as arenas in which these questions and problems could be raised and discussed, but also ventured to put forward advice and possible new solutions, and thus either contributed to or reflected the change of ideas in society.<sup>2</sup>

### Origins, Nature, and Form

Since the transposition of sex into discourse took place primarily in the literature disseminated by the bourgeoisie, Foucault links this process to class.<sup>3</sup> He further holds that the newly empowered middle classes vastly increased the emphasis on the body and its purity because they wished to set themselves apart from the aristocracy and thereby give new status to their own class:

The bourgeoisie made [sex] identical with its body, or at least subordinated the latter to the former by attributing to it a mysterious and undefined power; it staked its life and its death on sex by making it responsible for its future welfare; ...[it] looked to its progeny and the health of its organism when it laid claim to a specific body. (HS, 124)

Associating the mores of the aristocracy with depravity and corruption, segments of the middle class felt that their chance for social advancement had come and proclaimed the purity of both their physical and social body. Thereby they endeavoured to have a rejuvenating and reformatory influence on the society of their time. Foucault sees the bourgeois establishment of a distinctive body and sexuality as a positive act, as the expression of a genuine desire to improve society rather than discriminate against or exploit other sections of society. As the middle class gradually became aware of “what the ‘cultivation’ of its own body could represent politically, economically, and historically for the present and the future of the bourgeoisie” (HS, 125), however, it may have tried, by imposing censorship on certain ways of talking about sex and encouraging the proliferation of others, to silence some discourses in favour of others. The growth in number of eighteenth-century novels which have at their centre a woman’s struggle against a hostile society, seems to indicate that the female body in particular had become a symbol not only for the vulnerability of the upwardly mobile classes but also for their stamina and increasing confidence. While Defoe’s Moll Flanders and Roxana, for instance, present examples of the marketability of a woman’s body and indicate a new spirit of survival and resistance, Richardson’s Clarissa and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre’s Paul et Virginie, which make questions of purity and restraint the focus of their discourses, opt for the deaths of their virtuous and chaste heroines, almost as if to purge society of its evils through the sacrifice of a virgin in order to restore its health and order.

Foucault further draws a connection between discourses on sexuality and the political and economic processes of the time by pointing out that the discussion of sex increasingly assumed "the form of analysis, stocktaking, classification, and specification, of quantitative and causal studies" (HS, 24). Empiricism, the growth in rationality, and the Puritan habit of daily stocktaking may have influenced this development. I will mention here two rather secular literary examples: while Defoe's female protagonists continually emphasize the economic and financial advantages that may accrue from the generous disposal of their bodies, Cleland's pornographic novel Fanny Hill presents a central character who is obsessed with the detailed stocktaking of her sexual exploits.

With the growing importance of domesticity and the gradual change from the extended to the nuclear family, the new focal point of sexuality came to be the home: "since the eighteenth century the family has become an obligatory locus of affects, feelings, love; ...sexuality has its privileged point of development in the family" (HS, 108). The growth of affection and the increased concern for the individual's wishes contributed, for instance, to the assignment of more importance to sexuality within a marriage.<sup>4</sup> As Richardson's works show, the choice of the appropriate marriage partner becomes a central topic in literature. Although Richardson professes to place emphasis on the religious and moral compatibility of prospective spouses, the importance of the aspects of physical attraction and sexual desire should not be underrated.

### Interest in the Body and Desire

Far from accepting the notion that discussing sex was prohibited, Foucault argues that, from the late seventeenth century on, we find various centres -- mainly different institutions, medical, religious, legal and political -- in which discourses on sexuality are produced. This development resulted in the emergence of a number of experts in the field, each approaching sexuality from a different angle. He speaks of

the multiplication of discourses concerning sex in the field of exercise of power itself: an institutional incitement to speak about it, and to do so more and more; a determination on the part of the agencies of power to hear it spoken about, and to cause it to speak through explicit articulation and endlessly accumulated detail (HS, 18)

which may explain the existence of discordant views on topics related to sexuality. For instance, seventeenth-century medical treatises, which still echoed the age-old apprehensions about women's physical capabilities, gradually began to change from the one-sex to the two-sex model.<sup>5</sup> As a result, women's relegation, at the end of the century, to the domestic sphere as their "natural" habitat may well have found the official support of the medical community which, at about the same time, decided to ascribe the differences between men and women, among them women's weakness, to their different anatomies rather than to gender-related characteristics, that is, socially acquired forms of behaviour. Contemporary religious writing, in part still in the tradition of the Church Fathers, tended to warn of the dangers of the body and therefore advocated its renunciation in favour of the soul. In the political and

philosophical literature of the time, we find two opposing sides, both of them influential on writers in other areas: the Hobbesian view of life, which advocated the pursuit of one's worldly pleasures and the general disregard of the wishes of others, was opposed by Christian Platonist schools of thought which, like the religious writers of the time, emphasized the concern for the individual within the community, the care of the soul, and the orientation of one's life toward eternity.<sup>6</sup> Early conduct and periodical literature was especially important for the dissemination of new ideas on sexuality. It frequently addressed itself to a female audience, the concerns of whom it purportedly represented. Despite claims of elevating women by lending an ear to their problems, the advice given and the notions presented in periodical essays and conduct treatises often matched the problematic views of other discourses.

Foucault attributes the increased interest in the body and desire from the seventeenth century onward primarily to the old and persistent notion that sexuality constitutes a secret, mysterious force in life:

sex gradually became an object of great suspicion; the general and disquieting meaning that pervades our conduct and our existence, in spite of ourselves; the point of weakness where evil portents reach through to us; the fragment of darkness that we each carry within us: a general signification, a universal secret, an omnipresent cause, a fear that never ends. (HS, 69)

This notion would later lead to the belief that one can only know the truth about oneself if one uncovers the mysteries of sexuality.<sup>7</sup> The empirically motivated and institutionally induced need to reveal and analyse these mysteries may then also account for the attention given to them in literary works. In England the concern about sexuality and the particular manner of dealing with it seem to have been triggered, in

addition, by contemporary political and social events: thus, the tendency to substitute, at least on the surface, edifying and moralizing notions for frankness about sexuality, could well be seen both as a reaction to the excesses at the court of Charles II and as an indication that Puritanism, wide-spread among the upwardly mobile and increasingly influential middle classes, had taken a hold on society.

Female sexuality constituted a special area of interest, as it had in the centuries before, a terrain populated by suspicions and apprehensions. Many of these can probably be traced back to mythical times when images of the triple goddess haunted the minds of men.<sup>8</sup> With the rise of the bourgeoisie, at the end of a long period of witch hunts, however, deviancy, often gender- or sex-related and still, at times, associated with women, was no longer aimlessly persecuted, but instead approached in a “rational” manner which encouraged the production of a relevant body of knowledge.

### The “Repressive Hypothesis” Versus Modes of Confession

Foucault’s notion of the proliferation of discourses on sexuality from a certain time onward rests on his exposure of the “repressive hypothesis” as a myth. He shows that, although sexuality appeared to have been relegated to the margins, individuals were encouraged to reveal in detail their innermost thoughts and private actions. Thus late seventeenth-century society was permeated by the requirement both to conceal and



expose matters related to sexuality. The incitement to conceal is evident in the changes in the literary language of the time. Foucault points out that “there was [most likely] an expurgation -- and a very rigorous one -- of the authorized vocabulary” and that perhaps “a whole rhetoric of allusion and metaphor was codified” (HS, 17). The works of literary critics and poets of the time show that a refinement of the language -- its new code words being “propriety,” “perspicuity,” and “decorum” -- was recommended and put into practice by writers like Dryden and Pope.<sup>9</sup> Addison and Steele, in their Tatler and Spectator essays, took the reforms, initiated by the attention given to language, even further and tried to improve English society as a whole, particularly people’s manners and conduct. There was, however, always the possibility that writers who professed to be primarily concerned with morality and ethical issues pursued in reality quite different interests. Richardson, for example, who in his letters criticized his rival Fielding for his immoralities in Tom Jones and Amelia, was himself probably more occupied with sexuality in his work than many of his colleagues.<sup>10</sup>

In a strangely paradoxical manner, the incitement to conceal was accompanied by the almost “infinite task of telling -- telling oneself and another, as often as possible, everything that might concern the interplay of innumerable pleasures, sensations, and thoughts which, through the body and the soul, had some affinity with sex” (HS, 20). This practice resulted in a disparate relationship between the one who tells and the one who listens, that is, between the one who seeks advice and the one who gives it. Also, due to its monitoring and disciplining function, it became an important element of the Christian technologies of the self and culminated in Catholic

confessions. Modified by Puritan diaries and spiritual autobiographies, influenced by the habits of financial stocktaking in business and trade, and tested in the “letters to the editor” of numerous early periodicals, confessional techniques found their way into fiction. In particular, the epistolary novel, strongly influenced by Richardson’s familiar letters and brought to its perfection in his novel Clarissa, reflects the new trend of discussing private matters publicly. The concerns of the individual, preferably intimate and domestic, now become the centre of the readers’ attention. While economic considerations and sexuality merge in Defoe’s fictional autobiography, Moll Flanders, in which the heroine marks the end of each relationship with a careful calculation of her finances, questions of understanding the self and relating this knowledge to others converge and are dealt with in Richardson’s novel when Clarissa gives her friend Anna detailed accounts of her changing mind and situation. Although the genres of letter-writing and autobiography suggest a strong element of subjectivity, since they give the individual an opportunity to write the self, they also possess, in the act of composition, an element of objectivity which may point to the writers’ wish to direct their readers and elicit specific responses.

### Binary Oppositions

In his History of Sexuality, Vol. I, Foucault argues that the deployment of sexuality as a discursive apparatus was partly achieved through binary oppositions, of which he

mentions the following: flesh/spirit, instinct/reason, drives/consciousness (HS, 78), and the permitted/the forbidden (HS, 107). The act of dichotomization seems to necessitate the unequal assignment of value and can therefore easily be used for the uneven concentration of power. Directed toward the reform and improvement of their readers' behaviour, sermons and conduct books employ binary oppositions in order to disseminate their moral message. There are, however, contradictions inherent in their line of argumentation which is based primarily on the contrast of body and soul: emphasizing the need to monitor and care for the body, they point, at the same time, to its transitory nature and hence its lack of value, and expect their readers to renounce it at any time for things spiritual. Similarly, conduct and periodical literature which addresses questions of female behaviour also reveals ambivalences in its recommendations: on the one hand, women are urged to display passivity which renders them helpless and defenceless; on the other hand, they are told to acquire and cultivate various physical and moral qualifications, such as, "modesty," "delicacy," and "chastity" which will make them more attractive to men. Thus, if they follow social standards and prescribed forms of behaviour, they become helpless victims and are at the mercy of the male half of society. Binary oppositions, closely connected with sexuality, are also at work in contemporary novels: there they are often employed in order to indicate the dichotomies of good/bad and moral/immoral, and usually form an integral part of the author's didactic intentions. In Richardson's Pamela and Clarissa, however, owing to a lack of transparency with regard to the main characters' actions and motivations, these oppositions become problematic and perhaps reversible or

interchangeable, whereas Richardson's successors use them in a more definite manner, largely devoid of contradictions.

## II. Relations of Power

The deployment of discourses on sexuality intended to reform human behaviour and normalize social conduct seems to suggest the involvement of power, in one form or another, especially if we consider the possibility that some discourses were silenced in favour of others or that segments of society were relegated to specific spheres.

Foucault's understanding of power is not based, however, on the conventional idea of dominance and subordination, but rather endorses notions of flexibility and change. He argues that power is seldom centralized, but "changeable, reversible, and unstable"

(EC, 12), and should be examined in terms of the relations of forces:

Power must be understood ...as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization. ...Relations of power are not in a position of exteriority with respect to other types of relationships (economic processes, knowledge relationships, sexual relations), but are immanent in the latter; they are the immediate effects of the divisions, inequalities, and disequilibriums which occur in the latter, and conversely they are the internal conditions of these differentiations. (HS, 92-94)

Although power is often considered repressive and therefore negative, Foucault sees the relations of power as productive and positive. He refuses to locate them only on the larger level of society but sees them also operate in familial and sexual relationships. Furthermore, he argues that elements of resistance are built into relations

of power and are a necessary part of them. Power can be produced and changed through the specific manoeuvres of individuals in their relationships and interactions with others. In Richardson's novel most characters have taken a side in the struggle over Clarissa's body, upon which the power of each of them depends. All of them, Clarissa included, have their own interests in mind when they consider the fate of the young woman. They frequently try to manipulate others in order to gain advantage for themselves, and thus provide for continuous fluctuations of power in the discourse.

#### Deployment and Impact

Explaining how relations of power may be implanted in society, Foucault speaks of disciplinary techniques, used in order to develop proficiencies and competencies.

These could be directed either at the body per se, in order to secure "its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls" (HS, 139), or could be aimed at particular social groups, in order to achieve "the calculated management of life" (HS, 140). In the process of this "explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations" (HS, 140), individuals may be deprived of certain kinds of power but they may also be provided with new and different forms. When, toward the end of the seventeenth century, a new notion of female perfection arose, based on female restraint and self-discipline, women were, as a consequence, restricted in their freedom and

expected to adhere to certain codes of conduct. At the same time, however, they were empowered within the specific social sphere assigned to them. The private and domestic came to be the new centre for women.<sup>11</sup> Throughout the eighteenth century literary attempts at reform also led to the production of new representations of the masculine designed as models of the socially desirable man: Steele's anti-duelling efforts were aimed at creating the less violent and more benevolent man; Richardson projected his Sir Charles Grandison as a male paragon; and numerous late eighteenth-century novelists favoured the sentimental man. In most of these examples, men were expected to give up some of their social interests, that is, part of their influence and authority in the public sphere, and re-channel their social energies into domesticity.

Disciplinary techniques may be either prescribed, recommended, or self-imposed. In the case of Clarissa, they are imposed on her both from outside, in the form of gender-related and class-specific behaviour, and from within, in the form of a sense of superiority which induces her to set herself apart from others and consider herself above them.

If the many voices who argue that sexuality has a firm grip on human beings are correct and if Foucault is also right in his claim that, at a certain historical moment, sex was turned into discourse, then discourses on sexuality may be powerful indeed. Their power arises from the way in which they displace the spectacularity of the body onto the sobriety of the word without lessening the impact on individuals: "Power's hold on sex is maintained through language, or rather through the act of discourse that creates, from the very fact that it is articulated, a rule of law" (HS, 83).

Attempts by bourgeois individuals to eradicate the body, that source of so many feelings of guilt, by turning the flesh into the word and then relegating it to the margins of the text, often failed, leaving people more than ever under the spell of the body and its desires. In addition, various institutions, eager to gather knowledge on the body, added to the already existing pressures on the individual through the production of their own discourses. Dismissing the “repressive hypothesis” as a myth, Foucault sees sexuality as a historical construction, namely, the product of various forms of discursive attention given to the subject:

Sexuality must not be thought of as a kind of natural given which power tries to hold in check, or as an obscure domain which knowledge tries gradually to uncover. It is the name that can be given to a historical construct: not a furtive reality that is difficult to grasp, but a great surface network in which the stimulation of bodies, the intensification of pleasures, the incitement to discourse, the formation of special knowledges, the strengthening of controls and resistances, are linked to one another, in accordance with a few major strategies of knowledge and power. (HS, 105-106)

From the seventeenth century on, the proliferation of scientific discourses on the body and sexuality is accompanied by the denial and absence of the two in other, predominantly moralistic and didactic, forms of literature. In those works, attention given to the soul is substituted for the attention given to the body. When those works are read within the discursive context of the time, however, what then appears to be absent from, or suppressed in, the text may emerge as the very heart of the discourse. Richardson’s Clarissa, for instance, may well revolve around topics such as the loss of virginity, the horrors of prostitution, and the progressive dissolution of the violated body. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre’s Paul et Virginie may have at its centre the problem of female desire and the threat of incest, while Sophie von La Roche’s Geschichte des

Fräuleins von Sternheim seems to focus on a young woman's exposure to seduction, sexual manipulation and abuse. Although these topics are at the core of the respective novels, they are dealt with by circumlocution, without losing, however, their impact or centrality.

### Resistance

Foucault assigns great importance to the notion of resistance, which, as he argues, is built into the relations of power: "where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (HS, 95). Foucault speaks of heterogeneous forms, that is, "a plurality of resistances" (HS, 96), which he sees not necessarily as forms of reaction to the forces of power but as always already there as integral parts of these relations, as an "irreducible opposite" (HS, 96). Unpredictable by nature, they reveal themselves in an irregular fashion: "the points, knots, or focuses of resistance are spread over time and space at varying densities, at times mobilizing groups or individuals in a definitive way, inflaming certain points of the body, certain moments in life, certain types of behaviour" (HS, 96). Although they may sometimes occur in the form of "great radical ruptures" or "massive binary divisions" (HS, 96), they appear more often as

mobile and transitory points of resistance, producing cleavages in a society that shift about, fracturing unities and effecting regroupings, furrowing across individuals themselves, cutting them up and remolding them, marking off irreducible regions in them, in their bodies and minds. (HS, 96)



In Richardson's Clarissa, for example, it is for the most part unclear who acts and who reacts. Although Clarissa may be predominantly passive and intent on fending off the manipulations carried on around, and because of, her, both her family and Lovelace claim to respond to the power Clarissa holds. Also in this novel, we find various instances of shifting allegiance between or even within characters. Mrs. Harlowe, Clarissa's mother, for instance, does not consistently support her daughter, and Anna Howe, Clarissa's best friend, repeatedly appears to change her mind about the advice she gives. Clarissa herself is torn between the wish to appease her family and the need to assert her will. In addition, within her, the demands of the body seem to struggle with the desire to care for the soul. Her antagonist, Lovelace, also appears to display internal divisions: he knows that he will have to follow the code of the libertine if he wishes to uphold his reputation, and yet he loathes the idea of having to rape the young woman who has made a strong impression on him.

Referring to the significance of the notion of resistance for writing, Foucault speaks of the "polyvalence" of discourses (HS, 100), of their ability to be both, and simultaneously, in support of and in opposition to power:

Discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it, any more than silences are. We must make allowance for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it. (HS, 100-101)

Thus, the purpose as well as outcome of a discourse may change according to who controls it, the individual's degree of power at the moment of enunciation, and the

context in which the discourse is produced. The Harlowes may appear to be in control when they impose restrictions and confinement on Clarissa. The very fact that Clarissa is able to evade their disciplining actions through her correspondence and her escape, however, shows that their power is limited. In fact, the whole novel, the story of Clarissa, can be regarded as a vast discourse of resistance, made up of a plurality of discourses from which emanate various forms of power and the reactions to them. In Clarissa the boundaries between discourses of power and those of resistance are fluid; the novel's discursive fluctuations of power are therefore compatible with Foucault's definition:

There is not, on the one side, a discourse of power, and opposite it, another discourse that runs counter to it. Discourses are tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations; there can exist different or even contradictory discourses within the same strategy. (HS, 101-102)

Although Clarissa's apparent lack of resistance and some of her questionable actions and statements seem to play into the hands of her oppressors, the young woman is later able to use them as part of a larger strategy which presents her in the role of victim and saint.

### Power and the Body

With the onset of Enlightenment empiricism, the body becomes increasingly "an object of knowledge and an element in relations of power" (HS, 107). Foucault speaks of the classical age's notion of Man-the-Machine, "a docile body that may be subjected,

used, transformed, and improved” (DP, 136). From the seventeenth century on, the body is examined, classified, trained, and corrected. This tendency to subject the body to a variety of scrutinizing procedures contributes to the growing categorization and normalization of human behaviour. The deployment of sexuality forms an essential part of this process. Foucault notes “a gradual progression away from the problematic of relations toward a problematic of the ‘flesh’” (HS, 108), that is, a shift from the emphasis on marital relationships to a concern with the body. The demands and desires of the body become increasingly important and are at the centre of fictional and non-fictional works. Although concerns of the soul purportedly receive more attention, there is much emphasis on techniques of monitoring and controlling physical needs. In Richardson’s Clarissa, for example, much of the discourse rests on the question of how to dispose of the body of a young woman of marriageable age, a question on which the different sides have different considerations, physical, economic, and spiritual. Both the projected mercenary marriage and the rape present instances of intrusions on the unwilling body. However, both are also seen as threats to the soul’s well-being, since the soul may be either beneficiary or victim, depending on what is being done to the body.

In his History of Sexuality, Vol. I, Foucault argues that the expanding power-knowledge system employed the “hysterization” of the female body as one of its key strategies in order to gain control over the human body. A variety of experts, often self-appointed, in different fields began to analyse and explain the female body and, from the seventeenth century on, restricted a woman’s value and influence in a three-

step operation: women's bodies were reduced to their sexuality; the "pathologization" of their bodies was set in motion; and, finally, because of the particular capabilities of their bodies, women's function in society was reduced to the area of reproduction and nurturing (HS, 104). As a result, women were relegated to their own sphere, the domestic, where they gained in power. One might wonder, however, whether the web of perceptions and myths spun around the new locus of social values, the nuclear family residing in blissful domesticity, was not meant to replace the older myths about the eternal mysteriousness and elusiveness of woman, in an effort to fix her once and for all into socially acceptable categories, and to determine and prescribe her limitations. The emphasis on a woman's chastity or virginity, that is, the integrity of her body, for instance, constituted an important aspect of this process of "hysterization". It promoted the proliferation of discourses on this topic, in the form of both fictional and non-fictional works which in turn succeeded to "draw curiosity and desires around [women]" (UP, 213):

No matter what inferior position may have been reserved for them in the family or in society, there would be an accentuation, a valorization, of the "problem" of women. Their nature, their conduct, the feeling they inspired or experienced, the permitted or forbidden relationship one might have with them were to become themes of reflection, knowledge, analysis, and prescription.

(UP, 213-214)

Female chastity and virginity form important topics in many eighteenth-century novels. For Clarissa, virginity constitutes an integral part of her conception of the self. The Harlowes and Lovelace, however, make numerous attempts to reduce her to her body and sexuality -- we find in Richardson's novel allusions to female desire, rape, a suspected pregnancy, and a woman's decline into prostitution. Furthermore,

Richardson also presents instances of the “hysterical” woman: repeatedly, Clarissa comes under the spell of her body, as her fainting and hysterical fits, her inability to control the manipulations of her body, and her mysterious, perhaps specifically female, death show.

### III. The Technologies of the Self

In his later work, Foucault places special importance on the technologies of the self, an ancient technique of self-monitoring which he traces back to antiquity and which, in its emphasis on the act of disciplining and controlling the self, is associated with power. These technologies, which

permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality (TS, 18),

are primarily geared toward the care not of the body but of the soul. The body, however, still plays an important role in the practice of caring for the self, since matters related to the body – in Richardson’s novel, for example, the choice of the appropriate marriage partner – will eventually also affect the soul. Clarissa constructs her conception of the self on the balance between body and soul, as she is aware that proficiency in the technologies of the self will provide her with control, not only with the mastery of the self but also with influence on others. Clarissa’s care of the self appears to consist of a combination of ancient and Christian technologies of the self.

The presence of a combination of influences may then explain the ambiguity surrounding the woman's actions and professed intentions. She seems to be torn between the Christian renunciation of the self, of which the body is an integral part, and the ancient notion of bringing one's life to a perfection while in this world, that is, making it a "work of art," the memory of which will be cherished and admired for generations to come.

In both ancient and early Christian technologies of the self, the body and sexuality were considered potential sources of danger for the self. It was therefore widely believed that an understanding of and control over the two would prevent calamities and distress. As Foucault and his followers have suggested, the need to know the self seems to have gained importance in the epistemological break that introduced the modern age: "Beginning in seventeenth century Catholic confessional practices and continuing in twentieth century psychoanalysis, the task of scrutinizing our sexual behaviour came to be understood as a means of discovering [the truth] for better understanding ourselves."<sup>12</sup> In The Care of the Self Foucault argues that Christian authors borrowed extensively from the corpus of classical ethical thought which concentrated on "a mistrust of the pleasures [and] an emphasis on the consequences of their abuse for the body and the soul" (CS, 39). Furthermore, long-held apprehensions about women and their bodies, widespread in Hellenic society because of the extensive social separation between men and women and the careful division between male and female activities, also seem to have found their way into Christian thought. For Greek men "the female body, with its secrecy and its particular

characteristics, was charged with ambiguous power” (CS, 223). In Richardson’s Clarissa, Lovelace repeatedly voices suspicions about the female protagonist’s sexuality and desires. He suspects that she is not what she appears to be, namely, a paragon of virtue. Convinced that eventually her defences will come down and she will admit that she is attracted to him, he is intent on testing her perseverance. Clarissa, on the other hand, is at least partially aware of the dangers that may arise from her desires. Instead of dealing with them, however, she resorts to the denial of any preference for Lovelace and to various attempts to control her body, and monitor and discipline the self.

### Genealogy of the Technologies

The technologies of the self do not originate in Christianity but can be traced back to antiquity. There we find similar techniques, with different incentives and goals, however, because of different areas of problematization. A fundamental difference lies in the fact that the adherence to Greek ethical beliefs was considered a matter of personal choice, whereas Christian technologies were soon turned into imperative conduct. In Hellenic ethical thought no authoritarian system outside individuals tried to exert an influence on them or subject them to disciplinary measures. Within Greek ethics there were various schools of thought, each of which used different technologies: the Platonic ethic was founded on the recommendation that individuals

should strive for the recognition of themselves (gnothi seauton), that is, the realization of who they are and what is inside them, whereas Stoics believed in the appropriation of truths, doctrines, principles, and rules of conduct which would then help them to behave appropriately in whatever situation they might be in. Epicureans, by contrast, held that one had to know the world in order to take care of oneself (EC, 7; GE, 360). Foucault argues that, during the religious crisis of the sixteenth century, several ancient Stoic practices were reactivated and included in the “new modes of relationship to the self [which] were being developed” (GE, 368), among them the experience of the self as “an attempt to determine what one can do and cannot do with one’s available freedom” (GE, 368). He believes that a shift in significance and meaning occurs, since the same Stoic practices when successfully employed in Christian technologies are no longer interpreted as evidence that one is in control of oneself but “serve to test one’s dependence on God” (GE, 368). They are designed to remind one of one’s transitory nature, one’s weakness, and utter reliance on God, and to encourage the individual cheerfully to dispose of the body. In contrast to the Christian renunciation of the body for the sake of the soul, the Greek care of the self did not seek salvation, that is, strive for a state of being beyond the immediate verifiable reach. Instead, the “correct” care, namely that care which does not entail the abuse of power over others, was thought to lead to personal contentment and was believed to have been achieved when individuals had a sense of their identity, knew their abilities and their place in society, and were aware of their expectations and limitations (EC, 8).



### Techniques of the Care

Many techniques of the care of the self can be traced back to ancient Western traditions, although they may now be associated with certain Christian beliefs. An important one is the constant activity of writing as an efficient way of cultivating and monitoring the self, “in order to reactivate for oneself the truths one needs” (TS, 27). It may consist of taking notes on oneself in order to re-read them later, keeping notebooks for different purposes, and writing letters to friends in need of advice. The self becomes an important theme or object to write about. The Greeks, for example, cultivated the use of hypomnemata, that is, “account books, public registers, individual notebooks serving as memoranda,” also used as “books of life” [and] “guides for conduct” (GE, 365), in which the emphasis was on the description of the actions of the day, not on the thoughts of, or meditations on, those actions. Gradually, through the perfection of the practice of letter-writing, however, the examination of conscience became important and marked a shift to the concentration on the self. This technique becomes an integral part of the Christian care of the self. It can be found predominantly in Puritan diaries and spiritual autobiographies, an abundance of which were published in the seventeenth century and influenced early novel-writing. Both the fictional autobiographies of Defoe and Richardson’s epistolary novels have to be seen in this tradition. In Clarissa the act of writing may well be the most important act in the novel, as it is crucial in constituting the selves of the different, opposing writers.

The act of writing enables Clarissa to reflect on her past actions, examine her motivations, and vent her anger and frustrations. It serves as the medium through which her voice is heard and which she can use for her self-defence, for the denial of any guilt, and for the exertion of influence on others. It is the tool which will render her victorious: it ensures her permanence and continuity, because it allows her to influence and determine the representation of her life.

Obedience and the need for guidance are two other techniques of the self. Already in antiquity we encounter a strong sense that one needs to have guidance, that one is not a self-enclosed entity but should seek communication and interaction which will ultimately be beneficial to the self: "the care of the self implies ...a relationship to the other to the extent that, in order to really care for the self, one must listen to the teachings of a master. One needs a guide, a counsellor, a friend -- someone who will tell you the truth" (EC, 7). In early Christianity, monks submitted to a master or guide which often required the "sacrifice of the self, of the subject's own will" (TS, 45). A few centuries later, with the rise of protestantism and individualism, the urge to obtain guidance and the wish to be obedient, now to Christ and the word of God, become increasingly distinctive attributes of believers. Clarissa, who wishes to be seen as a strict follower of Christian instructions, professes to the utmost obedience of God's injunctions. She claims to see her friend Anna as guide and counsellor, and appeals for her assistance. Most of the time, however, the roles seem to be reversed: deeming her own intuition and her own understanding superior to the views of others, Clarissa frequently does not heed other people's advice, but instead is eager to counsel them.

Contemplation and self-examination, also important techniques in caring for the self, became especially relevant for the Puritans. Both techniques have to be attributed to the wish to attain knowledge of the self which is then gladly renounced. Clarissa's meditations and her fragmentary writing after the rape are instances of these techniques in action and serve as means of reconstructing the self. More importantly, they provide her with the awareness that she can replace the violated body with discourse and thus regain her old sense of integrity.

### Christianity and the Ancient Technologies

With time, Christian technologies of the self, imperative to believers, took the place of the ancient techniques, the observance of which had been a matter of personal choice. Foucault points out that Christianity appropriated elements of the Hellenic epimeleia heautou (the care of one's self) and modified them by increasingly turning them into epimeleia ton allon (the care of others) (GE, 370). Concentration on oneself was replaced by obligatory altruism. The basis for this development was already set in ancient times, however, since caring for the self, as it was understood by Greek philosophers, often also implied at least the consideration of others: "care for self can ...be entirely centered on one's self, on what one does, on the place one occupies among others; ...it can be, at the same time, if not care for others, at least a care for one's self which will be beneficial to others" (EC, 9). Another significant modification

occurred when Christian technologies put emphasis on the soul as the new object of the individual's care. The soul became the new focus of all attention and the element on which one's salvation depended. The old "cultivation of the self" was thus absorbed by the Christian pastoral institution, and a previous form of attitude or mode of behaviour "evolved into procedures, practices, and formulas that people reflected on, developed, perfected, and taught" (CS, 45). The new, Christian idea of the self not only had its focus on the care of the soul and the care of others, but also proclaimed the new self as a self which one had to renounce in order to please God and obey his will. The self that had to be renounced was symbolized by the body to which one was not supposed to cling. Seventeenth-century sermons, religious treatises, and conduct books were prominent vehicles for the dissemination of the Christian notion of the dichotomy between body and soul. Echoing the obviously paradoxical Christian notion of the simultaneous care and sacrifice of the self, they recommended the preservation of the body's integrity while they also insisted on contempt of the world, and suspicions of the body and the dangers emanating from it. Clarissa constructs her conception of the self on the notion of the equal care of both body and soul. She seems to have internalized the paradoxical advice the Christian pastoral is spreading and therefore knows that, in order to accommodate the demands of the body as well as the need to preserve its purity, she has to master the precarious balance between body and soul which will then guarantee her control over others.

From the beginning, Christianity developed a number of different approaches to the problem of the body and its desires. Requiring its followers to subject themselves to rigorous examinations of conscience and, in the Catholic Church, extensive confessions, Christianity tried, by emphasizing desire and its dangers, to eradicate it. It appropriated, for its own purposes, earlier models of abstinence, for example, Stoic forms of mastery of the self, and argued that “renunciation can give access to a spiritual experience of truth that sexual activity excluded” (UP, 20). Attempting to prepare Christians for eternity, the church demanded that its believers suppress their desires and try to gain control over themselves, which would render them worthy of exercising power over others. Aware of the influence a morally perfect individual may have on others, Clarissa is constantly working to improve her self, seeking to achieve perfection. She tries very hard to conceal her weaknesses and emphasizes her points of superiority. Frequently, she presents herself in the role of a person who renounces things she cares for: although she does see the social advantages of being responsible for a large domestic management, she offers to remain single if she can avoid marriage to Solmes; although she is pleased about her inheritance, she is willing to give the estate to her family; and although she would rather exert her influence on family and friends, she is prepared to live away from them, either on the Continent or even in the colonies. In order to set herself apart from other women, she denies for a long time any attraction to Lovelace and professes to be above physical desires. After the rape, Clarissa does not hesitate to renounce her body and give up her life, perhaps

because she hopes that this action will enable her to regain her lost reputation and become once again the virtuous young woman, now revered as a martyr-saint.

### Subjectivity

Foucault sees the self as a subjective notion constructed on the temporary act of distancing oneself from the self and then writing or reflecting on it (TS, 27). As Huck Gutman explains in Technologies of the Self, individuals are able to constitute themselves as subjects when they divide themselves from “the totality of the world, or the totality of the social body” (107) which will make them aware of both their significance and separateness:

having divided the “me” from the “not-me,” the “me” discovers itself apart, separated, isolated, alone; ...although the first reward of constituting oneself as a subject is a feeling of centrality and well-being, an inevitable consequence of that constitution, which depends upon division, is isolation. (TS, 109)

Puritan diaries and spiritual autobiographies encouraged this division of the self, the going out of the self in order to examine and analyse it. Writing about oneself thus served as a means of creating the self and, in the process of writing, of affirming it. The self becomes thus a continually changing construction, a product of the ongoing discourses which one produces on oneself or which are imposed on the self from outside. If the latter is the case, the construction of the self may at least partially be influenced by “policing processes,” through which it can be formed and monitored by others. In Christianity, the subjectivization of the human being is effected through two,

apparently contradictory processes: first, the belief that truth resides in the individual and can be discovered and articulated through techniques directed at the care of the soul, for example, through various practices which include attention to and verbal expression of soul-related matters; and second, this knowledge of the self is not to be gathered in order to achieve self-mastery, as in ancient times, but for the purpose of cheerfully renouncing the self, in accordance with an ascetic approach to life, that is, as a result of the practice of obedience and restraint, and of having doubts about ever achieving complete knowledge of oneself.<sup>13</sup> The epistolary novel may be seen as a discourse which strives for the knowledge of the self through elements of introspection. In Richardson's Clarissa, we see in action the constitution of the self as subject. The female protagonist has clearly made a division between herself and those around her and is, during the course of the novel, in the process of exploring the self and constructing her life on the basis of the word.

#### Areas of Problematization

In both ancient and Christian technologies of the self, identical or similar areas of problematization are to be found. They may, however, differ slightly in emphasis, owing to changes or modifications over the centuries. Although both Greco-Roman and Christian technologies practice austerity, Christianity emphasizes the problem of virginity rather than the problem of self-domination. Purity and virginity, in Christian

religions centred on the model of feminine integrity, was of little or no importance in ancient times. Increased religious influence on philosophical thought brought about changes, however: "At a certain moment, the problem of an aesthetics of existence is covered over by the problem of purity, which is something else and which requires another kind of technique" (GE, 365). From then on, various forms of austerity, which existed in Greco-Roman thought and were geared toward the mastery of the self, are channelled by Christianity into monitoring the self for the purpose of keeping the individual pure. Women, moved to the centre of interest with the rise in importance of domesticity, are also the focus of attention in Christian asceticism: "The paradigm of sexual self-restraint becomes a feminine paradigm through the theme of purity and virginity, based on the model of physical integrity" (GE, 366). Virginity and purity are used as evidence that a woman is able to suppress those desires, which have long been viewed with apprehensions, and that she has succeeded in guarding and preserving her virtue and integrity which make her disposable in an economically advantageous way. The topics of virginity and chastity seem to have preoccupied literature for a long time: women have often been portrayed as ingenious when it came to the disposal of their virginity, if possible, to their advantage. Lengthy dialogues on this matter can be found, for example, in Shakespeare's All's Well that Ends Well and Congreve's The Way of the World.<sup>14</sup> From the seventeenth century on, we encounter a proliferation of endangered and ruined maidens in literary works. For Richardson's *Clarissa*, for instance, virginity constitutes an integral part of the self, so much so that she decides after the loss of it to give up her life in order to restore her former reputation.



Another area of problematization which made its way into Christianity where it was slightly modified is the question of friendship and its compatibility with sexual relationships. In Greco-Roman thought, friendship was generally associated with love of the soul rather than love of the body -- Plato has Socrates make this distinction in the Symposium and favour friendship as the element which contributes true value to any relationship (UP, 233) -- and it was argued that sexual relations, because of their lack of reciprocity, cannot be based on or contain friendship (GE, 345). A change in this way of thinking occurred in the fourth century B.C., however, when the sexual act ceased to be associated with activity and was instead commended for its passivity. In fact, Christianity increasingly relegated sexuality to the margins. In an attempt to eradicate desire, the clergy recommended that the sexual act be restricted to the production of children, or the fulfilment of one's conjugal duties. Christianity thus aimed at decreasing sexuality's importance in marital relationships. This change in emphasis may explain why, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, many writers, among them Richardson, proceeded to praise marriage as "the highest state of friendship."<sup>15</sup> If reciprocity is understood not only in terms of sexuality but also in terms of mutual understanding, then the literature of the seventeenth century and beyond shows that, because of the division of society into masculine and feminine spheres and the establishment of gender-related codes of conduct, the sexes had moved further apart. Richardson's Clarissa is filled with instances in which the communication between the sexes breaks down or is virtually absent, because men and women are each enclosed in their own separate worlds. The problematization of

friendship becomes an important aspect of the novel: while portraying the friendships of Anna-Clarissa and Belford-Lovelace as constructive and mutually beneficial, Richardson also seems to suggest that marriage may mean the end of friendship and may itself be a disparate relationship based on submission and domination.

### The “Aesthetics of Existence”

The notion of the “aesthetics of existence” or the act of making one’s life an oeuvre forms an important aspect in Greco-Roman technologies. In Christianity, however, it gave way to the notion of renunciation and was therefore not adopted. It may, however, be important for an understanding of Richardson’s novel. In ancient thought, as Foucault explains, the “arts of existence” consisted of “actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also [sought] to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being, and to make their life an oeuvre” (UP, 10). In order to achieve this state of perfection with regard to one’s life, the individual had to be capable of subduing various forces and desires within him and gain control of himself. Only the rigorous monitoring and disciplining of the self would enable him to fashion his life as a “work of art” that “would endure beyond his own ephemeral existence” (UP, 139). An example of this practice of self-discipline among Hellenic men would be the state of virginity which was then seen as “a choice, a style of life, a lofty form of existence that the hero chooses out of the regard that he has for himself”

(CS, 230). What in ancient times was a matter of choice, a preference of a certain way of life which will enhance the formation and cultivation of the self, was later, by early Christianity, turned into prescribed behaviour, on the strict pursuit of which the salvation of the soul depended. During the transformation of this notion, the motivating principle, namely, making one's life an oeuvre, was lost or given up. Instead, the ability to attain perfection of one's life was transposed from the here and now onto the realm of the spiritual, an area beyond experience, intangible and unverifiable. Literary works describing the life of a hero who achieves laudable things for himself and his community, such as Agamemnon or Aeneas, are replaced by lives of saints and later by spiritual biographies, that is, genres in which the protagonist's existence is characterized by hardship and renunciation, the rewards of which are transposed onto the afterlife.<sup>16</sup> The purpose of this literature is to encourage believers to embrace a similar life of renunciation. A characteristic feature of the saints' lives seems to be the fact that an evaluation of the protagonist's life is part of the narrative. Thus the interpretation of this life is already fixed and included in the text. Richardson appears to pursue similar intentions with Clarissa. He wishes the reader to see Clarissa as a saint in the making, especially when she renounces the body, domestic happiness, and her family and friends after the rape. However, Richardson's novel seems to be only partially in the tradition of the lives of saints. Clarissa would certainly like to see her life as such and also encourages others to identify her with this tradition. Yet Clarissa's long-standing and continued desire to dominate others and her tendency to consider herself above others, and have others believe the same, seem to work against

this interpretation. Also, her decision to turn her life into discourse, to replace the physical body by the new material body made of words, appears to indicate that Clarissa may in part be in the ancient tradition. Quite systematically, Clarissa turns her life into an oeuvre, the book which tells her story, in order to secure its interpretation. Instead of humility and subservience, she often displays high self-esteem and a clear sense of superiority. She seeks recognition within her community and pursues her goals by trying to balance power in her own favour. By being able to present what had happened to her in the form of a work of art Clarissa achieves the permanence which men in ancient times had wished for and according to which they had structured and directed their lives.

1. In his Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding (first publ. 1957; Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1977), Ian Watt makes formal realism the distinguishing feature of the novel (see pp. 12-32). He argues that "formal realism" was for the first time fully realized in the novels of Defoe and Richardson (37). Michael McKeon, in his Origins of the English Novel 1600-1740 (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987) sees the novel as the result of tensions between generic and social categories in the period from 1600-1740. He further holds that the novel became established because of its function to mediate these tensions as well as changes in attitudes (pp. 20-21). For J. Paul Hunter's account of the beginnings of the novel see the first chapter of his book Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction (New York and London: Norton & Company, 1990), especially pp. 23-24.
2. Sue Warrick Doederlein's article, "Clarissa in the Hands of the Critics," Eighteenth-Century Studies, 16 (1983), speaks of "the two markedly divergent scholars, Michel Foucault and Lawrence Stone" (402). The author argues that Foucault holds literature, in his words, "discourses," largely responsible for changes in society (such as the deployment of networks of power), whereas Stone emphasizes rather that literature reflects these changes. In his Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800 (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), Stone does, however, acknowledge the influence fictional writing had on the society of the time, as is evident in this statement on early English novelists: "These men created fashion, and the fashionable world followed in their wake, partly, of course, because they found the ideas congenial to their tastes, aspirations, and way of life" (395).
3. See Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, Vol. I: An Introduction (New York: Vintage, 1978).
4. See Lawrence Stone, The Family, Sex and Marriage 1500-1800 (abridged edition; New York: Harper & Row, 1979), p. 165.
5. In his Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1990), Thomas Laqueur argues that "sex as we know it [is] an invention of the eighteenth century" (149), at which time it replaced gender as the primary category according to which men and women were distinguished. This change in medical opinion had far-reaching consequences. Laqueur points out, for example, that "structures that had been thought common to man and woman - the skeleton and the nervous system - were differentiated so as to correspond to the cultural male and female" (149-150).
6. See Jocelyn Harris, "Protean Lovelace," Eighteenth-Century Fiction, vol.2 no.4 (July 1990), 328, 343-344.
7. Foucault further argues that the "dissemination...of procedures of confession" was solidified in the late nineteenth century with the proliferation of theoretical works in

the fields of medicine, psychiatry, and pedagogy, and came to a culmination with Freudian psychoanalysis (HS, 63-64).

8. See the introductory chapters to Camille Paglia's Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson (London and New York: Yale University Press, 1990).

9. In her Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), Nancy Armstrong argues that language in the eighteenth century was dismantled in order to form masculine and feminine spheres (14) and that changes in language therefore both reflect and contribute to the social changes of the time (56). Carey McIntosh, in his Common and Courtly Language: The Stylistics of Social Class in 18th-Century English Literature (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), holds that the use of certain words within certain contexts may point to upper-class aspirations on the side of a middle- or lower-class user (102) and cites Clarissa's language as an example (123-126).

10. In a letter to his friend, Mrs. Donnellan, Richardson complains about Fielding's persistent use of immoralities in his characters which made him put down Amelia after reading only the first volume: "Poor Fielding! I could not help telling his sister, that I was equally surprised and concerned about his continued lowness. Had your brother, said I, been born in a stable, or been a runner at a sponging-house, we should have thought him a genius, and wished he had had the advantage of a liberal education, and of being admitted into good company; but it is beyond my conception, that a man of family, and who had some learning, and who really is a writer, should descend so excessively low, in all his pieces" (The Correspondence of Samuel Richardson, ed. Anna Lactitia Barbauld, 6 vols [London: Lewis and Roden, 180], vol. IV, 154).

11. Following closely Foucault's line of argumentation, Armstrong holds that, from the late seventeenth century on, women were empowered within the domestic sphere, mainly through their capacity to supervise, which also functioned as a prerequisite to regulating their own desires (Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 81).

12. See Patrick S. Hutton's "Foucault, Freud, and the Technologies of the Self," in Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault, ed. by Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick H. Hutton (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), p. 130.

13. See James Bernauer's Michel Foucault's Force of Flight: Toward an Ethics for Thought (New Jersey and London: Humanities Press International, 1990), pp. 164-165. Bernauer summarizes Foucault on the basis of lecture notes taken during a summer course presented by Foucault at the University of Toronto in 1982 ("The Discourse of

Self-Disclosure”) and of transcripts of papers given at Dartmouth College in 1980 (“Subjectivity and Truth” and “Christianity and Confession”).

14. In Act I. sc. i. of Shakespeare’s All’s Well that Ends Well, Helena considers both her social status and her desire when she ponders the right way of disposing of her virginity. Millamant, in Congreve’s Way of the World, negotiates in the “proviso-scene” (Act IV, sc. i) her conditions for marrying Mirabell. Aware that submission, both physical and mental, to her husband will be part of the marital contract, she voices her wishes for some reserve, privacy, and freedom.

15. Samuel Richardson, Clarissa, ed. by Angus Ross (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1985), p. 524 (II. 192-93).

16. See the third chapter, “Histories of the Individual,” of McKeon’s Origins of the English Novel 1600-1740 (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), pp. 23-24.

## Chapter 2:

### Clarissa's Ancestry: An Exploration of Discourses Informing Richardson's Novel

The following chapter is based on the theoretical supposition that there is no difference between "fictional" and "non-fictional" discourses save that which rests on aesthetic considerations. Since the issues I wish to examine in a selection of fictional works of the eighteenth century -- the changing conception of gender, the new attitudes toward sexuality and desire, the growing emphasis on subjectivity, and questions of power and class -- seem to have pervaded the literature of the time and emerged as central themes of various discourses, I suggest that Richardson's Clarissa and novels written in its tradition cannot be explored as closed works. Rather, the "fictional" should be seen as one among many discourses. We can come to a better understanding of novels, especially of early fiction, the origins of which we are still trying to comprehend and formulate,<sup>1</sup> if we take into account as much as possible of that which is offered to us in other genres and literary forms written in the same period and if we attempt to interrelate the available information.

Since various discourses may inform a literary text simultaneously, contradictions within it should not come as a surprise. Arguments from different sides will certainly allow for partisan readings but may also provide the material with which to explode these interpretations. Richardson's Clarissa is a prime example of a work of art which has been appropriated for the reader's assertion of his or her political beliefs. One-sided readings, however, are hardly ever convincing. My own claim is not one of objectivity. Rather, I wish to show that discourses are made up of



constructions. If constructions, which are the building blocks of discourses, many-faceted and multi-intentional, are the foundations of all forms of literature, including the most accomplished works of art, then readers should assign meaning to a text cautiously.

### I. Gender and Conduct

If we were to form an Image of Dignity in a Man, we would give him Wisdom and Valour, as being essential to the Character of Manhood. In like manner if you describe a right Woman in a laudable Sense, she should have gentle Softness, tender Fear, and all those parts of Life, which distinguish her from the other Sex, with some Subordination to it, but such an Inferiority that makes her still more lovely.

(Spectator no. 144)

Discourses which, in the widest sense, address questions of conduct and behaviour are often related to gender, that is, socially constructed categories of sex. The following pages will examine forms of and motivations for the construction of gender in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; they will, further, investigate the extent to which mythologies have influenced and assisted in these constructions and, in particular, the case of the construction of female “nature.” Over the centuries, changes in the understanding of masculinity and femininity often seem to have determined the ways in which suggestions and prescriptions with regard to conduct were formulated. An investigation into the modifications of and reactions to earlier models of gender will

provide a better understanding of eighteenth-century literary works, many of which include images of men and women which are not merely new creations, even if they appear to differ substantially from existing earlier models, but which may in fact allude to or build on examples preceding them.

### Gender Roles: Origins and Transformations

Since mythological times, men and women have been described in relation to their social functions: in the case of women, these functions have always been closely associated with their sexuality -- the prevalent image of woman has been that of virgin, wife, mother, or whore -- whereas men have tended to define themselves on the basis of their occupation or profession, namely patriarch, provider and protector, hunter and warrior, legislator and statesman. A brief sketch will show the ways in which the understanding of gender has been modified over the centuries and has been adjusted to reflect contemporary concerns or the prevalent political atmosphere. In ancient times, typical males distinguished themselves as fighters and leaders while women were portrayed in passive roles, with the exception of immortal females who were often fashioned after one of the images of the triple goddess.<sup>2</sup> Early Christianity, and later the Middle Ages, projected first the ascetic male who was expected to renounce the flesh and endorse celibacy, and second the idealized courtier and knight errant who fantasized a sensual relationship between himself and his admired lady.<sup>3</sup>

The female counterpart to these male types consisted of a dualistic conception of womanhood: on the one hand, woman was seen as the dangerous seductress or prostitute endowed with an insatiable sexual nature and concerned with the downfall of man; on the other hand, tribute was paid to the Virgin Mary and also, in a secularized imitation of her, the pedestaled virgin and accomplished woman whose purity and perfection made it impossible for men ever to possess her.<sup>4</sup> Only the Renaissance seems to have worked toward dismantling the polarization between the sexes: it favoured and encouraged the cultivation of rational and intellectual qualities in both sexes. Soon afterwards, in an unprecedented setback to the freedoms men and women had gained during the previous decades, however, Puritanism and the gradually expanding bourgeoisie introduced an entirely different set of values based on self-discipline and religious devotion as well as money and prestige. As a result, the old dichotomization returned and brought along new models: the entrepreneur and businessman who is rewarded for his ceaseless professional efforts and his private self-restraint with the beautiful young virgin, who, in her turn, distinguishes herself as a moral paragon. Over the centuries, gender roles which started out as archetypes were slowly transformed into stereotypes which were progressively reflective of the political atmosphere of the time and which were occasionally employed in the service of political change.

Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century conceptions of the masculine and the feminine which constitute important, often central themes in literature are at once products of a period of transition and responses to urgent contemporary problems. The

growing attention to private matters which led, as Foucault pointed out, to the introduction of sexuality as a discursive apparatus at the end of the seventeenth century,<sup>5</sup> indicates the extent of the transition. Under the influence of Protestantism, concerns with the body and desire had gradually increased in importance. As a result, the need to balance personal needs and social demands became the centre of discussion in various discourses and gave rise to a proliferation of works intended to provide advice as well as solutions to problems. At the same time, the need to gain a better understanding of one's sexuality introduced the tendency to investigate and examine all the related issues. Questions of a woman's role in society, her nature, her sexuality, and her personal needs became important aspects of these investigations and were primarily the concern of medical treatises as well as conduct and religious literature. That woman became the focus of empirical attention may have been the result of the fact that most literature prior to 1800 was written by men, often with the intention of understanding woman (the Other), explaining and defining her, and fixing her into categories, especially at a time when male dominance was increasingly challenged and undermined by forward-looking women. The re-evaluation of gender categories, however, was not only the result of the continuing need of men to come to terms with the other sex but also constituted an immediate response to urgent problems of the time: it served as a means of curbing both the liberties of the Renaissance and later the excesses at the court of Charles II which seemed to threaten the social order, and it presented a way of dealing with the epistemological shift in the seventeenth century which shook the foundation of long-standing hierarchies and

called into question a view of the world which had for many centuries provided a sense of security and stability.

Some of the new gender categories proposed in early fiction are clearly designed to counter typical characters of Renaissance and Restoration drama. In the plays of those periods, especially in the comedies, we find strong-willed and assertive women who actively pursue what they desire, sometimes at the expense of the male characters who become victims of their manipulations. Male protagonists, in return, are increasingly projected as Don Juan figures, self-centred and ruthless in the pursuit of their wishes, calculating when it comes to women, and enamoured with the assertion of their will and the exertion of their power.<sup>6</sup> Only in the tragedies and heroic plays are women often portrayed as innocent victims, weak, submissive and at times desperately devoted to the men who will seal their fate.<sup>7</sup> These earlier dramatic models are reflected in Richardson's novel: Lovelace, for example, puts himself consciously, as well as playfully, into the tradition of the Restoration rake and constructs an image of himself which comprises the roles of playwright, actor, and stage-director.<sup>8</sup> Clarissa vacillates between the roles of comic heroine which she represents early in the novel – there are amusing elements not only in her struggle with the ridiculously monstrous Solmes and her nightmarish family but also in her response to and sympathy for Anna's diatribes against the male per se – and the tragic woman when she admires Otway's Belvidera and accepts that character as a mirror image of herself. Although Richardson was attracted to earlier models, he also needed to undercut or at least modify them, because, by the turn of the century, they had

become increasingly problematic for those who wished to uphold the contemporary morality. Not only had Shakespeare's rather harmless puns and quibbles intensified over the decades and turned into daring rhetorical strategies and battles of wit, often devoid of ethical considerations, but the association of intellect and sexuality in them began to be considered problematic. For the bourgeoisie who must have felt increasingly neglected by plays which concentrated on characters and issues related to the court, this association certainly evoked visions of the collapse of all moral standards. Both literature and society were therefore deemed to be in need of correction. Since the signs of the time pointed in the direction of reform and called for new role models, clergymen, educators, and scientists, many of them from the newly empowered middle classes, were only too eager to provide them.

The new character types in literature which reflect a shift in the understanding of gender and the behaviour related to it can, however, not be attributed solely to reactions to earlier literary constructions or historical events, or to the new emphasis on private matters. New attitudes toward sexuality, the body, and desire in the seventeenth century also have to be taken into account. While the sexes had been regarded for centuries as similar, that is, physically related, with the qualification that the female formed an inferior and defective version of the male, they now began to be seen as different in kind not degree. In fact, the eighteenth century marked the beginning, as Laqueur and Schiebinger have pointed out, of a rigid differentiation of men and women, based on new medical findings, or rather constructions, which claimed that the two sexes possessed distinct organs, nervous systems and skeletons.<sup>9</sup>

Steele's Tatler no. 172 reflects this new thinking and takes it one step further, by moving it from the physical to the metaphysical:

I do not mean it an Injury to Women, when I say there is a Sort of Sex in Souls. ...the Soul of a Man, and that of a Woman, are made very unlike, according to the Employments for which they are designed. The Ladies will please to observe, I say, our Minds have different, not superior, Qualities to theirs.<sup>10</sup>

This new emphasis on the fundamental difference in kind, in body as well as mind, opened the way for assigning different spheres of influence to members of each of these spheres and establishing corresponding codes of behaviour. One of the most significant changes, the notion that women lack sexual feelings, in contrast to previous times when strong sexual desire and pleasure had been attributed to them, led to the creation of a new female character, the moral paragon, and may also have reinforced the cultivation of an already existing male character, the ruthless libertine. Richardson seems to have brought both of them to perfection. Designed as examples or types, the two represent, in many ways, older conceptions of gender, and yet there is a new dimension in both of them which is a modification or a view to future projections: Lovelace, believing that all women are driven by lust and are therefore inherently corrupt and corrupting, longs for Clarissa to be the angel he sometimes fears she may be; Clarissa, self-righteous and proud, convinced of the strength of her principles, the power of resistance in her, and the triumph of her purity, is drawn to the man who will be her downfall. Richardson presents in his novel both model and anti-model. Readers are either to admire and imitate or to despise and avoid a character. By

endowing a character with contradictions, however, Richardson undermines his own intentions and thus risks the collapse of his projections.

### The Normalization of Gender-Related Conduct

The new understanding of gender differences, as illustrated in both “fictional” and “non-fictional” works, promoted the tendency to normalize conduct. The long-standing dichotomization between the sexes which was now deepened by the insistence on men’s and women’s fundamental difference not only in degree but in kind was made more complicated by a polarization within each sex, that is, by setting up standard models of the desirable woman and the desirable man and evaluating gender-specific behaviour in relation to these models. As a result, people were often quickly categorized as either “good” or “bad,” as the following statement on women published in Steele’s Tatler no. 201 exemplifies: “The ill are employed in communicating scandal, infamy, and disease like furies; the good distribute benevolence, friendship, and health, like angels. ...Such is the destroying Fiend, such the guardian Angel, woman.”<sup>11</sup> Here women are said to display either destructive qualities, in the most physical sense, or their saving qualities. The presence of sexual undertones in this passage and their association with women at their worst seem to suggest that the deployment of characterization in the form of extreme oppositions was at least partially used for the purpose of undermining or eradicating sexuality.



Early periodicals played in fact a significant part in the process of normalization. Owing largely to them, the norms for correct conduct were tightened and any aberrations exposed as monstrous. According to the Spectator, the essentials of a man's character were "Wisdom and Valour," while the "right Woman" was expected to display "gentle Softness, tender Fear, and all those parts of Life, which distinguish her from the other Sex, with some Subordination to it, but such Inferiority that makes her still more lovely" (no. 144; II, 70). As Steele phrased it in his Christian Hero, women were "by Nature form'd to Pity, Love and Fear," while men were endowed "with an Impulse to Ambition, Danger and Adventure."<sup>12</sup> A woman had to be asexual, compliant, submissive, and weak, it seems, while a man was privileged to do as he liked.

Any invasion of the other sex's territory was severely reprimanded and rejected. Richardson himself contributed much to the construction of new gender categories in the eighteenth century: for instance, he brought the image of the virtuous woman to perfection; he developed further the persona of the despicable libertine; and he designed, as a contrasting character to the rake and a complementary one to the perfect woman, a new model, the male moral paragon.<sup>13</sup> Yet in his Familiar Letters he indicates where one of the many lines had to be drawn. Because of her "new Riding-habit," a young woman is criticized for "appearing more masculine than either the amiable softness of [her] person or sex can justify" and reminded that "as sure as anything intrepid, free, and in a prudent manner bold, becomes a man, so whatever is soft, tender, and modest, renders [her] sex amiable" (Letter XC, 113-114). Notions of

this nature spread as the middle classes strengthened their hold on the circulation of printed matter. Early in the century, Addison, in one of his widely-read Spectator articles, raves against the disregard of gender-related conduct: "If those Speeches and Actions, which in their own Nature are indifferent, appear ridiculous when they proceed from a wrong Sex, the faults and Imperfections of one Sex transplanted into another, appear black and monstrous" (no. 57).<sup>14</sup> A few decades later and in the context of a religious discourse, Dr. James Fordyce presents, in his Sermons to Young Women, a similar view, now applied to both men and women:

A masculine woman must be naturally an unamiable creature. I confess myself shocked, whenever I see the sexes confounded. An effeminate fellow, that, destitute of every manly sentiment, copies with inverted ambition from your sex, is an object of contempt and aversion at once. On the other hand, any young woman of better rank, that throws off all the lovely softness of her nature, and emulates the daring intrepid temper of a man - how terrible! The transformation on either side must ever be monstrous. (104-5)

Deviations from norms posed serious problems for the upholders of the status quo and morality. In fact, the rigidity with which the preservation of categories was observed and the anger concerning the violation of norms seem to suggest that moralists may have feared an attack on the social hierarchy and a disrespect for the concepts of "nature" and "rightness."<sup>15</sup> In the novel, gender transgressions are often associated with "negative" characters. Richardson's Lovelace, for example, is clearly exposed for his perverted way of thinking when he expresses his desire for cross-dressing in order to carry out his schemes (419-420; II. 24) and when he dreams of a sex-change in order to be closer to Clarissa (921-2; III. 248-52). By contrast, women did not even have to go to that length before accusations of monstrosity were levelled at them. All

they had to do was to acknowledge their sexuality; indeed, they were considered worse than monstrous when they decided to act out their desires. In Richardson's novel, Mrs Sinclair and her company of prostitutes are described as utterly disgusting both in their lives and deaths; Sally Martin, in particular, is exposed as revolting when she tries to seduce Lovelace out of jealousy after he has raped Clarissa (1217; IV. 134).

### Spheres of Influence

The concentration on prescribed standards and on aberrations from them served at the time to emphasize the differences between the sexes and assisted in constructing the notion of different spheres of influence. Addison and Steele's Spectator essays illustrate the pervasiveness of this notion again and again: "Men and Women ought to busie themselves in their proper Spheres, and on such Matters only as are suitable to their respective Sex" (no. 57; I, 241) and "Female Virtues are of a Domestick turn. The Family is the proper Province for Private Women to Shine in" (no. 81; I, 349). The middle classes, in particular, who, toward the end of the seventeenth century, tried to consolidate their newly gained place at the centre of society, were receptive to these ideas. They claimed domesticity for themselves and made it an important middle-class character trait. The idea of the domestic woman became a tool to assert bourgeois superiority. Although middle-class women were to some extent empowered within their domestic sphere, as Nancy Armstrong has pointed out<sup>16</sup> -- responsibility for the

education of their children and the management of the household were assigned to them -- these supervisory qualifications and occupations did not enable them to gain more political influence. More than ever they were restricted, both in political space, through their relegation to the private sector, and in the development of their personality, through the regulation of their conduct by imposed dicta. An entirely new vocabulary around the values of "modesty," "delicacy," "meekness," "sensibility," and most of all "chastity" was established in order to define and confine the domestic woman. Corresponding to the division of the social world into the public and the private, personal feelings had to be divided, too: men were permitted to display anger and frustration, while women had to demonstrate their submission and control. "Modesty never rages," the Tatler prescribed, "never murmurs, never pouts: when it is ill treated, it pines, it beseeches, it languishes" (no. 217, 4:157). While anger and decisiveness were deemed appropriate responses in the public world of competition, the domestic sphere required a different set of emotions and behavioural traits.

### Mythologies

In order to illustrate and emphasize their recommendations regarding desirable conduct or voice their criticism about undesirable behaviour, writers often had recourse to mythologies. For instance, they used examples and models from ancient classical and biblical writings to reinforce the notion of the ideal woman. Through the selection of

individual scenes from the classics, they demonstrated their idea of desirable conduct for men and women. In particular, they appropriated the myth of Lucretia, which they reinterpreted for their own purposes and which they used for the creation of their own bourgeois construction of the new woman, the myth of the middle-class moral paragon. Yet parallel to the adaptation of positive role models from earlier admired works, male writers also resorted to the same sources for negative analogies, that is, for examples through which they could convey their fear of and anger about women<sup>17</sup> and which would assist them in their problematization of the other sex. Although many of these examples were purposely taken out of context and thus removed from their natural surroundings, they became, through the process of being reshaped for and integrated into a new discourse, essential components of the textual mosaic that made up the new literary construction.

Numerous writers of conduct books directed toward women and of sermons dealing with the topic "woman" have over the centuries tapped into the reservoir of exemplary females in history and mythology in order to strengthen their own projections. One theme in particular seems to have fascinated the writers of didactic and moralistic discourses: the preservation of chastity and purity, not only in fact but also in appearance. Jacques Du Bosc, in his Compleat Woman, a treatise on the proper female conduct, translated from the French in 1639 and widely read in England during the following decades, makes frequent references to classical models which the author obviously considered apt to inspire admiration and induce the wish for emulation in his female audience. Chastity under attack but as eventually triumphant is represented

by Daphne, who is able to escape Apollo's persecutions through her metamorphosis into a laurel. This act of avoiding a rape through abandoning her body, that is, through her transformation into an inanimate object, makes the woman more desirable than ever. Du Bosc praises "Chastity [as] a divine quality, since even its very enemies make reckoning of it" and points out that "the most dissolute beare least respect to those who yeild, then who ressit" (60). A woman can remain admirable and valuable only as long as she does not submit either to her own desires or the desires of her attackers. Using a similar example in his Considerations upon Eternitie, Drexelius concludes his visions of everlasting hell and punishment for those who have succumbed to bodily desires by mentioning the commendable behaviour of Susannah who preferred death to her violation, inviting the murderers with these words: "it is better for me to fall into your hands without doing evil, than to sin in the sight of the Lord" (194). It may be important to note here that, in Richardson's novel, James Harlowe sends his sister Clarissa a copy of Drexelius for her instruction and as a meditational tool (561; II. 257), and that Lovelace compares Clarissa to Philomela, a mythical woman whose story constitutes a variation on Daphne's theme (1038; III. 409) and goes even beyond it in its applicability to Clarissa's situation. Unlike Daphne, Philomela, in fact, is raped and subsequently silenced through the excision of her tongue. She succeeds, however, in telling her tragic tale by weaving it into a web, that is, by turning her painful experience into a work of art. Clarissa eventually resorts to similar measures when she arranges for her story to be told in a collection of letters.

Many writers of conduct literature employ similar methods of illustrating and emphasizing their arguments through examples. Timothy Rogers, for instance, introduces his Character of a Good Woman with a “historical account of several excellent women,” among them Sarah, who distinguished herself through her “comeliness of dress,” “meekness of spirit,” and “respectful character and duty to her husband,” Rebeckah, who displayed great beauty but also “modesty and purity,” and Rachel, who shone through her “graceful carriage” and “winning sweetness” (Preface, unpaginated). Abraham Darcie concludes his Honour of Ladies (1622) with a similar list. Several writers concentrate on the precarious relationship between fact and appearance, between being chaste and being deemed chaste. Du Bosc uses the examples of Claudia, the vestal virgin, and Pompeia, the wife of Caesar, to explain the exceptionally high standards he wishes to set for his readers. Although both women were innocent and flawless in their character, they had unknowingly attracted attention and suspicions with regard to their conduct. Du Bosc’s advice to his female readers is to place great value on both their virtue and the reputation of possessing it:<sup>18</sup>

They should have alwaies before their eyes that which Julius Caesar said, when he repudiated his wife Pompeia even after she shewed her innocence: “It is not enough (said this Emperour) for the wife of Caesar to be innocent, who ought not even to be suspected.” (52)

Since the outside is to reflect what is inside, women are required to display caution and humility. A few decades later, the Anglican clergyman William Law, in his Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life, had the same theme in mind, both in a literal and a metaphorical sense, when he described his own fictitious model Miranda: “Everything about her resembles the purity of her soul, and she is always clean

without because she is always clean within” (14). The theme of balance between appearance and reality becomes especially important in eighteenth-century fiction where the female moral paragon is constantly questioned and undercut, perhaps because of her claim to perfection.<sup>19</sup>

### Contemporary Adaptations of Classical Notions

Writers of instructional literature often used individual scenes or events from historical, mythological, or classical works for the introduction or conclusion of their own arguments. They employed, as it were, respected authoritative voices either to set the tone for their own explications or to reinforce their ideas through the expert opinions of renowned authors. This method was, for example, a customary procedure in the articles of the Tatler and the Spectator, both of which often opened their essays with mottos from the classics. Although many of their middle-class readers, especially women, may not have understood these usually untranslated mottos, they probably assumed correctly that the headings were intended to capture in a nutshell the content of the article. Spectator no. 57, for instance, which concentrates on gender roles, is headed by an excerpt from Juvenal’s sixth satire, which in itself constitutes a particularly vicious attack on the poet’s female contemporaries: “Quem praestare potest mulier galeata pudorem/Quae fugit a Sexu?” (I, 241).<sup>20</sup> The essay then opens with the short description of a scene from the sixth book of Homer’s Iliad: Hector



objects to his wife's questioning of his role in the battle of Troy and orders Andromache to return to her spinning-wheel. After this introduction, the article turns to contemporary eighteenth-century society and recommends the cultivation of gender-specific manners and morals, while emphasizing at the same time the necessity of separate spheres for men and women. Addison continues in the tone in which he has set out, however, when he refers to an unconventional woman as "Rural Andromache" (251) and portrays her behaviour as a negative example. In his Spectator no. 81 which denounces the active involvement of women in party politics, Addison concludes his statements with a reference to the Athenian statesman Pericles who, at the end of one of his famous speeches, condescendingly addresses his female audience and points out their place in society: "And as for you (says he) I shall advise you in very few Words; Aspire only to those Virtues that are peculiar to your Sex; follow your natural Modesty, and think it your greatest Commendation not to be talked of in one way or other" (I, 349). Through relating the past and the present, mythology and "reality," fact and "fiction," Addison is able to present a strong argument for his efforts to reform society. Richardson similarly attempts to place himself in the tradition of resorting to writers before him for the purpose of reinforcing his arguments. His rake Lovelace, for instance, cites with great enthusiasm a catalogue of statements from misogynist authors in order to justify his own suspicions about Clarissa. Yet, while writers of periodicals, conduct books, and sermons use their adapted material in a serious tone and manner, Lovelace proceeds playfully, with a certain amount of irony in and self-consciousness about what he is doing. Parading a clear awareness of his act

of exploiting ancient sources for his own purposes, he actually seems to undercut this method, almost as if he wished to assert his superiority to those before him.

### Rewriting the Myth of Lucretia

Over the centuries, one myth in particular became important for the development of the positive image of the feminine: that of the innocent young woman who loses her life because of the advances of predatory and brute males. The stories of Lucretia and, to a lesser extent, Virginia formed the original narrative models, recounting tales of rape and attempted rape respectively, both of them with horrifying consequences. Lucretia's story was perhaps the more impressive and influential one, because in it the woman herself rather than her father or husband puts an end to her life after her purity has been violated. The story of Lucretia and the myth that developed out of it underwent many changes over the centuries owing to various new readings and re-interpretations. The rape and subsequent suicide are first mentioned in the work of the Roman historian Livy who, in contrast to later interpreters, emphasizes the political context of the event. He clearly draws the connection between the public and the private: Lucretia's decision to take a personal matter out into the open through her suicide leads directly to the overthrow of the Tarquins when the example of the young woman's determination inspires an oppressed people to rebel.<sup>21</sup> Although Livy also mentions Lucretia's concern for her reputation -- she submits to Tarquin because he

threatens to kill her and leave her in bed with a slave -- this reputation has taken on a public dimension, since questions of class and social propriety may have easily arisen, had Tarquin been driven to realize his threat. A few decades later, Ovid appropriates and reshapes the story of Lucretia through a shift of the emphasis from the public to the private. He turns Livy's assertive and determined Lucretia into a suffering, weak woman who survives the rape in a "ruined" state, dishevelled and inarticulate. Ovid relinquishes large parts of the story's political side in favour of an account of female experience. His Lucretia succumbs to Tarquin because she lacks the strength to fight him; she becomes a pathetic figure, especially since attention is now given to the look of her eyes and the way she falls when she dies.<sup>22</sup> Her posture in death is later explicitly mentioned in a Spectator article (no. 292), which concentrates on the proper conduct of women and which commends Lucretia for ensuring that her body "should lie in an Attitude worthy of the Mind which had inhabited it" (III, 41). Other adaptations and reworkings of Lucretia's story include, in the Middle Ages, Chaucer's Legend of Good Women, and, during the Renaissance, a play by Heywood, modeled after Livy's Lucretia, and poems by Shakespeare and Middleton, influenced by Ovid's interpretation.

Over the long period in which the myth of Lucretia has repeatedly been adapted and modified, a number of themes emerged which point to new areas of problematization and indicate how the story could be employed in the service of current political considerations. From the beginning, Lucretia's almost paradoxical ability to be triumphant in defeat is central to the success of the myth. Although

Lucretia is forced to submit to the rape, she is able to avenge herself and regain, even increase, her good reputation. Ingeniously, she succeeds in turning the aggressor's power to her own advantage, by transforming her body into a sign which marks the beginning of political reform. Prepared to dispose of her body in order to prove her innocence and assert her will, she becomes a martyr in part to her personal cause. "My body only has been violated," she says in Livy's account of the story, "my heart is innocent: death will be my witness" (Donaldson, 1982a, 21). The willing death of the innocent and superior human being seems to have been especially appealing to early Christians who began to see Lucretia in the tradition of Christ; but, at the same time, Lucretia's action met with increasing criticism, since suicide, a perfectly acceptable and honorable act in Roman culture, was considered incompatible with the Christian understanding of right moral conduct. Further, the notion that the violation of the female body and its subsequent pollution can only be rectified through the very rejection of this body received the approval of many seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writers of conduct books and sermons who had begun to reduce chastity to physical integrity.<sup>23</sup> The body, violated or intact, thus became a source of constant worry and trials. Much of the literature written on chastity discusses the implications of its loss and suggests remedial measures. Death is one of them. Suicide or, within the Christian framework, death through grief as a response to the loss of chastity operate both as acceptable forms of cleansing: they prevent the "pollution" from being transmitted to future generations, subdue the body through its progressive deterioration or sudden removal, and restore the dead person's reputation.

Given the rape, the threats of suicide, and the mysterious death of the female protagonist, Richardson's Clarissa clearly represents a re-working of the Lucretia myth. Belford, Lovelace, and Clarissa draw parallels between the events they are part of and the ancient tale. Although Richardson's emphasis seems to be on the private rather than the political aspects of the story, which would point to an adaptation of the Ovidian interpretation -- he seems to portray his heroine as weak, primarily concerned about her reputation, and eventually forgiving -- I suggest that the novel can also be read as a work in the tradition of Livy. While Clarissa, in the footsteps of Ovid's Lucretia, becomes a silenced woman who chooses death out of despair, that is, as a last attempt to restore her former reputation, Clarissa, fashioned after Livy's Lucrece is both revengeful and aware of the implications her death may have on Lovelace, her family, and the society of her time, should her story become known. Both readings are prepared for in the text<sup>24</sup> and have been presented in various partisan readings, such as, in recent years, Castle's Clarissa's Ciphers and Warner's Reading Clarissa. Yet, since the rape of Lucretia constitutes only one of the many myths which inform the novel and contribute to the creation of seemingly contradictory characters, we should be sceptical about the possibility of ever achieving a satisfactory interpretation. What twentieth-century readers are left to ponder about this work, however, is the close connection between the rape of a woman and her death, and the fact that, since mythological times, writers have been fascinated by this cause and effect relationship. It seems that long before the process of the "hysterization" of the female body had been institutionalized, women had already been reduced to their sexuality. The

powerful myth of Lucretia and all those works following in its tradition were instrumental in developing and reinforcing the eighteenth-century myth of woman as a moral paragon.

### Female Archetypes

We should not underestimate, however, the influence of myths which can no longer be traced back to their origins. Many of these had produced female archetypes which never ceased to haunt mankind's imagination. These projections should probably not be considered simply "politically motivated falsehoods by men,"<sup>25</sup> as Camille Paglia rightly notes in her book Sexual Personae, but may best be explained as expressions of a deep human need, perhaps connected to subconscious forces, a need to understand and deal with the mysteriousness of female sexuality, especially where the ability of child-bearing is concerned. Most of these female archetypes are therefore reduced to and defined by their sexuality, or rather by either its presence or its absence. The figure of the great goddess, often called "Great Mother," potentially destructive, closely connected with chthonian, earth-bound forces denoting fertility and primeval nature, is the mother of a long line of female creatures of horror: the Gorgon and Medusa, both endowed with deadly looks; the Furies, Harpies, and Sirens, all of them hauntingly destructive in character; Circe and Kalypso, witch-like and deceiving; and Scylla and Charybdis, literally devouring with the help of tentacles and womb-vortex.

The great goddess may also present herself in a very different light, however: as virtuous and chaste Artemis or androgynous Athena. Through their independence of men and their assertion of power in audacious and manipulative actions, both of them embody forms of militant chastity. Both have withdrawn intentionally from the sexual control of men and have thus become dangerous in a non-physical sense: their autonomy may render them competitors with men for power and influence. Whether projected as the Medusan mother in one of her manifestations or as frigid nymph, the archetypal woman is often conceived of as a femme fatale, first fascinating and attracting men, and then destroying them.<sup>26</sup>

Much archetypal imagery seems to have made its way into Richardson's Clarissa. On the surface, at least, it seems to be clear which categories to assign to which women: Mother Sinclair and her hellish "brood" (1047; III. 421) are in allegiance with Medusa and her daughters and with Hecate's underworld. Clarissa, however, is the child of Artemis, pure and chaste, waving the banner of virtue, detachment from the world, and moral superiority. Yet Clarissa herself, suspected by both her friends and foes of weaving plots (879; III. 191), wishes for the powers of a Gorgon when she angrily confronts Lovelace after the rape: "Oh that it were in my power, in mercy to my sex, to look thee first into shame and remorse, and then into death!" (775; III. 45). Lovelace, who often compares women to "spiders" (418; II. 24), "dragons and serpents" (1047; III. 421), but genuinely admires Clarissa and her virtues, calls her a "little witch" (690; II. 454) and sees her as a vine curling about him, slowly suffocating him (521; II. 187). He increasingly considers her a femme

fatale who will eventually be his downfall: "Why was such a woman as this thrown in my way, whose very fall will be her glory, and perhaps not only my shame, but my destruction?" (848; III. 146). Throughout the novel, Clarissa is portrayed as a potentially dangerous woman: ensuring in a determined manner that her principles are not being violated, she puts an end to her family's "favourite views" (97; I. 82) and subverts many of Lovelace's evil machinations. The only person she is not only afraid but deeply horrified of -- even toward the end of her life -- is Sinclair. It may be that in her Clarissa has seen her counter-image and recognized it as part of herself, as the shape and the existence into which she would gradually be driven, were death not to take her: that of the monstrous woman, vengeful and cruel, destroying and devouring those around her.

### The Eighteenth-Century Myth of the Moral Paragon

Both positive and negative images of the feminine contributed to the creation of a new myth in the middle of the eighteenth century, that of the virtuous middle-class woman. The new model seems to have arisen directly out of the ambivalent conception of woman disseminated in the literature immediately preceding this period. In Restoration plays and early eighteenth-century satires, assertive and fairly independent as well as corrupt and evil women are often at the centre of the discourse. Their opposite, the virtuous woman, may appear as a marginal character or may be alluded to in



conversations. It is in comparison to her that they are judged. In instructional discourses, such as conduct books, sermons, and periodical literature, the ideal, perfect woman is often the focus of attention, while the average woman is set up as the other extreme but remains largely in the background. Although all of these discourses, when taken together, may seem oppositional in intention -- Restoration comedies are in sharp contrast to didactic literature -- all of them have in common the underlying suggestion that female perfection is only a utopian ideal. This notion seems to have changed drastically in mid-eighteenth century, however, when the image of the virtuous woman became the new standard. The establishment of the new ideal has to be understood in a dual context, as Marlene LeGates has pointed out: that of centuries-old, deeply engrained (mis)perceptions about women, since "the cult of the virtuous woman was not so much a new idea as a new response to an old problem, that of the dangerous sex" (26); and that of the political circumstances of the time, as "the image of chaste Womanhood represents a fantasy about what could be done with women in terms of social conditioning" (33).

Richardson was in the forefront of those who promoted the new myth of a "desexualized upholder of the social, domestic, and religious order" (Nussbaum, 136) when he announced in the preface to his second novel that he had designed his female protagonist as an "exemplar to her sex"<sup>27</sup> and that his utmost aim in writing this novel had been "to investigate the highest and most important doctrines not only of morality, but of Christianity, by showing them thrown into action in the conduct of worthy characters",<sup>28</sup> the worthiest of them of course being Clarissa. In the preface to

Pamela Richardson had already promised to give “practical Examples, worthy to be followed in the most critical and affecting Cases, by the modest Virgin, the chaste Bride, and the obliging Wife” (3), but those had backfired when Fielding believed he had detected not only desire and deceit in the “chaste” heroine but also a great amount of hypocrisy. Similarly, the female protagonists of Rowe’s Fair Penitent (1703) and Johnson’s Caelia (1733), immediate predecessors of Clarissa, had possessed virtues which were only skin-deep and for which they were eventually exposed as flawed characters. Clarissa was to be different: “as far as she could be perfect,” Richardson says about her, “she is perfect”.<sup>29</sup> He places her in opposition to the infernal women at Sinclair’s house, her own jealous, scheming sister Bella and her weak, submissive mother, and even her good friend Anna who is forward and cannot keep her emotions under control. He endows her with numerous virtues and qualifications, yet doubts and suspicions about her persist. As the cases of Clarissa and so many other accomplished heroines show, the myth of the female paragon reveals itself as a perversion: no matter how hard a woman strives to attain the new desirable qualities, not only will she not be able to reach the goal, along the way she will also have to surrender the small independence she had left; she will have to rearrange her personality in order to blot out any thoughts of herself and then permit her chastity to be channelled into marriage where she will take her place at the centre of the domestic sphere; and, sometimes, she will have to give up her life in order to recover and then confirm the reputation she had had to cultivate for such a long time.

### Representations of "Female Nature"

Discussions of female nature often accompanied the establishment and dissemination of the new myth of the moral paragon. This attempt at investigating and defining what constituted female nature led of course to different views and, more importantly, to the wish of molding women into displaying the behaviour deemed appropriate for the new woman. The construction of a new notion of female nature and the ensuing process of conditioning may be comparable to the process at the centre of Shakespeare's Taming of the Shrew. Katharina's conduct does not comply with the expected and constructed "nature" of a demure daughter and later a submissive wife. Only after she has been subjected to a process of taming in which she adopts new patterns of behaviour does her "true nature" emerge. Since her chaste and virtuous sister Bianca discloses her "real," shrewish nature in marriage, however, Katharina's transformation has to be taken with a grain of salt: instead of undergoing a genuine, long-lasting change of character, she may have only slipped from one category into another, perhaps intentionally so, in order to (re)establish domestic peace. Shakespeare's comedy points to the existence of two fundamentally different and opposing conceptions of female nature which then reveal themselves as two sides of the same thing. One of them constitutes the core of a woman, the other the surface or mask: women are by nature vicious and shrewish but can be shaped into acceptable human beings. Thus, the concept of nature can take on a new meaning, depending on its shifting terms of reference which are sometimes influenced by political considerations.

In the eighteenth century an elaborate construction of femininity around key concepts, such as “chastity,” “delicacy,” “modesty,” “propriety,” “purity,” and “virtue” became the new foundation of female nature and replaced earlier notions of women’s unpredictability. Some writers considered these qualities inherent in women, however, and argued that female conduct deviating from the required norms would expose serious flaws and deficiencies in a woman. Wetenhall Wilkes, for instance, in his Letter of Genteel and Moral Advice to a Young Lady (1740) admonishes his audience: “Chastity is so essential and natural to your sex, that every declination from it is a proportionable receding from womanhood. An immodest woman is a kind of monster, distorted from its proper form” (Jones, 30; emphasis added). Similarly, Eliza Haywood’s Female Spectator also held that feminine qualities are given by nature but added that they had to be preserved and cultivated:

MODESTY is the characteristic of our sex; it is indeed the mother of all those graces for which we can merit either love or esteem: - sweetness of behaviour, meekness, courtesy, charity in judging others, and avoiding all that will not stand the test of examination in ourselves, flow from it.

(Female Spectator, I, 240-1)

Women who wished to display these feminine qualities had to admit to their weakness, helplessness, and submissiveness, all of them characteristics which would, when in action, set off in men complementary virtues, such as assertiveness, valour, and determination. Male perfections had to be matched by female imperfections. Women’s inferiority, with all its implications, became their greatest attraction. Edmund Burke, for instance, strongly associated women’s beauty with imperfection and indicated, in

contrast to many other writers, that desirable female qualities and virtues are acquired rather than inherent:

this quality [beauty], where it is highest in the female sex, almost always carries with it an idea of weakness and imperfection. Women are very sensible to this; for which reason, they learn to lisp, to totter in their walk, to counterfeit weakness, and even sickness. In all this, they are guided by nature.  
(Rogers, 1966, 38)

Burke's statement implies that by nature women may not be as imperfect as expected but that they become so through practice. Shevelov, in her perceptive study, Women and Print Culture, shows how, in a sequence of Tatler essays, Jenny Distaff, until then inclined to men's nightcaps and snuff, becomes more "feminine": under her brother's guidance, she changes from an eccentric young woman to a responsible wife. Subtly prescriptive, the Tatler essays and many other discourses illustrate and encourage the acquisition of specific gender-related behaviour, with the help of which women will then be able to display their "real" nature.

Although many examples indicate that very little was "natural" about the projected nature of women and although some writers, notably Pope and Swift, had objections to the forced standards of femininity -- they especially criticized the belittlement of women's intellectual abilities<sup>30</sup> -- many novelists shared and promoted the new ideal. Yet even Richardson, whose *Clarissa* was meant to embody the new desirable woman, has individual characters question and discuss this new creation. Lovelace, for example, is repeatedly confused about the nature of women. As his alternating suspicion of and admiration for *Clarissa* show, he is torn between the old view of female corruption and the new notion of women's reformatory and saving

qualities. Clarissa herself addresses the question of nature in her fragmentary writing after the rape. At a moment when her self is in a severe crisis, Clarissa appears to have doubts about her principles and the actions which had led up to the event that shattered her inner balance. Likening herself, by implication at least, to the lady who nurtured a murderous lion cub,<sup>31</sup> she seems to become dimly aware of the awful consequences the strict observance of the new ideology may have for women: under the influence of social impositions, a woman may feel too confident of her redeeming qualities and underestimate the ravenous nature of the other sex, or she may neglect considerations of her own desires, especially after she has been indoctrinated with their non-existence.

In many discourses female "nature" becomes a problematic, even contradictory concept. It is set in opposition to male nature which is, however, never as extensively and sufficiently analysed and explained as its counterpart. Female nature denotes physical inferiority but moral superiority, perfection only through imperfection, redeeming qualities through rigorous self-discipline, and self-effacement combined with simultaneous altruism. The new ideology requires and expects from women that kind of conduct which disciplines, represses, and obliterates the body.

## II. Constructions of the Body

With a few exceptions ...literature does its best to maintain that its concern is with the mind; that the body is a sheet of plain glass through which the soul looks straight and clear, and, save for one or two passions such as desire and greed, is null, and negligible and non-existent. (Virginia Woolf, On Being Ill, 10)

If Foucault is correct, then our understanding of the body and sexuality changed significantly toward the end of the seventeenth century when, after an epistemological shift and various simultaneous social transformations, the body became the new locus of cultural interpretation.<sup>32</sup> Foucault sees a clear relationship between the textual explosion around the body which led to the establishment of sexuality as a discursive apparatus, and the rise of the bourgeois classes who “laid claim to a specific body” (HS, 124) in order to gain and then consolidate political power. This body was largely identical with the female body whose purity and integrity were to secure moral superiority over the degenerate aristocratic body.<sup>33</sup> This re-evaluation did not prove to be an easy task, however, since over the centuries a host of negative connotations had been attached to the female body. In order to ensure therefore that its revalorization would not backfire, a three-step procedure was set in motion: the body was first newly constructed, then displaced or marginalized, and finally replaced by discourse. Thus, the essence of the bourgeois body consisted of both its presence at the centre of the discourse and its simultaneous absence from it. But even after many redefinitions the

new construction was never a complete success, because old misconceptions about women lingered on, competed with the new female values and virtues, and thus produced contradictions in the text. It is not clear, for instance, to what extent Richardson continued in the old tradition and worked with already existing constructions and to what extent he questioned what had been done before him and tried to redefine or renew it. The body is of great importance in Richardson's works, however, both in its presence and its absence. While attempting in Clarissa to give us a glimpse of the newly invested and in many ways accomplished bourgeois body, just as it is in the process of constituting itself, Richardson still creates powerful images of vile and evil bodies, perhaps because he wishes to exorcise them in order to make room for the short appearance of the brilliant and radiating, perfect body before it vanishes, leaving behind only a textual corpus which bears witness to its fame.

### The Evil Body

Notions of the evil body have probably permeated discourses ever since ideas began to be disseminated. They are sometimes used as vehicles for religious instruction, when they admonish their readers to adopt an attitude of contemptus mundi and reject worldly, amongst them physical, pleasures. At other times, they form responses to apprehensions about female sexuality. The investment of the female body with negative connotations thus becomes a form of self-defense, and at times a means of



resisting the attractions which women's bodies may exert on men. Whatever the underlying motivations for corporeal denigrations may have been in these discourses, the body is generally rejected as flawed, prone to disease, perverted, and possibly dangerous.

Female sexuality was believed to pose dangers for both men and women in that it re-directed their lives of virtue into paths of sinful profligacy. The foundations of these beliefs lay in two basic assumptions about women: first, that they cannot control their bodily desires and, secondly, that they intentionally corrupt men into sin and then control them through their sexuality. Deriving their fears at least partially from mythological descriptions of women and predominantly from their notions of the biblical first woman, Eve, whom they held responsible for the downfall of man, the Church Fathers, whose words carried much influence on later writers, celebrated celibacy as the highest state of living. St. Augustine, for example, writing in the tradition of St. Paul, repeatedly pointed out women's corrupting influence on men and argued that their attractiveness posed a serious threat to the well-being of men's souls.<sup>34</sup> These misogynist views on the part of the clergy persisted into the Middle Ages when St. Thomas Aquinas, still echoing the past, held that not only was woman morally inferior to men and created primarily to fulfil her sexual functions, "as helper in the work of generation" (Rogers, 1966, 66), she also presented a great peril for men owing to her powers of seduction. Aquinas therefore placed virginity above marriage and encouraged everyone to follow his example. Only when men began to feel more confident about the possibility of bringing female sexuality under control through

channelling it into marriage and when marriage began to be seen as the only place where one could attain a state of true friendship, both spiritual and secular,<sup>35</sup> did the negative notions about women slowly begin to wane.

Parallel to men's apprehensions about female sexuality, women were instructed, especially in the eighteenth century, to have misgivings about their bodies. Told that their attractiveness can have dismal consequences for them and others, they were encouraged not to look at or think of their body. The young Elizabeth Montagu, for instance, asked her mother in a letter for the speedy delivery of her bathing dress, as until then she "must bath in her chemise and jupon" (Hill, 17). In fact, the new virtues of "delicacy" and "propriety" required women to regard topics which concerned the body as taboo. The new corporeal restrictions came to play an important role in the clothes women were expected to wear: in contrast to the fashionable, extravagant, and rather daring apparel worn to court festivities, masquerades, and theatre performances, the virtuous middle-class woman had to force her body into unassuming, heavily stayed dresses which did not attract the least attention.<sup>36</sup> She frequently heeded the advice given by well-meaning protectors of morals, such as Wetenhall Wilkes, who warned young women, in a rhymed couplet in order to fix his lesson into their memory: "The negligence of loose attire / May oft' invite to loose desire" (Hill, 18). It was always women who were marked out as the ones responsible for creating as well as controlling desire. Contradictorily, they had to attract men first in order to reform and redeem them afterwards. In Richardson's "fire scene," Clarissa unintentionally evokes desire in Lovelace when he sees her in deshabille. Her body and later the

clothes she wears and in which she hides much-desired letters become sites of incitement,<sup>37</sup> tempting the young man to continue on his road of profligacy.

Since female sexuality was thought to have a corrupting influence on men, measures to counteract it had to be taken. The repeated assertion that women's attractiveness was only a matter of appearance and that a façade of virtue and purity was in fact covering up the truly disgusting essence of women proved to be the most effective. St. Augustine's statement that the female body, inviting as it may seem, was really a vessel of filth (Rogers, 1966, 22) continued to reverberate in discourses written many centuries later: there are, for instance, the famous words of King Lear who, in his madness, talks about women's "riotous appetite" (IV. vi. 125) and claims that "But to the girdle do the Gods inherit, / Beneath is all the fiend's" (IV. vi. 128-9); there is the Puritan, Philip Stubbes, a contemporary of Shakespeare, who, in his Anatomic of Abuses (1583), rejects the female body, made up by fineries and paint, as "a dunghil covered with white and red" (Rogers, 1966, 140), and the seventeenth-century divine, Richard Allestree, who, in his Ladies Calling (1673), points out that women's "gorgeous apparel ...holds perhaps a putrid body" (26); and there are Rochester's poems and numerous Restoration and early eighteenth-century satires, most notably those by Pope and Swift, which portray women as frivolous, sexually insatiable, and physically repulsive. Although a small number of positive female counterimages, such as the Virgin Mary, Dante's Beatrice, and various female saints, had been established over the centuries, these usually existed on an idealistic, unattainable plane which served to reinforce the distance to and difference from the

common woman.<sup>38</sup> Interestingly, Thickstun, in her Fictions of the Feminine, notices “a shift in Puritan literature from the polarized world of Madonna/Whore, Minerva/Medusa to a world in which each woman contains within herself both possibilities” (2). Her argument may yield an explanation for the suggestiveness of Clarissa’s surname, “Harlowe”, or for the associations which the names “Clarissa” and “Sinclair”, when placed next to each other, may evoke. In her purity and chastity, Clarissa is what Sinclair once was. Her crucial experience of the fall and “ruin” of an innocent young woman is thus the repetition of an event which happened many times before and is likely to happen again. Women’s bodies become interchangeable, the only temporary, but also continually changing difference being the degree of their corruption. Hence they need to be rejected, as the clergyman William Law encourages his female readers to do: “Your bodies are not only poor and perishing like your clothes but they are like infected clothes that fill you with ill diseases and distempers which oppress the soul with sickly appetites and vain cravings” (270). Clarissa seems to have internalized some of the lessons given to women at her time. After the rape, she loathes her body and considers it a burden, delaying her spiritual victory in death. Unaware of Lovelace’s preference for being a “first discoverer” who will not “take up with harlots” (674; II. 428), she may actually believe herself quite literally infected, especially if she remembers the shocking allusions her cousin Morden had made in a letter to her in which he had associated libertines with “foreign fashions, foreign vices, and foreign diseases” (563; II. 259).

## Medical Constructions of the Body

From an early time on, man seems to have known that the body constituted an unstable site in which to place value because of its proneness to disease and death. Religious and philosophical discourses which had always put their emphasis on transcendental values contributed greatly to the shifting of attention away from worldly things to a higher realm. They portrayed the body as a potential source of evil, and this more so in the case of women than men because the former had always been associated with matter rather than mind. Ever since mankind began to think about the body and evaluate it discursively, it has been a continually changing construction, reflecting world views and political concerns in transition. Not only did the conceptions of gender and sex change dramatically within the period of a few centuries, the aetiology of gender-related diseases, the description of their symptoms, and the assignment of cures to them were subjected to a corresponding process of transformation. As a result, the body was occasionally made to fit into new empirical schemes, influenced and dominated by changing sets of values. Since a severe epistemological shift occurred in the seventeenth century, the impact of which reverberated for decades to come in a variety of discourses, early fictional works may still contain residues of the old medical notions or may actually be arenas in which different scientific ideas are pitted against each other. Richardson's Clarissa, it seems, is a novel of transition with regard to its presentation of the body and disease, since in it we find references not only to hysteria and hypochondria as well as various forms of

consumption, all of them ailments which have a very long history, but also instances of recent developments in nervous physiology. Although the physical body -- in contrast to the spiritual or textual -- is increasingly marginalized and displaced in fictional works which follow in Richardson's footsteps, its continuing importance in these novels makes an enquiry into the changing nature of medical discourses indispensable.

#### From the One-Sex to the Two-Sex Model

The division of men and women into two physically different entities is, medically speaking, a fairly recent development, as, until the late seventeenth century, they had been distinguished only on the basis of gender, the social category of sex.<sup>39</sup> In the preceding centuries, philosophical and medical treatises had concentrated on only one biological sex which was believed to manifest itself in various hierarchically ordered forms. Since the evaluation and interpretation of these forms was imposed from outside, sex was rendered "a sociological not an ontological category" (Laqueur, 142). Notable scholars, such as Aristotle and Galen, held that men and women had essentially identical physical structures which could, however, differ in appearance, the tertium comparationis being an ideal notion of the reproductive organs. Deeming the male as representative of a state of physical perfection, both considered woman as an imperfect, inverted, and thus inferior version of man. Since men and women were

thought to possess identical organs and bodily fluids, their difference was linked to humours and their corresponding dispositions: cold and wet humours dominated female bodies, forming the basis for their deceptiveness, changeability, and instability, whereas men's reliability, bravery, and bodily strength was attributed to the preponderance in them of hot and dry humours. Bartholin, a physician of the Renaissance period, for instance, claimed that woman's "coldness of temper" kept female organs inside (Laqueur, 92), and thus confirmed in his own way the superiority of the male body. Also, the terminology used to describe the human body was identical for both its male and its female version: both were considered to produce "seed" – men sperma and women catamenia – and both were thought to "bleed", through menstruation or other forms of bleeding (Laqueur, 41). The cause of a variety of ailments was diagnosed as obstruction of the blood flow and hence treated by repeated bloodletting. Since "man, after all, [was] in an 'androgynal condition'" (Laqueur, 128), as the physician Sir Thomas Browne stated as late as the seventeenth century, the notion of sex change was never deemed very unusual. Just as there had been, over the centuries, "lactating monks, women who never ate and exuded sweet fragrance, ...bodies in paradise without sexual difference, monstrous births, [and] women who bore rabbits" (Laqueur, 151), the belief that inappropriate conduct, usually in the form of transgressions of gender-related behaviour, could lead to a change of sex prevailed for a long time. As the assumption was that Nature tends toward perfection, women more often turned into men than vice versa (Laqueur, 128). Since sudden physical transformations proved that there was no stable biological sex, gender

and the strict adherence to the behaviour associated with each of its forms became all-important, making transgressions a very serious matter. Notions about the one-sex body, gender and sexuality are, of course, also reflected in literature. Shakespeare's comedies, for example, in the middle section of which transformations and gender transgressions often take place,<sup>40</sup> describe nightmarish, topsy-turvy worlds in which all sense of balance and stability is lost. The energies which are set free when forbidden boundaries are crossed, however, are either positively absorbed into the formation of new personalities or channelled into the (re)establishment of a world of order. What mattered in a universe in which there was only one biological sex was the correspondence of sign and status, the agreement between what a person appeared to be and the social rank he or she held.

The late seventeenth century, however, with its advancements in empirical sciences and the spread of Enlightenment ideas in the areas of philosophy and political theory, both of which were accompanied by a heightening of scepticism, introduced changes in the way the world was perceived. The spread of new ideas also signalled the end of the old episteme in which the universe had been explained in the form of hierarchical layers or, as Foucault phrased it, "in which signs and similitudes were wrapped around one another in an endless spiral" and in which "the relation of microcosm to macrocosm [was] conceived as both the guarantee of that knowledge [the episteme] and the limit of its expansion" (OT, 32). The general movement away from correspondences and analogies toward the notion of difference set the basis for a re-evaluation of gender and sex, and led to the establishment of the two-sex model,



that is, the clear anatomical distinction between man and woman. The old isomorphisms were relinquished in favour of a new understanding of the body, founded on the sexes' essential difference in specific organs, the nervous system, and the skeleton. The reproductive organs, in particular, went, as Thomas Laqueur points out, "from being paradigmatic sites for displaying hierarchy ...to being the foundation of incommensurable difference" (149). As a result, a new set of medical terminology was introduced in order to distinguish linguistically what had been similar or identical before: the womb, for instance, for a long time regarded as a misshaped version of the phallus and as the source of various diseases, became the "uterus" while, simultaneously, many ailments linked to it were relocated to "nerves" and "fibres" (Laqueur, 152).

It is very likely that the contemporary political situation contributed to as well as profited from the fundamental shift in the way both sex and gender were constructed: not only did the dramatic changes in scientific discourses occur at a time when the notion of social hierarchies was in a crisis and when new classes pushed forward in order to promote their interests, but also at a time when women were increasingly dissatisfied with the social roles they had been assigned and demanded that their voices be heard. The new notion that the difference between man and woman is extensive and firmly grounded in nature came at an opportune moment for the bourgeois classes. Through it, they were enabled both to claim that nature had destined women for the domestic sphere and to use the cult of virtuous womanhood to glorify domesticity. Richardson's novel, an important tool in the dissemination of

bourgeois ideology, is among the first fictional works which reflect the latest “scientific findings” in nervous physiology, a newly established field of knowledge. However, it does not yet constitute a complete removal from the old, mythologically informed beliefs about the womb but rather puts forward an image of the feminine which had already existed in the earlier paradigm and which, in a modified manner, continued to live on: that of the weak, fragile woman, in need of help and prone to disease, a woman who, despite, or perhaps because of, her frailty and physical disadvantages manages to control and sometimes bring down man. Clarissa, for instance, who embodies both the old mythological archetype and the new eighteenth-century stereotype of the feminine, exerts immense power over others in her weakness. If we examine her as a medical case, then her physical condition and its progressive deterioration can possibly be attributed to several diseases: chlorosis (most likely in connection with iron deficiency) and various forms of hysteria and consumption. Richardson has his female protagonist waste away and die in a mysterious manner, perhaps in order to emphasize the instability and preciousness of the bourgeois female body. The conduct of Clarissa’s antagonist, Lovelace, may also be in part explained through reference to contemporary medical discourses: his Protean character displays clear symptoms of hypochondria as outlined by the eighteenth-century physician Blackmore.<sup>41</sup> Only an investigation into the history and nature of the diseases mentioned above as well as the evaluation of medical treatises of the period can give us an indication of the way and the extent to which ideas of the sick body are incorporated into the novel.

### Female Diseases (Hysteria, Chlorosis, Consumption)

For many centuries, the female body had been associated with a wide variety of diseases, most often with hysteria but also with chlorosis (“greensickness”) and different forms of consumption. Although within the one-sex model both men and women could be afflicted by the same ailments, the female body was generally considered weaker and therefore more susceptible to them. Hysteria, etymologically closely connected with the womb, was, until the seventeenth century, considered a typically female disease. Its history had been long and turbulent.<sup>42</sup> Ancient Egyptian notions of the “wandering womb” had early been absorbed into Greco-Roman thought where they then emerged in different theories about positional aberrations of the womb. Hippocrates, for example, incorporated the Egyptian beliefs in his De morbis mulierum (“On the Diseases of Women”) and was, furthermore, one of the first to attribute the cause of hysteria to a woman’s prolonged continence. Many of his followers compared the womb to an “animal within an animal” (Veith, 23) and thus began to disseminate an outrageous notion, here graphically demonstrated in Plato’s

#### Timaios:

The womb is an animal which longs to generate children. When it remains barren too long after puberty, it is distressed and sorely disturbed, and straying about in the body and cutting off the passages of the breath, it impedes respiration and brings the sufferer into the extremest anguish and provokes all manner of diseases besides. (Veith, 7-8)

Although the idea of the “wandering womb” was eventually put to rest, it did return shortly in the seventeenth century, in the modified form of theories about the movement of “animal spirits” in the female body. During most of antiquity, however, movements of the womb were considered the main cause of female disorders. Galen of Pergamon added in the second century A.D. a new and important idea to the aetiology of hysteria when he declared that the retention of the semen is responsible for the various symptoms of the disease. As a result, marriage and the implied sexual intercourse were held to be the most efficient remedies for the problem. Early Christianity, which advocated sexual abstinence and valued celibacy, objected strongly to this kind of suggested cure, however. Under its influence, hysteria began to be associated with the mind. This development culminated in the Middle Ages when theologians, in contrast to physicians who adhered to Galen’s uterine theories, proceeded to link hysteria to women’s alliance with unholy powers -- women, being the “fragile sex,” were believed to be much more susceptible to the influence of evil forces than men -- and set in motion a long-lasting period of witch-hunts. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, however, concentrated increasingly on the relationship between mind and body, and proposed a number of theories in which the brain becomes the source of hysterical manifestations. Jorden, for instance, holds that “perturbations of the minde are oftentimes to blame for this [hysteria] and many other diseases” (Veith, 123), and Burton ranks hysteria as one of his many varieties of melancholy. Willis is the first not to limit the disease to the female sex only, although he admits that women, owing to the weaker constitution of the female body, are more

susceptible to it than men: “Women, from any sudden terror and great sadness, fall into mighty disorder of spirits, where men from the same occasion are scarcely disturb’d at all” (Veith, 133). Influenced by Sydenham who had stressed the importance of a balance between mind and body, the early eighteenth century, notably the scholars Blackmore and Cheyne, began to play with the idea that psychological causes may be at the root of various ailments and developed an extensive theory based on the fragile constitution of “nerves and fibres”. Yet parallel to the constructions in nervous physiology, the old uterine aetiology persisted: Purcell, for instance, writing at the turn of the century, attributes hysteria to ““vicious and corrupted humours ...engendered in the womb’ rising ‘up to the Head’ -- hence ‘Vapours”” (McAlpine/Hunter, 288) -- the term “vapours” also plays an important role in theories on nervous susceptibility -- and Astruc located, as late as 1743, in his Treatise on all Diseases Incident to Women, the seat of “hysteric passion” in “the Matrix, the Brain being only secondarily deranged in its Functions” (288). Although hysteria related to “nerves and fibres” dominated medical discourses for most of the eighteenth century, the old uterine theory had returned by the end of it, in a modified manner, however, as the disease now came to be linked to the ovaries.

Critical studies examining medical aspects in relation to Richardson’s novel have tended to concentrate on Clarissa’s delicacy and nervous susceptibility and have neglected both the possibility that she may suffer from other diseases and that Lovelace, too, may constitute a case for the medical profession.<sup>43</sup> While Lovelace may very well have been afflicted by hypochondria -- he is “continually employed by

alternate Succession in fixing and unfixing various Projects” (26), as Blackmore describes one of the two main symptoms of the disease -- Clarissa may also suffer from either chlorosis or consumption, in one of its different forms. Chlorosis or “Green-Sickness,” the “virgin’s disease,” the symptoms of which include, according to Chambers’ Cyclopedia, paleness, weakness, “a loathing of food,” and “a dejection of mind,” was attributed to “improper regimen,” as, for instance, the wrong or insufficient intake of food or “the liberal Use of rich Coffee,” as well as “the Passions of the Mind.” The recommended treatment consisted, as it did for most forms of hysteria, of “Matrimony as the best and most proper Remedy.”<sup>44</sup> Chlorosis was later ascribed to the inordinate loss of blood through menstruation and the oftentimes ensuing deficiency of iron in the body. Putting the blame on the excessive consumption of coffee, that is, on a habit which was, of course, associated with the deleterious effects of affluence and luxury, came actually close to the precise cause of the disease, as caffeine normally acts as a blocker of the absorption of iron from foods rich in this mineral. Since Clarissa, throughout the year of her trials, repeatedly and consistently declines food but accepts tea, the iron-blocking ability of which even surpasses that of coffee, she may very well have suffered from iron-deficiency anemia which, if untreated, can result in death. Her gradual deterioration may, however, also have been caused by a form of consumption. The symptoms of “amorous consumption,” for example, which afflicted in particular “Young wenches smitten with Love darts” (23), consisted, according to Harvey’s Morbus Angelicus (1672), of “fainting, extreme weaknesses, ...[and] lack of sleep” (20), while his “consumption of

grief,” provoked by “pain of the soul for the absence of some good, or the presence of an evil thing” (25), led to “a gradual suppression of vital spirits” (27). Although psychological in nature, these ailments will, so Harvey claimed, eventually turn to physical consumption and lead to death (15). Buchan’s Domestic Medicine (1738) widely echoes Harvey but adds another form of the disease, namely “nervous consumption,” which induces “a wasting or decay of the whole body, without any considerable degree of fever, cough, or difficulty of breathing” (207). Buchan’s new form corresponded, of course, to the fashionable malaises attributed to an over-active sensibility.

### Nervous Susceptibility

By the early eighteenth century, ailments had ceased to be related to “humours and dispositions” and began to be brought in connection with “nerves and fibres.” Hysteria and hypochondria now came to be linked primarily to the “Spleen and Vapours,”<sup>45</sup> and were as such regarded as forms of nervous disorders, that is, as manifestations of what Cheyne called the “English Malady.”<sup>46</sup> Blackmore, for instance, in his Treatise (1725), located the cause of both afflictions in “the Tenderness and Delicacy of the nervous Fibres, and the too fine and fugitive Disposition of the Animal Spirits, by which they are apt to be dissipated, and inclined to run into the Muscles and Bowels in a confused and disorderly manner” (28). Oddly enough, nervous afflictions came to

be evaluated in both a negative and a positive manner, as Mullan shows: they could result in dangerous disorders, requiring constant medical care and treatment, or they could lead to a heightened sensibility, deemed indicative of “exceptional intellectual and ‘sensible’ capacities” (Mullan, 152). Richardson, who corresponded regularly with his friend, Dr. Cheyne, on the volatile condition of his health, must, of course, have been flattered when the doctor diagnosed him as “a genuine Hyppo ...with all its plainest Symptoms and Nothing earthly else,”<sup>7</sup> as he most certainly saw the disease as a side-effect of the powers of his imagination and sensibility. His male protagonist Lovelace, who seems to display many of the symptoms Blackmore ascribed to hypochondria, clearly considers himself to be quite genial when it comes to his intellectual capacities: he would certainly not have objected to being ranked among those hypochondriacs who “spend their Days in contriving Schemes” or who “often entertain the Company with a great Eruption of Wit and facetious Conversation,” although he might have had reservations about being compared to those who are exposed for the “wavering Instability in their intellectual Faculties ...[and the] Diversity and Inconstancy in their Temper and Passions” (Blackmore, 26). Both author and character appear to fit into the categories of those who are afflicted by the fashionable disease of the eighteenth century.

Nervous susceptibility was, however, often interpreted negatively, when it came to women. For a long time considered physically unstable, women continued to be objects of male scrutiny. Liable to a variety of disorders, the tearful and trembling female body became the foundation on which a new image of femininity was erected,



an image which more than ever allowed for the marginalization and repression of women, because it emphasized their physical and also mental inabilities. It justified the claims made with regard to the difference between the sexes and encouraged the relegation of women to the sphere of domesticity. An excerpt from John Bennett's Letters to a Young Lady may serve as an illustration of the way in which women's bodies were endowed with special qualities which rendered them different from and eventually inferior to men:

The timidity, arising from the natural weakness and delicacy of your frame; the numerous diseases, to which you are liable; that exquisite sensibility, which, in many of you, vibrates to the slightest touch of joy or sorrow; the tremulous anxiety you have for friends, children, a family, which nothing can relieve, but a sense of their being under the protection of God; the sedentariness of your life, naturally followed with low spirits of ennui, whilst we are seeking health and pleasure in the field; and the many lonely hours, which are likely to be your lot, will expose you to a number of peculiar sorrows, which you cannot, like the men, either drown in wine, or divert by dissipation. (Jones, 1966, 22)

Bennett's treatise on female conduct incorporates and echoes the medical literature of the period. It shows how the new vocabulary created out of and around the new conception of femininity had been able to invade and permeate "scientific" and non-"scientific" discourses. Visions of "temporary infirmity and delirium" (Mullan, 155), alongside the desirable qualities of tenderness, delicacy and sensibility, created the image of a female body which was at once fascinating and suspicious. Foucault, commenting on the relationship between violent afflictions of the mind and their physical expressions, suggests that women were thought to enjoy subversively their susceptibility to bodily disorder: "The entire female body is riddled by obscure but strangely direct paths of sympathy; it is always in an immediate complicity with itself,

to the point of forming a kind of absolutely privileged site for the sympathies; from one extremity of its organic space to the other, it encloses a perpetual possibility of hysteria" (MC, 153-154). Women's proclivity to the "vapours," ascribed to their delicate frames and their sedentary lives, rendered them privileged to receive male attention and admiration. When considered negatively, however, hysterical disorders were attributed to the evocation in women of imaginary desires through attendance at the theatre and the reading of novels (MC, 167). Most of all, however, they were linked to menstruation, as Mandeville, in a modified version of the old uterine theory, pointed out:<sup>48</sup> "their idle Life, and want of Exercise ...dispose them to the Disease, but above all the innumerable disorders, which upon account of the Menstrual Flux, and the whole Uterus they are so often subject to" (Mullan, 160). As in the old days, the prescription most frequently recommended was that of marriage,<sup>49</sup> which was still regarded as the only state for women in which inordinate passions and desires could be channelled into a meaningful occupation, namely that of child-bearing and child-rearing. Although the paradigm may have changed and the terminology been qualified and extended, the aetiology and the consequences arising from it for women had not much altered. Rather, the old mythologically informed constructions of the female body had returned in a modified manner, that is, disguised as a fashionable ailment, and were now readily absorbed into the novel.

### Contemporary Medical Discourses in Richardson's Novel

Written at a time when the interest in the organization of the body had taken a hold in many disparate discourses, Richardson's Clarissa reflects a similar engagement with the latest medical discussions, especially with the one on sensibility. Rendering the female protagonist as a delicate and timid young woman whose mind and body are subjected to more than they can bear, Richardson seems to present a medical case in which physical ailments have been evoked by disturbances in the nervous system. Strongly felt passions are shown to lead to violent outbursts, while pain and grief induce a gradual bodily deterioration. The body appears to function as a medium through which internal, psychological processes find their expression. Several elements of the novel indicate that the relationship between body and mind is at the centre of the discourse: owing to her exceptional delicacy, Clarissa suffers from fainting spells and hysterical fits whenever she finds herself in unbearably difficult situations. After the rape, she is subjected to extreme distraction, before her body enters into a long phase in which it slowly and painlessly wastes away, presumably because Clarissa can no longer cope with life after her dreadful physical and emotional experiences. Similarly, her antagonist Lovelace shows nervous afflictions, that is, bouts of frenzy and distraction, when he hears of Clarissa's escape and later of her death. Richardson's novel testifies to the artistic appropriation of dominant medical beliefs of the period: it presents the body as a "moral construction" (Mullan, 169), that is, an object in which "sensibility can produce either collapse or integrity, disorder or

articulacy" (Mullan, 169). Excessive delicacy and sensibility can have a socializing effect, as they may enhance the capacity to feel and communicate sentiments, or they can be destructive, in which case they not only evoke physical disorders and bodily deterioration but also have their impact on those surrounding the tremulous body. Clarissa's attractiveness, for example, appears to increase whenever she is in a state of bodily disorder. Her frailty and delicacy, indicative of her accomplished femininity as well as her deep feelings and her exceptional sentiments, are especially appealing to Lovelace, since they provide him, as he thinks, with control over her and since they will, in addition, be a credit to him and his family, should he be able to gain her for a wife. Owing to her delicate frame and disposition, the young woman can, however, not bear any suggestions of marriage. Although Richardson appears to marginalize and repress themes of sexuality by keeping them below the surface of the text, they are in fact at the centre of the discourse. Clarissa's body seems to react negatively to any allusions to physicality: for instance, her physical symptoms indicating bodily disorders increase when she is asked to look at the settlements drawn up by her family; she is disturbed about Anna's recommendation not to be "over-nice, now [that she is] so near the state" (813; III. 97); and she is overcome by hysterical fits when members of her family enquire if she is pregnant. Richardson uses the body as a means to convey a moralistic message: those who have not been able to repress or displace bodily desires are subjected to painful diseases and horrifying deaths, while those who are willing to reject the body or to assign it a place of inferiority when compared to the mind are rewarded by beatification and long-lasting renown.

Richardson's Clarissa can, however, not be regarded as an accomplished exemplar of the sentimental novel, that pillar of bourgeois ideology and bourgeois society, because it has not yet completely overcome the old conception of the all-too-powerful flesh. Foucault locates the births of the modern soul and subjectivity "precisely in the moment of the disappearance of the body from public view" (Barker, 14), that is, the moment when the body ceases to be displayed in a spectacular manner and begins to be secretly surveilled and disciplined. Richardson's novel, however, seems to be a transitional work, as it presents both the new, desirable bourgeois body, erased in its physicality and replaced by the word, and the old spectacular body which, in all its fleshliness, had served as "the immediate [and] unmediated site of desire and penalty" (Barker, 63). Turning his words, as it were, into flesh, Richardson creates horrifying images of the sinful and repulsive body which is at once the decadent aristocratic body and the body of the "fallen" woman: the rake Belton, suffering from progressive consumption, appears as an "emaciated carcass" (612; II. 331), while his friend Lovelace dies under convulsions, vomiting blood (1487; IV. 530); Sinclair's prostitutes are characterized as "haggard well-worn strumpets" (1388; IV. 381), contaminated in body and mind, and comparable to "Swift's Yahoos, or Virgil's obscene Harpies squirting their ordure upon the Trojan trenchers" (1388; IV. 381); and the Mother herself lies on her deathbed "foaming, raving, roaring, in a burning fever" (1378; IV. 368), interrupted by lucid moments during which she howls, "more like a wolf than a human creature" (1387; IV. 381). It seems that Richardson has two things in mind when he resorts to such graphic descriptions of evil, loathsome bodies: he

wishes to set them up as warnings to those who continue on their ways of profligacy and debauchery, and he wishes to contrast them to the desirable body, that is, the body which holds a mind informed by Christian values, such as goodness, charity, and humility; or, on a more social level, he wishes to degrade the aristocratic body as well as the bodies of those outside the social strata -- Richardson's "fallen" women seem to come from all walks of life, although they now fit into only one category, one which has to be rejected and despised -- and wishes to elevate, at the same time, the healthy, bourgeois body which will then strengthen the middle classes' claims to increased importance and influence.

### The Perfect Body

As visions of the evil body were gradually repressed in literature under the pressure of the new notions of femininity and delicacy, counter-constructions of the perfect body took their place. As Foucault points out, the newly empowered middle classes, putting increased emphasis on the body in its purity and integrity, made sexuality a central issue of their discourses:

The bourgeoisie made [sex] identical with its body, or at least subordinated the latter to the former by attributing to it a mysterious and undefined power; it staked its life and death on sex by making it responsible for its future welfare; ...[it] looked to its progeny and the health of its organism when it laid claim to a specific body. (HS, 124)<sup>50</sup>

The “specific body” Foucault is talking about consists of a paradox: it is at once the marginalized private body and the scientifically explored body. Both of these constructions replace the older notions of the flesh and are used by the bourgeoisie in the service of the consolidation of their newly gained social position. The new ideal private body, as the bourgeoisie fashioned it for themselves, distinguished itself by its perfection through imperfection, the transposition of its essence onto the spiritual realm, and its discursive absence. The cultivation of defects, for instance, such as faintness, a pallid complexion, and physical as well as psychological delicacy became important elements of the desirable female body,<sup>51</sup> in part because it allowed men to put themselves into the role of protectors and in part because it assisted in making women more marketable, at a time when matches were increasingly made on the basis of attraction rather than property.

Alongside the cultivation of specific qualifications recommended in conduct and periodical literature, however, writers of religious treatises and sermons fervently denounced the physical body as unreliable, repulsive and contaminated,<sup>52</sup> and made it their goal to direct the thought of their audience to the after-life. In order to reinforce their demands for abstinence and the repression of the body, these writers evoked images of the perfect and inviolate, spiritual body, the body which will “shine as the Brightness of the Sun in the Firmament” (Bayly, 90), in the likeness of the body of Christ. Protestant religion in particular seemed to require of its followers a division of body and soul, an internal separation of the self into two parts, one of which is to be discarded, while the other is to be cherished and cultivated.<sup>53</sup> Since this splitting of

the self tended to lead to feelings of guilt, especially when the individual was apprehensive about the repression of physical desires, the bourgeois subject was inclined to erase the body through self-censorship. Required by religious beliefs to deal with concerns of the self on a regular basis, either through self-examination or the act of writing about the self, as in diaries, letters, and autobiography, the individual had learned to put the care for the soul first. In the process, the physical body in literature was increasingly moved to the background or the margins of a text. From there, it still exercised its influence, perhaps through its very absence, which rendered it at once mysterious and fascinating. In Richardson's novel, the body of the female protagonist is endowed with an air of the enigmatic: Clarissa's perfect, virginal body is repeatedly only alluded to -- physical functions or her experience of rape are never presented in detail -- and is eventually removed. It gradually deteriorates, just as it is in the process of constituting itself in the text. Clarissa's body, representing the bourgeois female body, is there for us to admire but is always beyond our epistemological grasp. We can see it establishing itself, in all its radiance, at the centre of the discourse, dominating and slowly absorbing that discourse, but we can never see and comprehend it in its essence. In the end, Clarissa's physical body has become both a metaphysical body, existing on a different, unverifiable plane, and a new material body, made up of the words that tell her story.



## Chastity and Virginity

Chastity and, in connection with it, virginity came to be essential elements in the construction of desirable forms of the body and the self. In the case of woman, both formed the centre of her being, that is, the one thing that determined her personal value and often influenced the position she was permitted to hold in society. In fact, over the centuries her body was increasingly reduced to one locus, on the integrity of which the future of the individual and often the financial situation of her family depended.

Closely linked to the care of the soul, chastity, in both men and women, became a central aspect of the Christian care of the self. While the concern for chastity can be traced back to Greco-Roman times, where it was an optional form of conduct, Christianity made it an essential requirement of the true followers of the faith. The Church Fathers, for example, proclaimed the acting out of one's desires as detrimental to one's soul and declared celibacy and virginity the highest states of living. Even as late as the eighteenth century, the Anglican clergyman William Law, for instance, praises virginity as a desirable state, as it "frees from worldly cares and troubles and furnishes means and opportunities of higher advancements in a divine life" (271). In contrast to antiquity, where chastity was a matter of choice for individuals who felt that, through this particular form of conduct and attitude toward life, they could both better care for the self and be beneficial to the people around

them, Christian religious groups, especially Protestant and Puritan, considered it mandatory behaviour and imposed it on their believers.

Although chastity had always been considered a valuable property for women, it became, during the seventeenth century, more and more the essence of the female body, that is, a possession which had to be wisely disposed of. Since those women, who had learned to govern their sexual passion and remained chaste out of conviction, were considered dangerous, as long as they were outside the sexual control of men, female chastity had to be channelled into lawful generation. Literature, of course, reflects some of the concerns about chastity and presents different solutions: although Isabella, in Shakespeare's Measure for Measure, would rather die than relinquish her chastity, she, strangely enough, marries in the end a man she hardly knows and for whom she has, until then, not shown much interest; Spenser's female warrior Britomart refuses to succumb to any temptation, until she has made it possible for herself to submit to the man destined for her; and Richardson's Clarissa, who, through her domestic accomplishments and her moral superiority, poses a great threat to the males in her family, can escape marriage and the control of her body by others only through the complete withdrawal from life.

The eighteenth century saw chastity and the loss of it primarily in the context of the economic and ideological value assigned to the bourgeois female body. Samuel Johnson, referring to the importance of knowing whether a man's offspring is in fact his, links chastity to property:

...it is the great principle which she [woman] is taught. When she has given up that principle, she has given up every notion of female honour and virtue, which are all included in chastity. (1768)

...Consider, of what importance to society, the chastity of women is. Upon that all the property of the world depends. We hang a thief for stealing a sheep; but the unchastity of a woman transfers sheep, and farm and all, from the right owner. (1773)  
(Hill, 33)

Johnson's words show that women were seen in terms of economic value, not because of the dowry they may bring a man -- by that time marriages based on business transactions had made way for those based on affection -- but rather because of the estate he will pass on to the children they share. The notion of the female body as a commodity, either intact or flawed, appears in a different sense in Bloch's observations on the "English defloration mania" (176) in the eighteenth century, according to which the Englishman considered only the best, that is, virgins, good enough for his consumption: "He must have something which can only once, and only by one person, be possessed, and of which he can boast before others" (177). Both views are echoed by Lovelace in Richardson's novel: not only does he prefer to be the first when it comes to women, but he has also the perverted dream of impregnating both Clarissa and Anna and having their (and his) children intermarry.

### Discourses on Desire

In order to induce women to value highly chastity and strive for the preservation of it, various discourses warn of the dismal effects the loss of it will have on the

individual's soul. In fact, in religious treatises and conduct literature the topic of chastity was a particularly popular one. As early as 1622, Abraham Darcie, in his Honour of Ladies, tried to convince his readers that chastity is by nature a female characteristic and serves to ennoble women:

Chastity is the flower of manners, the honour of the body, the ornament and splendour of the feminine sexe, the integrity of the bloud, the faith of their kinde, and the proclaimer of the sincerity and candure of a faire soule;...it is in Women where she has edified her Temple. (97)

As chastity was increasingly held to be a woman's highest good, the loss of it came to be associated with her downfall and utter ruin. If a woman should not be able to preserve her body's wholeness, the salvation of her soul was forever out of her reach, as the seventeenth-century divine, Richard Allestree, explained: "...between the state of pure immaculate Virginitie, and arrant prostitution, there are many intermedial steps, and she that makes any of them, is so far departed from her first Integrity" (Ladies Calling, 161). The notion that chastity was absolutely indispensable for women was still as valid by the mid-eighteenth century, when Wetenhall Wilkes warned his readers that "the least slip in a woman's honour, is never to be recovered" (Jones, 23). The question of how one's chastity is lost does not seem to be of any concern; all that matters is the fact of its loss and its implications. In order to take precautions against a fall, women are repeatedly admonished to "fly temptation rather than fight with it,"<sup>54</sup> that is, not to listen to men's flatteries and promises but rather avoid and resent their advances:

When a man talks of honourable love, you may with an honest pleasure hear his story; but, if he flies into rapture, calls you an angel, or a goddess; vows to stab himself, like a hero; or to die at your feet, like a slave; he no more than

dissembles: or, if you cannot help believing him, only recollect the old phrase 'violent things can never last.'<sup>55</sup>

The question of chastity plays an important role in Richardson's Clarissa. Although his female protagonist is aware of the consequences a step off the "right" path may have on her life both in the here and the after and although she is sceptical about Lovelace's protestations of love, she does not fly temptation. Instead, she claims that circumstances, largely determined by the preposterous demands of her family, have driven her right into its arms. Since Clarissa, while at Sinclair's house, does, however, listen to the proposals and suggestions Lovelace makes -- she explicates Lovelace's statements in detail in her letters to Anna -- and since she does admit that she finds the young man attractive -- "I never saw a man, whose person I could like, before this man" (507; II. 167) -- Clarissa's reasons for being with Lovelace may not just be despair on her and trickery on his side but also, as her friend Anna repeatedly suggests, desire which, according to all codes of behaviour, Clarissa almost would certainly have suppressed or denied.

Desire, the great antagonist of chastity and virginity, had for a long time been an area of problematization, especially when women were concerned. While male desire has always been a natural given, female desire has been rather more suspicious, to say the least. Thought to pose a danger to men's spiritual well-being, it had to be curbed and restricted. Shakespeare's comedies, however, are early literary examples in which female desire is given an important place and is treated in a positive manner: many of Shakespeare's female protagonists actively pursue their wishes and, like Helena in All's Well That Ends Well, are quite prepared to manipulate others if that

will serve their cause. By the end of the play, their desire is usually channelled into marriage as an outlet for their potentially subversive and destructive energies. Female desire in seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century literature is frequently concentrated in characters who precede Richardson's *Clarissa* as far as character traits and the situations they are in are concerned and is often shown to have a tragic outcome. The Portuguese nun, Rowe's fair penitent, Pope's *Eloisa*, and Johnson's *Caelia*, to name only a few, are portrayed as women whose failure to discipline, repress, or displace their desire brings them down.

From the statements of the Church Fathers on, desire seems to have been closely associated with women in whom it was thought to manifest itself in an active and a passive way: women were held to be both desiring and desirable; hardly able to suppress their own desires, they were, owing to their nature as objects of desire, responsible for men's downfall. Although the Puritans still located temptation and desire in women, the general notion of female desire underwent a change in the seventeenth century, when the new bourgeois ideal of femininity, resting upon delicacy and restraint, required women to repress any wishes connected with sexuality and cultivate an air of ignorance. Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living*, for instance, a book which *Clarissa* finds in her room at Mrs Sinclair's, clearly indicates that, to the author, women and desire are an incompatible notion:

Virgins must contend for a singular modesty; whose first part must be an ignorance in the distinction of the sexes, or their proper instruments: or if they accidentally be instructed in that, it must be supplied with an inadvertency or neglect of all thoughts and remembrances of such difference: and the following parts of it, must be pious and chaste thoughts, holy language, and modest carriage. (80)

Similarly, Lewis Bayly, in his Practice of Piety, another treatise which Clarissa has read, concludes his strict regimen of the day with suggestions of what to meditate on when “thou art putting off thy Clothes” (191). Both works expect women to dispel any thoughts of their bodies and instead concentrate on the salvation of their souls. Yet in spite of their need to be ignorant in sexual matters, women still had to attract men in order to reform them later. Although the desirable female qualities of the time consisted of largely moral, all-inclusive traits like chastity and modesty, a woman’s appearance and conduct were of no small importance. She had to be appealing to others but remain passive, not showing preferences for any particular man, as those may be interpreted as “somewhat too warm desires.”<sup>56</sup>

Owing to the shift away from the womb to nerves and fibres as the place of origin of female disorders, medical treatises in the eighteenth century increasingly established links between desire and disease in women. A century earlier, Du Bosc, author of the widely popular Compleat Woman, had already, but perhaps in a less clear way, made the connection when he had warned of desire as both the cause and manifestation of the disease: “We need to carry our selves like sicke persons; there is nothing we should so much refraine, as from that which pleaseth most: Our Inclination is no lesse distempered, then their tast; it proceeds from a poysoned spring, it comes not from a sound but from a corrupt nature” (82). Under the influence of Enlightenment empiricism, however, desire began to receive scientific attention and became an important component in the triggering of diseases. As Foucault points out in Madness and Civilization, external influences, such as books and plays, were

thought to affect the imagination and evoke desire (167). They could then stimulate the nervous fibres and lead to hysterical manifestations. Thus, as in earlier discourses, desire, in its negative form, is linked to women, and this time justified on the grounds of recent medical knowledge.

With the establishment of the libertine as a popular character, male desire becomes an important aspect in literature. Although rakish characters had already occasionally appeared in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, they began to flourish only in Restoration comedy in which the libertine and his manipulations were at the centre of attention. His desire, Protean by nature, vacillating between positive and negative poles of feeling, precludes constancy and stability, those qualities which the Puritan ethic considered indispensable for the individual.<sup>57</sup> Believing that a serious relationship based on honesty, trust, and commitment cannot co-exist with desire, the libertine opts for the latter and prefers to thrive on continual novelty and excitement. However, it is not only the imagined and the lived experience itself which yields intense pleasure but also, and very much so, the translation of this experience into words. Foucault perceives of the connection between desire and representation as the constituting characteristic of the Don Juan figure in literature:

the libertine is he who, while yielding to all the fantasies of desire and to each of its furies, can, but also must, illumine their slightest movement with a lucid and deliberately elucidated representation. There is a strict order governing the life of the libertine: every representation must be immediately endowed with life in the living body of desire, every desire must be expressed in the pure light of a representative discourse. (*OT*, 209)

As a result, language not only becomes a medium through which desire is filtered and disseminated but can also, together with novelty and variety, act as a stimulant of



excitement. The rhetorical battles of wit, so characteristic of Restoration comedies, both reflect the desire which informs them and function as sites which may incite new desire. Body and word are thus in a reciprocal relationship, each courting, instigating, and manipulating the other.

In the following years, the novel became a terrain on which the problem of desire continued to be analysed. Male desire, previously exemplified by the Restoration rake, underwent modifications, the final result of which was the creation of a rather harmless character, who had only temporarily gone astray and would eventually return to society's fold. Female desire had to be completely redefined and re-directed in order to make it an acceptable trait of the new ideal woman. Owing to the influence of the sentimental comedy, examples of the comic novel present heroes whose rakishness is still apparent but has been diffused with an element of naiveté and benevolence. Although Fielding's Tom Jones and Joseph Andrews as well as Richardson's Mr B. repeatedly display signs of violent attraction to various women, their clumsiness, essential good nature, and susceptibility to other people's advice prevents them from taking drastic steps. Richardson's male protagonist in Clarissa, however, is of an altogether different stamp: Lovelace embodies a particularly vicious version of the Restoration rake and yet he is designed in a manner that makes him likeable, despite his ruthlessness and cruelty. Projected as a warning, that is, a reminder of where excessive and misguided desire, devoid of Christian values, may lead, Lovelace horrifies through his scandalous wishes and extravagant stratagems, but he also fascinates through his confidence, courage, and wit. Although drawn as a

character with a potential for reform and the possibility for an entirely different direction in life, as William Warner has shown,<sup>58</sup> Lovelace is in the end exposed for his “perverted” desires and proven wrong. In contrast to the abandoned and failed rake, Richardson seems to place virtuous characters like Morden and Belford redeemed in the position of the desirable man, the man who has been able to control his passions, transform them, and direct them to the good of others. Richardson’s next protagonist, Sir Charles Grandison, represents the new ideal brought to perfection.

The notion of female desire had already undergone significant changes before the rise of the novel. Middle-class novelists had already established the necessity that women shift their attention away from themselves to others. In fact, the cultivation of a specific form of altruism, namely, the desire to redeem and reform a profligate man, had become a commendable act and an idea especially disseminated in romance literature. Early, particularly domestic, fiction continued to develop the notion of the virtuous woman who is able to regulate her own desires and hence privileged to direct those of others. It often presented women who were close to perfection and whose many qualifications enabled them to have a beneficial influence on men. Richardson’s Clarissa embodies, of course, the desirable woman par excellence. In her, the author illustrates what the ideal bourgeois woman could, and should, be like. Clarissa possesses in abundance what Armstrong calls “supervisory capacity” (81), the prime accomplishment of the new woman. Having regulated her own desires, as it seems, she has been given control over the management of the household and exerts an influence on both her family and Lovelace. In fact, it appears to be Clarissa’s intention to induce

others to adopt her values and beliefs. And yet the nature of her desires is never quite clear. There seems to be a difference between what they ought to be and what they actually are: Clarissa's claims that she only wishes to protect her family and perhaps, if God should grant her this success, reform a misguided young man, may possibly disguise her real feelings for and attraction to the libertine. Her demonstration of Christian self-effacement and altruism may furthermore hide her interest in wielding power over others.

The novel, like many other discourses, appears to have played an important role in the conditioning of people's desire. Presenting characters in binary oppositions, that is, placing individuals displaying desirable traits in sharp contrast to utterly despicable characters, authors often tried to change their readers and direct them to new forms of behaviour, as Armstrong has pointed out: "the novel, with all manner of printed material, helped to redefine what men were supposed to desire in women and what women, in turn, were supposed to desire to be" (132). Although much of fiction seems to have the objective of fashioning the body and the conduct related to it in a certain image, the same literature frequently also provides recommendations with regard to the care of the soul. Only when the two are brought into a balance, however, can the individual attain a state which approaches perfection.

### III. The Care of the Self

But sure there is a middle way to be followed; the Management of a young Lady's Person is not to be overlooked, but the Erudition of her Mind is much more to be regarded. According as this is managed, you will see the Mind follow the Appetites of the Body, or the Body express the Virtues of the Mind. (Spectator, no. 66)

The care of the self has always played an important part in literature. Based on the notion that one can give one's life special meaning and perhaps bring it to perfection, this care is geared toward the cultivation of all the positive aspects which make up an individual. Primarily directed toward the advancement of the soul, it does not neglect the mind and the body, however, but rather ensures that these two are developed in correct proportion to the soul. Should the care of the self be conducted successfully, it will be beneficial not only to the individual but also to the community. It may enable those persons who bring their lives to perfection to gain in influence and perhaps make their lives works of art which will be cherished and admired by others; it will, in turn, provide those in contact with accomplished individuals with exemplary role models. In antiquity, care of the self was probably best expressed by the notion "mens sana in corpore sano,"<sup>59</sup> that is, the view that a well-trained body provides a good foundation for an efficient and productive mind. The Christian ethic later adopted this formula but altered its meaning substantially.<sup>60</sup> As the overall emphasis shifted from the development of one's mental abilities to the salvation of one's soul, the desirable opposite was no longer the physically sound body but the chaste and pure body. All

energies now had to be directed to a morally flawless balance of body and mind. Alongside the notion of care itself, Christianity also adopted from Greco-Roman thought various techniques which were to assist individuals in their endeavours to bring the self to perfection. Protestantism, in particular, appropriated ancient methods of self-examination, meditation, and writing about the self, but put those into its own service by giving them a decidedly religious direction. Furthermore, the old idea of a guide or master for the individual in need of advice seems to have appealed to Christianity: after a period in which apostles wrote letters to their congregations or gave oral advice to their followers, religious counselling was gradually transferred onto an impersonal level. Religious institutions and their representatives began to disseminate their recommendations for the proper care of the self in various forms of printed material. The need for printed advice seems to have increased dramatically after the Reformation, which had overturned the strict clerical hierarchies and had done away with the authoritarian relationship between priest and believer. Now more or less on their own when it came to religious matters, individuals welcomed the new “second-hand” instructions which they encountered in religious treatises, conduct books, and, in the early eighteenth century, those numerous periodicals which devoted their pages to moral exhortations.

The following chapter examines prevalent constructions of the care of the self in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century discourses. Concentrating on contemporary projections of the relationship between body and soul, it also points out the contradictions in these constructions and relates them to ideologies which may inform

them. Although the focus is again on women, toward whom much of the advice is directed in order to render them “good women,” I also discuss a counter-construction which is at the heart of the libertine code of conduct: a care of the self which favours the body over the soul, while celebrating, at the same time, the intellectualization of what happens to the body. Fiction is often used as a vehicle to promote these projections. Although they are intended as recommendations which are to be emulated, they frequently have very little bearing on real life. Rather, fictional characters like Clarissa and Lovelace who, each in their own way, embody extreme forms of the care of the self, present a grim vision of where excessive or inappropriate care may lead.

### Correct Conduct and Its Appearance

A substantial part of that which was written on the care of the self in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was addressed to women and was concerned with the appearance of their conduct, the attention they gave to the power game between the sexes, and the disciplining of their bodies. Repeatedly, both religious treatises and conduct literature emphasize that women should concern themselves not only with cultivating various qualities but also with displaying them in an appropriate manner. Richard Allestree, for instance, recommends, in his Ladies Calling, that women “make their own vertue as illustrious as they can; and by the bright shine of that, draw off mens eyes from the worser prospect” (30). Although this advice seems to conflict with

many contemporary exhortations to display Christian humility, it does agree with the notion that a virtuous woman ought to attract a depraved man in order to reform him. Richardson's Clarissa seems to be treading a fine line between the two extremes. She is far too proud of her many accomplishments to keep them to herself. Moreover, she tries to give the appearance of true humility, especially when she feels the need to influence favourably others' opinion of her. When she appeals to her family on the topic of her impending marriage, for example, she observes the necessary submissiveness of children to parents. Similarly, when she gradually approaches death after her rape, she presents herself in the role of a person who has resigned herself to her fate and welcomes her physical dissolution. Clarissa's exceptional performance in sickness and death, so impressive and cathartic to those who witness it, is a prime example of the desirable way of dying and hence in accordance with what the Spectator no. 292 calls "the care of doing nothing unbecoming" (III, 41)), thereby commenting on Lucretia's decent posture in death. The right and advantageous appearance of one's virtues, so various discourses seem to suggest, may contribute to the efficiency of one's care of the self, add to the esteem others have for one, and by this means increase one's influence.

### Awareness of the Power Game

Women are further encouraged to be aware always of the fluctuations of power in relationships and to use them, if possible, to their advantage. In order to provide a favourable environment for their care of the self, women are told to beware, at all times, of men's artifices: "the best way ...to countermine ...Stratagems of Men, is for women to be suspiciously vigilant even of the first approaches. ...she that must secure her Chastity, must never let it come to too close a siege, but repel the very first and most remote insinuations of a tempter."<sup>61</sup> Allestree's straightforward and clear advice on how young women ought to fend off approaches and allurements of men is also presented in religious discourses, albeit in a much more obscure manner, as this excerpt from Lewis Bayly's Practice of Piety demonstrates: "in going abroad into the World, thou goest into a Forest full of unknown Dangers, where thou shalt meet many Briars to tear thy good Name, many Snares to trap thy Life, and many Hunters to devour thy Soul" (157). Vigilance and caution have become prerequisites for the daily interaction between the sexes.<sup>62</sup> Owing to the necessity that women live according to strict moral codes and also owing to the importance that both sexes are wary of each other, real communication and understanding between men and women are next to impossible. Yet prudence and caution with regard to male behaviour may not be enough: some discourses suggest that women use, to their advantage, the difficult and precarious social position they are in and attempt to manipulate men in their favour. George Savile, the Marquis of Halifax's Advice to a Daughter (1688), a widely-read



conduct book which was reprinted at least fourteen times during the eighteenth century, encourages women to use their so-called “feminine wiles” in order to exert their influence on men: “You have more strength in your Looks, than we have in our Laws, and more power by your Tears, than we have by our Arguments” (Jones, 18). Women are once again encouraged to employ their appearance and perform in a certain manner in order to have their way and attain their wishes. This power game, in all its various forms, is also at the heart of contemporary procedures of courtship, as Mandeville points out in his play The Virgin Unmask'd (1709). He has his character Lucinda explain the reasons for a woman’s condescension and cruelty to a man before she marries him:

She is resolved to be very cross, and with abundance of coyness sits in state, insults over the man, and treats him with as much scorn, as if he was not worthy to wipe her shoes; and why does she do all this? For no other reason but because she designs to make him her master, and give him all she has in the world. (Hill, 76)

Whether a woman is to act in a seductive, an aggressive, or a submissive way, the very fact that she needs to play a role at all indicates that a free, unencumbered social interaction between men and women is not possible at a time when strict codes of conduct limit the parameters of conversation. The proper care of the self in the eighteenth century seems to predispose individuals for a putting on of social masks for the purpose of adjusting their behaviour to accepted standards.

### Disciplining the Body

Many conduct books and religious treatises concentrate on disciplining the body, an important element in the care of the self. Jeremy Taylor, in his Holy Living, recommends “corporeal mortification and hard usages of our body” (84) as remedies against temptation. He suggests various methods, among them “a spare diet” and “frequent fasts” (84), which will help individuals gain control over their bodies in order to save their souls, and adds: “For by cutting off the provisions of vitual wee shall weaken the strengths of our Enemy” (84). The prevalent notion that fasting will subdue the flesh and will be an outward sign of repentance as well as a form of self-punishment is also echoed by Allestree’s Whole Duty of Man (1719) and Bayly’s Practice of Piety (1714). Accompanied by the proper demonstrations of humility, fasting will ease the soul and alleviate one’s conscience: “we do inflict somewhat of punishment upon our selves for our former excesses, or what ever other sins we at that time accuse our selves of” (Allestree, 126). Restrictions in the intake of food may, however, also constitute a preventive measure against sinfulness: “Use therefore to eat and drink, rather to sustain and refresh the weakness of Nature, than to satisfie the Sensuality and Delights of the Flesh” (Bayly, 201). Richardson’s *Clarissa* repeatedly displays a reluctance to eat. While she is still at her father’s house, she refuses food in order to express her displeasure at her family’s plans to marry her off to the despised Solmes. However, her rejection of food may also signal her effort to deal with unacknowledged desires, that is, her attempts to prove to herself and her family that

she can control her body. Later, at Mrs Sinclair's, she refuses to eat not only because she wishes to avoid the company of the prostitutes, but also because she feels the need to punish herself for the precipitate step she had taken. After the rape, her body has lost its previous value. Several measures Clarissa takes indicate that she now wishes to punish her violated body: in an immediate attack of despair after the forced act, she tears her hair and, for a while, becomes negligent and oblivious of her appearance; again, she declines to take any nourishment; and she begins to give away her clothes when she gives up any thoughts of future happiness. Clarissa subjects her body to a continual process of discipline and punishment, only to discard it later on when she realizes that all her efforts regarding the care of the self have been in vain.

### The Relationship between Body and Soul

Although many different discourses may have concentrated on disciplining the body and may have warned of the dangers emanating from physicality, most of them also paid attention to questions of the soul. In fact, the relationship between body and soul, often symbolized in the form of hierarchically ordered binary oppositions, had been of central importance for a long time and was often presented in the form of analogies.<sup>63</sup> Dichotomies which existed on the spiritual level, such as Christ and the church, or Christ and the believing soul, were matched on the secular level by husband and wife, in imitation of the historical archetype of Adam and Eve. On the worldly

plane, the body, representative of sensuality, was identified with woman, while the soul, or reason, took the form of man. If a woman wished to be associated with the soul, she had to repress her body or, if everything else failed, to dispose of it. Early in Richardson's novel, Belford points out that someone so near perfection as Clarissa should never have to undergo such a common female experience as childbirth (555; II. 243-44). Lovelace, later dreaming of Clarissa's ascension to heaven, seems to share this view, at least in his unconscious (1218; IV. 136). Particularly toward the end of her life, the young woman sees herself more and more as soul. She prepares herself for death as a bride makes preparations for her wedding: unable to marry Lovelace after the rape, Clarissa puts herself in the position of a nun and chooses Christ as her new bridegroom. As her body gradually deteriorates, her mind becomes more and more active and she disseminates a wisdom which points already to another world. Aware of her exceptional qualities and proud of them, she uses her last strength for the construction of a self-image which will place her in the tradition of a virgin martyr and ensure her future sainthood.

Richardson's novel is clearly influenced by that tradition of thought which puts higher value on the soul than the body. As a result, the female protagonist displays an extraordinary amount of asceticism in order to live up to the vision she has projected of herself. Clarissa seems to have internalized the widely popular view, propagated by contemporary religious leaders, educators, and moralists, that both body and soul have to be cared for and cultivated equally.<sup>64</sup> Heeding the advice of writers like Richard Allestree who, in his Ladies Calling, demands that individuals "take care of [their]

body as [they] take care of [their] soul" (169-170), Clarissa makes the integrity of her body, which for her constitutes itself in her virginity, an essential aspect of her self. She seems to hold that her virginity and chastity, combined with a life of Christian charity and benevolence, will guarantee the salvation of her soul. Continuing in a tradition which began as early as Plato, who claimed that the highest form of love completely transcends the sexual (Rogers, 1966, 43),<sup>65</sup> and St. Thomas Aquinas, who elevated virginity above marriage (Rogers, 1966, 65), Clarissa appears to be fashioned after the image of the Virgin Mary, revered as a saint and idealized especially since the Middle Ages. Trying to fulfil all the requirements associated with the admirable, virtually perfect model, the individual woman is constantly under the pressure of disciplining her body in order to make it subservient to mind and soul. She has to care for the body while she knows, at the same time, that it can only play an inferior role in her life. Patrick Delany, a friend of Richardson, expresses this idea well in his Twenty Sermons on Social Duties and Their Opposite Vices: "the care of the body, however, important, is yet but a lower concern; as it [the body] is the instrument of the soul, care should be taken to make it as usefully subservient to it, in its operations, as possible, ...therefore we owe the same care of the body on these accounts" (89). The body is of equal importance as the soul and yet inferior to it. This contradictory and confused message delivered in religious treatises and conduct literature may then also evoke contradictory and confused responses from those addressed: Clarissa wishes to achieve a balance between body and soul, that is, she wishes to adhere to her religious and moral values while she refuses, at the same time, to renounce her

physical desires and expectations. Not knowing how to coordinate the demands of both body and soul, she occasionally appears to be utterly at a loss about the measures she ought to take in order to attain the proper balance between the two. Only after the rape is Clarissa able to subordinate the concerns of the body to the requirements of the soul.

Following in the footsteps of various Catholic virgin saints but also heeding the recommendations laid out by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century religious advisors, Clarissa increasingly strives to impress those around her by a life of extreme asceticism. She displays several signs of “religious fasting,” a procedure which Lewis Bayly describes in his Practice of Piety (1714) as the commendable conduct of the sinner: the rejection of food “to make [one’s] Body and Soul the fitter to pray more fervently unto God upon some extraordinary Occasion” (280-281); the refusal of “good and costly apparel” (284) to subdue pride and inspire humility; and the abstinence from “the full Measure of ordinary Sleep” (285) to humble the body. Clarissa’s decision to subject herself to physical hardship may have its roots in any of the explanations Bayly gives for the phenomenon of “religious fasting”:

when a Man becomes an humble and earnest Suitor unto God for the pardon of some gross Sin committed; or for the prevention of some Sin, whereunto a Man feels himself by Satan solicited; or to obtain some special Blessing which he wants; or to avert some Judgment which a Man fears, or is already fall’n upon himself or others: Or lastly, to subdue his Flesh unto his Spirit. (283)

Clarissa’s attempts at atonement may be attributed to her feelings of guilt about the rash step she took when she left her father’s house. They may further be a sign of her desire to obtain blessings and forgiveness from her earthly as well as her heavenly

father. Clarissa's wish to put herself in the position of a regretful sinner also becomes evident in the different forms of self-humiliation to which she subjects herself: once she is over the shock of having been taken to the sponging-house, she almost indifferently accepts her fate and even encourages further degrading treatment of herself as the proper punishment for her fall; in contrast to her previous reluctance to talk about the disgraceful weeks she spent at Mrs Sinclair's, she eagerly reveals her story to the women in Mrs Smith's home, intent on leaving behind an account of what happened to her as a warning to those who may be unaware of the dangers lurking for the innocent and the proud. Clarissa's gradual deterioration may also be interpreted as an expression of an extreme religious choice, as was made by very few young women, later revered as saints.<sup>66</sup> Through their exceptional and intense suffering which frequently ended in death, they tried to prove the validity and legitimacy of their principles. In Richardson's novel, as in various accounts of the lives of female saints, we find an emphasis on the body of the female protagonist: owing to the grace of God, so it appears, Clarissa's body wastes away painlessly; even in sickness and death, it still radiates beauty and attractiveness which renders this pale and delicate outer shell an object of worship and admiration. Although it is Richardson's declared intention to lead his heroine toward sainthood,<sup>67</sup> he is never quite as successful as he may have wanted to be, perhaps because he occasionally surrounds Clarissa with an air of self-imposed holiness which is suggestive of a well-hidden pride and possibly thoughts of revenge.

Literary Models for Richardson's Depiction of the Care  
(Milton's Eve and Francis Spira)

The relationship between body and mind is a precarious one, often in need of balance. In literature, we are frequently presented with exemplary cases which serve either as warnings or as models to be followed. The stories of biblical Eve as well as Francis Spira, both of which are alluded to in Richardson's novel, constitute instances in which the mind-body-soul axis is under scrutiny and yield instructions indispensable for the well-being of the individual. The description of the events surrounding Eve, first presented in the Old Testament and later re-worked and re-told in Milton's Paradise Lost, echoes stereotypical views on female sexuality. While still in a state of innocence and grace, Adam regards Eve as a friend and companion. It is only through Eve's perversion of the mind, that is, her insatiable curiosity and her desire for knowledge and hence equality, that Adam and his descendants are subjected to hardships and the curses of the flesh. Women are not to have a mind of their own, the story seems to say; they are to defer to men in matters which require the involvement of the mental faculties. Richardson's Clarissa is likened to Eve not only in her outward appearance and its connotations of ambiguity -- the hair of both is "in wanton ringlets waved / As the vine curls her tendrils" (Milton, IV, 306-7)<sup>68</sup> -- but also shares with her the disobedience which is the direct cause of the physical misfortunes soon to follow.<sup>69</sup> Eve's transgression of God's commands results in mankind's discovery of carnal desire and their subsequent loss of all contentment and tranquility: "Their inward state of mind, calm region once / And full of peace, now tossed and turbulent/



...both in subjection now / To sensual Appetite” (IX, 1125-6; 1128-9). Woman wreaks havoc on man’s life, her mind and body being responsible for his fall. Placing Clarissa in the tradition of Eve, Lovelace later not only blames the young woman for having set in motion the turn of his good fortune but also claims that, as a woman, she was born to suffer (1069; III. 450-51). Unlike Adam, however, who understands the grave situation and is willing to share responsibilities as well as pain, Lovelace continues on his path of profligacy after the rape, although he is aware of Clarissa’s progressive deterioration. Adhering to diametrically opposed codes of conduct, that is, libertinism and Christian benevolence, both Lovelace and Clarissa are driven to extremes, one physically, the other spiritually, because both of them are unable to achieve the right balance in their lives.

While Eve’s error and plight are presented to us as the tale of an individual who is unaware of the consequences of one wrong step, Francis Spira demonstrates that he has carefully weighed the demands of the soul against worldly contentment and decided for the latter. Since the religious dilemma he is in – he is torn between adhering to his new Protestant beliefs and revoking them and returning to Catholicism – poses a choice for him between the world of the spirit and the world of the flesh, or, as he says, “the terror of this world” and “the terror of God” (37), parallels can be drawn between him and Clarissa. In many ways a bourgeois text, affirming the new middle-class values of self-discipline and renunciation of the body against what was believed to be the worldly pleasures of the aristocracy, A Relation of the Fearful Estate of Francis Spira (1638) is sent by James Harlowe to his sister

Clarissa to remind her of the disastrous consequences of a step off the right path may have. Opting for a comfortable life, favoured with the approval of family and friends, Francis Spira goes against the wishes of God and disavows his religious convictions. His punishment is cruel, however: Spira is subjected to self-imposed tortures of the mind, and eventually to distraction, despair, and painful death. The story of Francis Spira seems to be intended as a foil to Clarissa's sufferings. Clearly under the belief that he is right and that he has God on his side, James Harlowe attempts to place his sister in the category of the fallen angel: she has been disobedient to her father's wishes and orders and hence to the will of God. Severe punishment is soon to follow, in this world and in the other. Clarissa's religious position can be understood in two ways, however. On the one hand, her elopement from Harlowe Place may indicate that she indeed succumbed to her desires and felt the need to fulfil her wishes rather than accepting the woman's lot of suffering in marriage. In this case, James's allusions to her condemnation may be a severe blow to her and increase her feelings of guilt and dejection. On the other hand, Clarissa's decision to flee her father's home and marriage with the despicable Solmes, which, as she believes, would endanger her spiritual well-being and hence her chance for salvation, serves to show that she is the only one in her family who gives utmost priority to the requirements of the soul. Although Richardson created a heroine who gradually transforms herself into a female saint and although he therefore surely intended the latter interpretation, the first option should not be lightly dismissed: we should not forget that Clarissa is not free of human fallibility, as the author himself points out in his preface.<sup>70</sup> Rather, a

comparative reading of the stories of Francis Spira and Clarissa, that is, a reading in which one tale mirrors as well as contrasts the other, does provide us with a better understanding of the difficulties of establishing the right balance between body and soul.

### Representations of Libertinism in Literature

In spite of growing efforts in the eighteenth century to reform male conduct, most of the guidelines associated with the care of the self were still primarily directed toward women. Fictional and non-fictional discourses alike presented the “good woman” in her various forms: she is the sexless woman, restricted to a codified language and a limited sphere of interaction; she shines through meekness and imperfection, self-effacement and submissiveness; she lacks ambition and possesses desire only when it can be employed for the good of others; conditioned by the reading of selected literature only, she has learnt to cultivate those qualities which were considered most valuable in her, that is, to be “a social friend and a useful assistant” (57), as, among many others, Patrick Delany phrased it. Richardson himself, of course, participated in an extraordinary manner in this process of conditioning: while presenting in *Clarissa*, for the purpose of emulation, the admirably accomplished woman, he also appears to work toward changing his male readers by giving them in Lovelace, the cruel and manipulative rake, a negative example and a warning of a way of life which is to be

despised and avoided. As Richardson's eventual intention seems to be the creation of a male character who, in his virtue and benevolence, corresponds to Clarissa, he has to exorcise first the dominant literary persona of the reckless libertine before he can present his new male prototype. Since Mr B., the novelist's first attempt at fashioning a reformed rake, was designed in a way that invited the ridicule of both men and women -- it is doubtful that anyone could have been truly afraid of or appalled at the bumbling gentleman -- Richardson, in his next work, seems to have felt the need to take the negative characterization of Lovelace to an extreme, thus opening the way for the introduction, in his third novel, of Grandison, his male paragon. Yet even Lovelace and libertinism per se may not be completely devoid of notions of the care of the self but may have cultivated instead what could be called a distorted form of the care, that is, a care which does away with any thoughts of the afterlife and which is geared to an eclectic notion of self-fulfilment.

Conceptions and constructions of the self in Restoration comedies are closely connected with sexuality, that is, with the rake's assertion and simultaneous analysis of his physical desires. In fact, the need to attract attention through excessive and disgraceful behaviour and thus boost one's self-image appears to be at the centre of the libertine code of conduct. Although Restoration drama was certainly the natural environment of the rake, early versions of the libertine can already be found in Shakespearean comedy. Angelo, in Measure for Measure, parading a mask of virtue which hides the predatory male underneath, is prepared to break the laws decreed by himself, only to gain possession of Isabella, whose body and mind alike have made

him forget his previous strict standards. Bertram, in All's Well That Ends Well, displaying increasingly a combination of sexual energy and aggression, loathes the woman who cares for him, rejects her repeatedly, and does not hide his willingness to engage in short relationships with any other woman instead. In both plays, efforts at reforming the lecherous and depraved male protagonist seem to be doomed to failure, until the difficult situation arises in which he eventually finds himself forced to submit to radical changes in his conduct. As is also shown in numerous Restoration comedies, reform is not so much a matter of voluntary decision but rather imposed from outside. In the second half of the seventeenth century, the rake was not only brought to perfection but also endowed with a new dimension: the ability to intellectualize his sexuality.<sup>71</sup> Revealing a new inclination to analyse and discuss personal problems and considerations, Restoration comedies probably constitute the first modern discourses on sexuality, as Weber has pointed out in his study, The Restoration Rake-Hero: "Modern conceptions of character locate our sexual natures at the core of the individual being; we no longer relegate our sexuality to the periphery, but attend to it as the center of our individuality" (20). The development of the Restoration rake with his particularly negative character -- he thrives on egotism, cynicism and indifference to the suffering of others -- seems to reflect the growing interest at the time in individuals and the workings of their minds. More than ever, the self, in one of its rather unpleasant manifestations, is under scrutiny in Restoration plays. Interestingly enough, this self is, for the first time in literature, no longer a unified self: it has already undergone a division of body and soul and thus constituted itself in a way which forms the basis

for a modern discourse.<sup>72</sup> The sarcasm with which the libertine confronts everyday life seems to indicate his ability to build a wall between his inside and the world outside, that is, to guard himself through wit and rhetorical manipulations. In a playful manner, he is able and sometimes willing to analyse himself and others, yet he never reveals his feelings. He is obsessed with manipulating others both sexually and socially but he himself will not be treated in the same way. The rake is clearly a by-product of the secularization of seventeenth-century society, which was accompanied by a questioning of the belief in divine power. Hence this character and the plays in which he appears met with severe criticism from the middle classes, largely composed of staunch followers of the Protestant faith. Since Restoration plays, often associated with aristocratic circles, constituted a source of irritation and anger for the bourgeoisie, a problematization of the rake-hero commenced in the following years, in order to rid society once and for all, so it seems, of the celebration of depravity and manipulation.<sup>73</sup> Several decades after the hightime of Restoration comedy, Richardson, for instance, appropriated the figure of the reckless libertine and used this character in his efforts to diminish the value of his social superiors and present his own class as worthy of increased influence and importance.

## Variations of the Rake

On his search for an exceptionally impressive and effective version of the rake, Richardson had different models to choose from. Unlike those early libertine characters appearing on the Renaissance stage, most Restoration rakes are informed by a unique combination of sexuality and intellect. In fact, many of the plays in which the rake is assigned a central role reveal a close connection between language and desire: excitement appears to be stimulated by the use of wit and verbal strategies; in turn, rhetorical moves and extensive ruses seem to be inspired by physical needs. Although most rakes have in common a love of intrigue, an abundance of sexual appetite, excellence in self-control, and an extraordinary ability to manipulate others, they can still be divided into two main categories.<sup>74</sup> The Hobbesian rake, sometimes also called "vicious rake," is characterized mainly by his cold calculation, his aggression, and his tendency toward sadistic behaviour. He derives most pleasure not merely out of sexual but also social manipulation. On the scale of all the things he values most in life, sensuality seems to rank lower than power. Wycherley's *Homer* and Etherege's *Dorimant* present examples of the Hobbesian rake: both of them flourish when they are able to control and manipulate women who, for the most part, are no more than helpless and innocent prey. The philosophical libertine, in contrast, appears in the second phase of Restoration drama, and there especially in Congreve's plays. Influenced by the philosophy of both Epicurus and, in the seventeenth century, Sir William Temple, the philosophical libertine represents a more refined version of

the Hobbesian rake and displays such qualities as temperance and the ability to control his desire. Although the gratification of his ego seems to be of the utmost importance to him, he is able to approach the fulfilment of his wishes with a good amount of self-restraint and occasionally even exhibits an indifference toward sexual pleasure. While the Hobbesian rake seems to be determined by a decided streak of cruelty, the Philosophical libertine often reveals two very different, opposing sides: his aggression and brutality is occasionally softened by generosity, often expressed toward a weak and already ruined woman.<sup>75</sup> Rakish characters, such as Congreve's Mirabel, are further frequently matched with equally forward and resolute young women. As a consequence, the power game developing between the two takes on the nature of a mutual play, rather than a one-sided, exploitative activity. Since the game has always been a favourite occupation of the rake, a relationship resting on continually fluctuating levels of power seems to yield all the more pleasure and enjoyment. Rhetorical exchanges and battles of wit thus become sources of an aesthetic and animating experience, perhaps rendering violent physical confrontations less likely. As the temperance and ambivalence of the philosophical rake is indicative of the presence of some basic goodness in his character, efforts to reform him are frequently successfully and convincingly completed by the end of the play.



### The Libertine Care of the Self

Largely devoid of concerns for others and even for the state of his own soul, the character of the libertine often presents a distorted version of the proper care of the self. His acute awareness of social hypocrisies and his willingness to expose them, however, allow for his partial rehabilitation. Self-centredness and self-consciousness constitute integral parts of the rake. Constantly driven to assert his will, he employs his intelligence in order to undermine the wills of others. To achieve this, he must have an excellent knowledge of both himself and those he wishes to manipulate. His probing spirit, patience, curiosity, and designing abilities are therefore of the utmost importance in his endeavours. His sense of life's absurdity endows him with the ability to reveal remorselessly the dark sides of human nature and the brutal truths about the world in which he lives. Systematically, he tries to do away with the varnish of morality laid on by many centuries of the Christian ethic and gives us a glimpse of reality. Wycherley's Horner, for instance, is eager to expose the corruption and hypocrisy of London's genteel society and to hold the mirror up to those who are usually the first to judge. Like many other rakes, he sets up what Traugott calls an "empirical experiment:"<sup>76</sup> claiming that it is his intention to defend and to preserve the old values of love and honour, he ruthlessly puts them to the test through his manipulative powers and his knowledge of the weaknesses of others. Yet although his censure of contemporary society may be valid, his position as a social critic is forever undermined by the contradictions in his nature and conduct: his own depravity and

immorality divest him of the right to question the behaviour of others. The rake's most poignant characteristic and perhaps also his greatest handicap is his self-centredness. Often a follower of the Hobbesian outlook on life, which encourages the assertion of one's will if that should accommodate one's desires, he inconsiderately pursues his plans and overlooks, in a nonchalant way, the casualties on the road to his personal victories. Overcome by his egotism, he expects the whole world to be his subordinate. The rake's all-encompassing belief in himself is probably best expressed by Lord Rochester, one of the living, seventeenth-century examples of the libertine creed: "In my dear self I center everything" (Traugott, 1966, 388), Rochester claimed, thus justifying his various escapades. Displaying an abundant self-confidence, the rake relies on his ingenuity and is convinced of the impossibility that he should ever fail and come to any harm. Caring for the self means, in the case of the libertine, to attend first to the mind and the body, and to relegate to the background thoughts of the soul, in the hope that later there will be time for remorse and reform. Richardson's Lovelace repeatedly voices his determination to change, but frequently adds that he would first want to enjoy the pleasure of this current and last conquest: "I do intend to endeavour to overcome myself; but I must first try if I cannot overcome this lady" (609; II. 326). Concerns for the soul are absent in the rake's considerations or are displaced onto a worldly object, that is, transformed into the desire for a presumably unattainable person who becomes identical with the soul: "wanting her, I want my own soul" (740; II. 524), Lovelace says in a moment of despair after Clarissa's escape from him, but soon he is back in his old element of vowing revenge and scheming

against his adversaries. Clearly aware of his flaws and limitations but also in admiration of himself, the libertine is able to laugh about himself and to forgive himself, and therefore to continue with a way of life considered reprehensible by most of his contemporaries.

### Reforming the Rake

Since most libertines are either neglectful of a proper care of the self or have reshaped their understanding of this care to suit their interest, the notion of the reformed rake becomes problematic. Following the convention of concluding a comic play with a happy ending, Restoration comedies frequently close with the reform of the rake and his subsequent marriage to the virtuous, equally intelligent and equally sharp-tongued female protagonist. The sudden changes in the libertine character remain, however, often unconvincing and questionable, especially in early Restoration comedies in which rakes tended to exhibit particularly cruel features. In Etherege's play, The Man of Mode, Dorimant's sincerity regarding his resolution to follow Harriet, his future wife, to the countryside seems rather doubtful, since he also expresses his wish for a new meeting with Belinda, his previous lover, after having declared his affection for Harriet. In fact, when the rake steps into the new role of the devoted husband, he seems to play a new game or put on a new mask in order to pursue another strategy or carry out another scheme. Fidelity and loyalty are decidedly out of his character, as

they would require him to give up an essential part of his self. Only when the tone of comedy changes in the following years is a genuinely and believably reformed rake possible. Congreve was one of the first to introduce elements of compassion and humanity in some of his libertine characters. He achieved this, as Traugott points out, by splitting the rake into two figures, one representing the despicable, the other his attractive qualities (404). In The Way of the World, for instance, Congreve sets the witty, intelligent, and charming Mirabel against the cruel, manipulative, and heartless Fainall and thus allows for an acceptable, positive resolution. In sentimental comedies of the early eighteenth century, the trend continued and led to the creation of heroes whose flaws were not only less severe but were also, once acknowledged and accepted, capable of being corrected. Although attacked by bourgeois moralists and subjected to numerous modifications over the decades, the figure of the rake continued to exert its influence and eventually found its way into the novel.

### Eighteenth-Century Attitudes to Libertinism

Perhaps owing to the rise of discourses of sexuality, the eighteenth century appears to have shown renewed interest in Restoration drama. While the plays of Wycherley and Congreve reached their peak in popularity in the 1730's and 1740's,<sup>77</sup> rakish characters became also very fashionable in early fiction. Richardson's own Mr B. and Fielding's Tom Jones, young men with libertine inclinations who are temporarily on

the wrong path, appear to have sprung out of the sentimental tradition. Richardson's Lovelace, probably the most famous villain in the history of the English novel, however, seems to have been fashioned after early Restoration models of the Hobbesian rake. Aside from political motivations, Richardson's return to and re-working of this vicious character could perhaps be attributed to a peculiar dread of, as well as fascination with, the figure of the cruel, predatory male. Yet it was not only the genres of drama and the novel which had announced their intentions to reform the society of the time and had made the rake representative of the evil which had to be extinguished. Rather, by the early eighteenth century, the inclination to expose and condemn the libertine way of life seems to have permeated most discourses, especially those which, by their nature, leaned toward moralizing and preaching. In Steele's Tatler no. 33, for instance, Jenny Distaff, a young woman who is gradually instructed in the arts of femininity, reveals her narrow escape from the snares of a rake. Her narrative serves as a warning to the reader not to trust the protestations and promises of potential seducers. The essay criticizes and dismisses the notion of the reformed rake by pointing out that any declarations of change and improvement are no more than well-guarded lies. Patrick Delany also has very harsh words for rakes in his Sermons. Echoing views which Richardson probably shared, he lashes out against the bold manipulations of these depraved young men:

There is something so gross and shocking in this vice of corrupting women, that it is hardly possible to expose it as it ought: it is like some deformed creatures, too foul and too loathsome to be handled; its turpitude defends it; the bare mention of it is almost an offence to modesty. (18)

Delany denounces libertine behaviour as utterly despicable and adds, turning to the other extreme in his exaggerated praise of the virtuous female sex, that its consequence can only be “the corruption of body and mind [in] the most helpless of the most heavenly part of the creation” (19). Since both writers aim at the cultivation in their audience of a proper care of the self which will eventually reform and improve the society of their time, Richardson expresses in his novels what Delany preaches from the pulpit.

In his second novel, Clarissa, Richardson brings the character of the rake to perfection. Yet although the novelist professes to educate his readers about the perils emanating from this dangerous species of mankind, his creation seems to take on a life of its own, thus revealing an ambivalence in the author, an ambivalence which threatens to subvert his intentions. Occasional Lovelacian phrases in his correspondence also suggest that Richardson was not wholly free of sympathy for the rake and that he, perhaps unconsciously, even identified with this intriguing creation of his.<sup>78</sup> His fascination with the Don Juan figure can probably also be attributed to the singular opportunity it gave him: to create a character who overstepped all social boundaries and committed actions which would be unacceptable to the ordinary, ethically conditioned citizen. Foucault seems to describe the rake aptly when he points out different, captivating sides of this figure:

Underneath the great violator of the rules of marriage -- stealer of wives, seducer of virgins, the shame of families, and an insult to husbands and fathers -- another personage can be glimpsed: the individual driven, in spite of himself, by the somber madness of sex. Underneath the libertine, the pervert. He deliberately breaks the law, but at the same time, something like the nature gone awry transports him far from all nature; his death is the moment when the

supernatural return of the crime and retribution thwarts the flight into counternature. (HS, 39)

No matter which side dominates the rake, he is always at once fascinating and pitiful. He is especially impressive in his courage at overturning socially accepted norms of conduct and in upsetting hierarchies. Perhaps Richardson was induced to present a particularly hideous and, at the same time, charming libertine because, through the creation of Lovelace, the author could, if only for once and for a short time, live in his imagination the exciting but also depraved life of a rake. Richardson knew, however, that he could not revel in this role for too long. Aware of the task he had set himself, that is, knowing that it was his duty to expose socially reprehensible forms of conduct and offer new models of behaviour, he had to subject his male protagonist to death and destruction, thereby perhaps also exorcising his dark side.

Clarissa and Lovelace, the two main characters of Richardson's second novel, may be seen as two sides of the author himself. Clarissa's efforts concerning the care of the self are matched by similar efforts on Lovelace's part, although the seriousness of his assertions has to be questioned. Through his irony, Lovelace seems to undercut every positive step he claims to have taken toward reform and is thus constantly undermining his position. Lovelace's behaviour, however, is fully in agreement with the libertine code of conduct: true to the self he has envisioned for his life, he presents himself as protean, ambiguous, and indecisive. For both Clarissa and Lovelace, their reputation is of the utmost importance and induces them to direct their care of the self toward perfection, each in his or her own metier. Consequently, Clarissa must needs be the virgin martyr par excellence and Lovelace cannot make any concessions to his

vision of himself by giving up part of his infamous fame. Both have to take their predilections and desires, different though they may be, to extremes in order to fulfil their ideal notions of the self. With *Clarissa* and *Lovelace*, Richardson has created two equally well-developed and fascinating characters. He does not present their personalities, extreme as they may be, half-heartedly, which may be an indication that the one encompasses the author's social and spiritual aspirations while the other represents his fears and, perhaps, his secret wishes. Through his creation of two equally convincing characters, Richardson is able to incorporate in his novel different, even opposite, notions of the care of the self and thus to render Clarissa a captivating work of art. Influenced and informed by several other texts which had made the discussion of the care of the self one of their central concerns, Richardson's novel fulfils a two-fold task: it presents a care of the self which is to be emulated, while it also exposes a way of life which is to be avoided. Echoing more than one view with regard to the topics of gender and conduct, the body, and the care of the self, Clarissa becomes a many-faceted and, perhaps, multi-intentional novel, that is, a work which invites and accommodates a variety of different readings.



1. Michael McKeon, in his Origins of the English Novel: 1600-1740 (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), traces the beginnings of the novel in "the history of literary and material forms" (19) and J. Paul Hunter, in Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction (New York and London: Norton & Company, 1990), examines its origins in a variety of other, non-fictional discourses.
2. See Camille Paglia's Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), especially the first three chapters.
3. See James A. Doyle's The Male Experience (Dubuque, Iowa: Brown Publishing, 1983) for a brief overview of prominent images of masculinity.
4. See Henderson and McManus's Half Humankind: Contexts and Texts of the Controversy about Women in England, 1540-1640 (Urbana and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985) for opposing constructions of the feminine before and during the Renaissance.
5. See Michel Foucault's History of Sexuality, Vol. I: An Introduction (New York: Random House, 1978), especially chapter one.
6. There seems to be a direct line from Shakespeare's Rosalind (As You Like It) and Helena (All's Well That Ends Well) to Congreve's Millamant (The Way of the World) and Goldsmith's Kate (She Stoops to Conquer), and also clear connections between Renaissance rake characters, such as Angelo (Measure for Measure) and Bertram (All's Well That Ends Well), and the Restoration libertine, like Etherege's Dorimant and Congreve's Mirabell.
7. Shakespeare's Desdemona, for example, unable to comprehend the extent of her husband's jealousy, eventually falls at the hand of Othello. His Ophelia, incapable of bearing Hamlet's rejection, takes her own life. Otway's Venice Preserv'd, a play the performance of which Clarissa and Lovelace attend together, presents Belvidera, a female protagonist whose life is destroyed by her husband's inconsiderate, selfish actions.
8. See Margaret Anne Doody's chapter on Restoration heroic tragedy in her work, A Natural Passion: A Study in the Novels of Samuel Richardson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974) and especially William Warner's Reading "Clarissa": The Struggles of Interpretation (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979).
9. See Thomas Laqueur's Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1990) for an extensive analysis of the change from the one-sex to the two-sex model. Londa Schiebinger, in her article, "Skeletons in the Closet: The First Illustrations of the Female Skeleton in

Eighteenth-Century Anatomy,” in Catherine Gallagher and Thomas Laqueur, eds., The Making of the Modern Body: Sexuality and Society in the Nineteenth Century (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1987), reveals an important instance of the construction of femininity in medical discourses by investigating the origins of the female skeleton.

10. Richard Steele and Joseph Addison, Selections from the Tatler and the Spectator, ed. Angus Ross (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1982), p. 154.

11. Richard Steele, The Tatler (London and New York: Dent and Dutton, 1953), p. 211.

12. Richard Steele, The Christian Hero (Dublin, 1725), p. 12.

13. In his study, “Clarissa” on the Continent: Translation and Seduction (University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), Thomas O. Beebee argues that Richardson filled a conceptual gap by creating Grandison (117).

14. Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, The Spectator, ed. by Donald F. Bond, 6 vols., (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), I, 242. Citations from Spectator essays are taken from this edition and will hereafter appear in the text.

15. The social hierarchy seems to have been especially endangered by women who tried to invade the male sphere, whereas “nature” and “rightness” were more likely subverted by men who were willing to step down from their level of perfection to what was believed to be an utterly inferior plane. See Thomas Laqueur’s Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1990), pp. 122-34.

16. See Nancy Armstrong’s Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

17. See Katherine Rogers’ The Troublesome Helpmate: A History of Misogyny in Literature (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1966) for the history of misogynistic literary discourse.

18. Seeing himself in one of his favourite roles, that of conqueror and emperor Julius Caesar, Lovelace actually cites this passage, encouraging himself to be more doubtful of Clarissa whom he clearly sees as his wife and property (Clarissa, 429; II. 39).

19. Repulsed by Richardson’s first novel, Henry Fielding parodied Pamela in his own work, Shamela. There are also several comic or picaresque novels which clearly reveal that their authors do not take moralistic works too seriously but rather try to subvert them (for example, Goldsmith’s Vicar of Wakefield or Smollett’s Humphry Clinker).

20. "What sense of shame can you expect in a steel-helmeted woman, a renegade from her sex?"

21. Simon Shepherd, in his Amazons and Warrior Women: Varieties of Feminism in Seventeenth-Century Drama (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1981), comments on Lucretia's suicide: "It falls on the shoulder of Lucrece to transform the intimate act into the public event, and she does so by killing herself, by literally demonstrating the rape to be murder" (183).

22. This new emphasis on the body and its appearance, which is almost neglectful of the act, its background, and its implications, becomes especially apparent in Renaissance visual art, as Ian Donaldson, in his study, The Rapes of Lucretia: A Myth and Its Transformations (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), has pointed out, and may have directly influenced eighteenth-century illustrations of the penknife scene in Richardson's Clarissa.

23. William Law, in particular, makes the body and the threat of its pollution a central theme of his treatise, A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life (1728; repr., New York: Paulist Press, 1976), when he encourages young women to be watchful: "Your bodies are not only poor and perishing like your clothes but they are like infected clothes that fill you with ill diseases and distempers which oppress the soul with sickly appetites and vain cravings" (270).

24. Belford, likening Clarissa to the Lucretia of Ovid, holds that the young woman will not be able to sustain the shock of a physical violation: "But what I most apprehend is, that with her own hand, in resentment of the perpetrated outrage, she (like another Lucretia) will assert the purity of her heart: or, if her piety preserve her from this violence, that wasting grief will soon put a period to her days" (710; II. 43). Lovelace also compares Clarissa to Lucretia but then rejects any similarities, mainly on the basis of his own position. Contending, perhaps wrongly, that, since he is devoid of power, Clarissa cannot make any political point by taking her own life, he puts himself clearly in the tradition of Livy's Tarquin whose long tyrannical rule is overturned because of Lucretia's action: "Her innate piety ...will not permit her to shorten her own life, either by violence or neglect. She has a mind too noble for that; and would have done it before now, had she designed any such thing: for, to do it like the Roman matron, when the mischief is over, and it can serve no end; and when the man, however a Tarquin, as some may think him in his action, is not a Tarquin in power, so that no national point can be made of it; is what she has too much good sense to think of" (1148; IV. 38).

25. Camille Paglia, Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 12.

26. See Paglia, p. 15.

27. Samuel Richardson, Clarissa, 4 vols. (Everyman's Library, 1932; repr., New York, 1979), xiv.
28. Richardson, xv.
29. Richardson, xiv.
30. Rogers, in The Troublesome Helpmate: A History of Misogyny in Literature (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press: 1966), points out that Swift held that "extreme delicacy, exaggerated modesty, tearfulness, and cowardice, far from being naturally appropriate to the female sex, were just as contemptible in women as in men, and also undoubtedly the result of affectation" (174).
31. The animal imagery throughout the novel seems to justify such a reading: Lovelace, for instance, is described as a lion preying on Clarissa (196, I. 219; 742, III. 526), later as an eagle (480, II. 125; 559, II. 253), a wolf in sheep's clothes (750; III. 11), and a poisonous serpent (1320; IV. 276). Also, Anna, suggesting that Clarissa is in love with Lovelace and therefore wishes to reform him, tells her friend in a letter: "love delights in taming the lion-hearted" (209; I. 243).
32. Ted Hughes, in his preface to A Choice of Shakespeare's Verse (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), argues, however, that sexuality was already in a crisis during the Renaissance. During that period, so he contends, it came to a clash between Catholicism and Protestantism which resulted in the split of mind and body. He further points out that reason defeated the physical side in mankind and brought about the rejection of the figure of the goddess, until then revered, and the simultaneous introduction of the rigid Protestant, patriarchal god.
33. When Richardson introduced his male paragon, Sir Charles Grandison, the male body, virtuous and self-controlled, was probably meant to be the centre of similar values. However, this image of masculinity was never taken seriously enough by the readers of Richardson's novels and therefore did not gain much influence.
34. Katherine Rogers, in her study The Troublesome Helpmate: A History of Misogyny in Literature (Seattle and London: University of Washington, 1966), argues that men turned their hatred against women in order to suppress or deny their own feelings of guilt: "This preoccupation with sex was of course an indirect effect of their attempt to repress their own physical natures, and their extreme sexual guilt caused them to project their forbidden desires onto women. This projection in turn reinforced their belief that women were particularly sexual, and hence particularly sinful, and intensified their constant warnings against the dangers of associating with them" (22).
35. See the fourth chapter, "Puritan Marriage and the History of Friendship," of Edmund Leites' Puritan Conscience and Modern Sexuality (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986).

36. See Boucé's article, "Some Sexual Beliefs and Myths in Eighteenth-Century Britain," in Paul-Gabriel Boucé, ed., Sexuality in Eighteenth-Century Britain (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982), for more information on the fashion of daring clothes and décolletages. The growing presence of sexuality is also evident in French illustrations of Clarissa, in which the female protagonist is portrayed in extravagant clothes, clearly suggestive of the potentially seductive powers of young women.
37. Suspecting a conspiracy between Clarissa and her friend Anna, Lovelace has a strong desire to obtain her letters which he believes are hidden in her clothes: "but as to her pockets, I think my mind hankers after them. -- But they cannot hold all the letters that I should wish to see. And yet a woman's pockets are half as deep as she is high" (569; II. 268).
38. See John Richetti's essay, "The Portrayal of Women in Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Literature" in Marlene Springer, ed., What Manner of Woman: Essays on English and American Life and Literature (New York: New York University Press, 1977): "The Virgin Mary and her sisters merely served by their rare purity to emphasize the grossness of the type, of women in general; they were the pure exceptions who proved the filthy rule" (67).
39. I am indebted to Thomas Laqueur's study, Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud (Cambridge, Mass. and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1990), for my discussion of the shift from the one-sex to the two-sex model.
40. In Shakespeare's Twelfth Night and As You Like It, for instance, women temporarily disguise themselves as men in order to pursue their wishes. A Midsummer Night's Dream and The Tempest are examples of plays in which extensive transformations of body and mind occur.
41. See Richard Blackmore's Treatise of the Spleen and Vapours (London, 1725), pp. 26-28.
42. For useful and interesting information on hysteria see Ilza Veith's Hysteria: The History of a Disease (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), Ida McAlpine and Richard A. Hunter's (eds.) Three Hundred Years of Psychiatry, 1535-1860: A History Presented in Selected English Texts (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), and Michel Foucault's Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason (New York: Random House, 1965).
43. For two useful articles on nervous sensibility and its application to Richardson's novels see John Mullan's "Hypochondria and Hysteria: Sensibility and the Physicians," The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation, 25 (1984), 141-74, and Raymond Stephanson's "Richardson's 'Nerves': The Physiology of Sensibility in Clarissa," Journal of the History of Ideas, 49, no. 2 (1988), 267-285.

44. See the entry "chlorosis" in Ephraim Chambers' Cyclopedia (London, 1728).
45. See Richard Blackmore's Treatise of the Spleen and Vapours (London, 1725) and John Mullan's "Hypochondria and Hysteria: Sensibility and the Physicians," The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation, 25 (1984), 147.
46. George Cheyne, The English Malady: Or, a Treatise of Nervous Disease of all Kinds (London, 1733).
47. See Cheyne's letter to Richardson on July 1742, in Charles Mullett (ed.), The Letters of Doctor Cheyne to Samuel Richardson (1733-1743) (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Studies, 1943), p. 104.
48. Bernard de Mandeville, A Treatise of the Hypochondriack and Hysterick Passion (London, 1721), p. 172.
49. John Mullan, "Hypochondria and Hysteria: Sensibility and the Physicians," The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation, 25 (1984), 161. See also, for instance, John Ball's statement in his Female Physician (London, 1771), "if the patient be single, and of proper age, the advice of Hippocrates should be followed, who wisely says, that a woman's best remedy is to marry, and bear children" (15), and Robert James's Medicinal Dictionary, "It is, also, certain, from Experience, that Venery both alleviates and removes various Disorders incident to Women: For the male Semen, consisting of a fine elastic Lymph, rarefies and expands not only the Eggs, but, also, the Blood and Juices in the Vessels of the Uterus, the Fibres of which it likewise strengthens. Hence the Reason is obvious why Venery, or Coition, cures Women, rendered cachetic by a Suppression of the Menses, and generally restores that salutary Evacuation" (s.v. "VENUS").
50. This passage already been quoted above (p. 3) in my theoretical introduction, but is repeated again in order to emphasize once more the importance Foucault attributed to the connection between the bourgeoisie and the repression of the body.
51. Lawrence Stone, The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England, 1500-1800 (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), p. 446, and Randolph Trumbach, The Rise of the Egalitarian Family: Aristocratic Kinship and Domestic Relations in Eighteenth-Century England (New York: Academic Press, 1978), p. 151.
52. See especially William Law's A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life (1728, repr., New York: Paulist, Press, 1978).
53. See Rosalie Osmond's Mutual Accusations: Seventeenth-Century Body and Soul

Dialogues in Their Literary and Theological Context (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).

54. Richard Allestree, The Whole Duty of Man (London, 1658), p. 164. Similar ideas can be found in Wetenhall Wilkes' Letter of Genteel and Moral Advice to a Young Lady (London, 1740), in Vivien Jones, ed., Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 32.

55. Wetenhall Wilkes, A Letter of Genteel and Moral Advice to a Young Lady (London, 1740), in Vivien Jones, ed., Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity (London and New York: Routledge: 1990), p. 32.

56. Richard Allestree, The Ladies Calling (London, 1673), II, 20.

57. Edmund Leites, The Puritan Conscience and Modern Sexuality (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 117.

58. William Warner, Reading "Clarissa": The Struggle of Interpretation (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979).

59. Juvenal, X, 356.

60. Patrick Delany's Twenty Sermons on Social Duties and Their Opposite Vices (London, 1747), for example, show that the ancient idea has also been introduced into Christianity. In one of them, Delany preaches: "the first and great care in life should be, to join a sound mind to a sound body; and to preserve both in their perfection" (89-90). He repeats literally the Greco-Roman notion, yet his understanding of it is different. Rather than emphasizing the well-trained body, Delany has in mind the chaste and pure body.

61. Richard Allestree, The Ladies Calling (London, 1673), p. 17.

62. Eliza Haywood, in her Female Spectator (Vol. I, Book I, 1744), presents the story of an innocent young woman falling prey to a man's manipulations. The tale serves as a warning to her readers about how easy it is to be ruined if one forgets just for a second to be vigilant. For a reprint of this story, see Vivien Jones's anthology Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 38-44.

63. See Rosalie Osmond's Mutual Accusation: Seventeenth-Century Body and Soul Dialogues in Their Literary and Theological Context (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990) for an extensive analysis of these analogies.

64. In his Practice of Piety (London, 1714), Lewis Bayly lists a prayer which believers ought to say when they rise in the morning: "I beseech thee...defend me this Day from all Perils and Dangers of Body and Soul" (158).

65. See Katherine Rogers' The Troublesome Helpmate: A History of Misogyny in Literature (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1966), for her reference to the remarks of Socrates in Plato's Dialogues (p. 43).
66. In her Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1987), Caroline Walker Bynum discusses numerous cases of virgin martyrs. See also Raymond F. Hillyard's "Clarissa and Ritual Cannibalism," PMLA (Oct. 1990), 1083-1097 for a short note on the possibility that Clarissa suffers intentionally from "holy anorexia" in order to rebel against her family and punish them through her death (1092-1093).
67. Anna Laetitia Barbauld, ed., The Correspondence of Samuel Richardson (6 vols, London, 1804), III, 181.
68. Lovelace, at one point, compares Clarissa to a vine curling about him and suffocating him (521; II. 187). He seems to realize that the young woman is both attractive and seductive, but possibly in a destructive way.
69. See also Janet Butler's "The Garden: Early Symbol of Clarissa's Complicity," Studies in English Literature 24 (1984), 527-44, which draws a clear parallel between the biblical Eve and Clarissa, and, in contrast to Butler's argument, R. Paul Yoder's article, "Clarissa Regained: Richardson's Redemption of Eve," Eighteenth-Century Life 1989 May; 13 (2), 87-99, which contends that Richardson rewrites Milton by creating a "female Christian hero" (95).
70. See Samuel Richardson's preface to his second edition of Clarissa (Everyman's Library, 4 Vols, London: Dent and Sons, 1962).
71. In his article, "The Rake's Progress from Court to Comedy: A Study in Comic Form (Studies in English Literature, 6, 1966)," John Traugott argues that the rake was a creation of a specific period which had to deal with specific problems: "Only the restoration, an age perfectly cynical but with a sick nostalgia for the virtues of love and honor of a putative past, could have invented the rake" (383).
72. See Francis Barker's Tremulous Body: Essays on Subjection (London and New York: Methuen, 1984). Barker applies the idea of the splitting of body and soul to bourgeois literature and contends that, owing to a newly engendered "intense self-'consciousness,'" the individual represses and displaces the body and its desires (59).
73. In the introduction to The Use of Pleasure, his second volume of The History of Sexuality, Foucault points out that, over the many years of his research, his interest had shifted from the analysis of the deployment of sexuality as a discursive apparatus to an investigation of the formation of "a hermeneutics of desire" (5) and "a



hermeneutics of the self" (6), of both of which the problematization of sexual practice was an integral part (23-24).

74. For further information on different types of the rake, see H. Weber's The Restoration Rake-Hero: Transformations in Sexual Understanding in Seventeenth-Century England (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986) and Robert D. Hume's The Rakish Stage: Studies in English Drama, 1660-1800 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983).

75. In Etherege's Country Wife, Horner has pity on Mrs Pinchwife and therefore exposes her cruel, inconsiderate husband to the laughter of the town. Similarly, in Congreve's Way of the World, Mirabel makes financial provisions for his former lover, Mrs Fainall, and arranges a marriage for her before he leaves her.

76. John Traugott, "The Rake's Progress from Court to Comedy: A Study in Comic Form," Studies in English Literature 6 (1966), 386.

77. See Harold Weber, The Restoration Rake-Hero: Transformation in Sexual Understanding in the Seventeenth Century (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Madison Press, 1986), p. 183.

78. In an almost Lovelacian tone, Richardson invites Susannah Highmore, daughter of his friend Joseph Highmore, the painter, to visit him: "Do come and see how your other old lover spins away, hunting after new faces at fifty-seven. You will see him in his kingdom: and he will read to you a new performance, calculated indeed for the perts of the place: 'A Dialogue between a Father and a Daughter,' very sprightly; a little sprinkling of something better in it, but very sparingly sprinkled; as if the author were afraid, that his mind should be thought as antique as his body" (Barbauld, Correspondence, II, 204-205). Later, Richardson makes demands on his female friends in an almost regal manner: "I intend to make a law, that my ladies shall send me two letters for one" (II, 257).

### Chapter 3:

#### Transparency Re-examined: An Analysis of the Textual Complexities and Ambiguities in Clarissa

The following chapter will point out contradictions in Richardson's novel, Clarissa, and examine their origins. As we have seen, Richardson seems to draw on various discourses to strengthen his points. He frequently uses them as a framework for questions he wishes to address, such as contentious aspects of the parent-child relationship, questions of desirable conduct in both men and women, the right balance between the body and the soul, and problems in the relationship between the sexes. Since Richardson seems to have recourse to opposing or even mutually exclusive discourses in order to reinforce his arguments, however, ambiguities may easily arise in the text. For example, Clarissa's progressive deterioration may be regarded, within the context of religion, as self-imposed suffering, owing to a form of extreme asceticism, or, when read in relation to contemporary medical beliefs, as the result of physiological problems. Similarly, Lovelace's continually changing attitude toward Clarissa can be interpreted as a typical feature of the libertine character, but may also be read as Richardson's failed attempt to introduce the prototype of his "new man."<sup>1</sup>

The various contradictions in the novel may perhaps also be attributed to Richardson's wish to portray his main characters as two extremes, that is, to characterize Clarissa as angel or saint and Lovelace as consummate devil. Endowing his protagonists with psychological depth, however, instead of presenting them as mere

types, Richardson risks the possibility that his constructions will collapse the moment they lose the appearance of constancy and stability. Yet Richardson fails in his intentions precisely because he cannot sustain this kind of characterization. He tries to take Clarissa, his model of femininity, to an extreme while surrounding her, at the same time, with an abundance of doubts which then begin to undermine her position. Since perfection must be flawless, any dubious moves on her part may easily be interpreted as hypocrisy. The portrayal of Lovelace may be equally problematic, since the young man, designed as a despicable villain, is paradoxically endowed with positive features. In his eagerness to “feminize” society, Richardson may accidentally have endowed the vicious rake with character traits which run counter to the nature usually associated with this type. While Belford’s reform and its tearful, moralistic manifestations appear as almost pathetic, Lovelace’s repeated wishes for change, which reflect his internal division and are in sharp contrast with his declared depravities, may be far more impressive to the reader.

This chapter will further show that Clarissa and Lovelace are never very far apart. Although they are designed as binary oppositions -- they depend on one another in order to define themselves; that is, they constitute themselves in their particular identity predominantly through the contrast to the respective other -- they may really only be two sides of the same coin or, to be more precise, different but integral parts of Richardson’s own personality. Although Clarissa and Lovelace may appear to be essentially different, their approaches to power, the care of the self, and the notion of friendship are surprisingly similar. Neither follows consistently the codes of conduct to

which he or she supposedly adheres but rather each occasionally enters the territory of the other: Clarissa wishes to embody to perfection the pious, obedient daughter and later the devoted, morally accomplished, wife, while Lovelace takes pride in being an infamous libertine and skilled strategist. Lovelace does at times display benevolence and affection toward his fellow human beings and repeatedly expresses his wish to change for the better, while Clarissa, although criticizing and rejecting Lovelace's way of life, is tempted to resort to similarly manipulative measures in order to attain the reputation and influence she feels she deserves. Since Richardson's correspondence reveals that the author endowed his two main characters with many of his own, often contradictory, sentiments, it may be possible to merge Clarissa and Lovelace into one persona by thoroughly investigating their similarities and isolating those elements in which they complement each other.

### I. Fluctuations of Power and Control

Clarissa: "I thought if I could be encouraged to hope for a reconciliation, I would let this man see that he should not have me in his power but upon my own terms, if at all." (506; II. 166)

Lovelace: "And if she hate me not, she will forgive: and if she now forgive; then will all be over; and she will be mine upon my own terms." (886; III. 200)

There is something deeply disturbing about the way in which power is presented and analysed in Richardson's novel, perhaps because both its location and intensity are neither clear nor stable. Several modern critics have addressed the question of power and in the process have taken sides with one of the different parties: while both Castle and Eagleton see Clarissa as the primary victim of the many manipulations carried out by various groups,<sup>2</sup> that is, as a human being who is cruelly and repeatedly silenced and whose fundamental rights are first restricted and then taken away, Warner, purposely adopting the opposite view, contends that Clarissa is far from being innocent but rather quite adept in turning to her advantage the miserable situation in which she finds herself.<sup>3</sup> He shows that Clarissa ruthlessly manipulates others in order to promote her own cause, which consists of proving that she is a victim and in achieving that she is admired for her steadfastness and determination. Warner is probably correct when he indicates that Richardson was perhaps the first to interpret

the novel in a reductive fashion when he favoured the position of Clarissa (Warner, 175). The author had, after all, designed a male protagonist who is attractive, witty and charming and whose continuation of his libertine life of depravity evoked regret and disappointment among some contemporary readers.<sup>4</sup> When Richardson, therefore, dismissed Lovelace as thoroughly flawed and despicable, he may have given the impression that he had suppressed part of his own creation and had joined the ranks of Clarissa's supporters. Richardson does, in fact, repeatedly concede victory to Clarissa: although constantly active and scheming, Lovelace is never successful in gaining complete hold on Clarissa, while she, despite being intimidated and abused, is able to fend off most attempts by others to control her.

Foucault's notion of power relations may be useful for a better understanding of the dynamics of domination and submission in Richardson's novel. Power, Foucault believes, is not concentrated on one side but is constantly shifting. It is characterized by the elements of flexibility and change (HS, 92-94). In Richardson's Clarissa power manifests itself as a continual test of wills and hence fluctuates. On a rather harmless level, we find battles of wit which derive from Restoration comedy and in which opposing factions are engaged in light and superficial squabbles. These verbal contests can usually easily be won by one side or the other and do not have far-reaching consequences for the outcome of the novel. On a more serious plane, however, we are presented with immovable and inflexible positions, sometimes in the form of deeply engrained principles which, when on a collision course, elicit violent responses in the opponent. Thus the family pride of the Harlowes, bourgeois parvenus, is pitted against

the libertine creed of Lovelace, the aristocratic profligate, while Clarissa's Christian moralism is caught in between. Instead of displaying a willingness to compromise, characters often try to draw others to their own side, either through subtle manipulations or force. Clarissa's and Lovelace's widely differing outlooks on life are reflected in the struggle between the tragic and the comic mode which seems to be at the centre of the novel. Lovelace appears to be dominated by the element of change and cheerfully tries to adjust his actions to the requirements of the moment, while Clarissa frequently prefers to see herself in an utterly hopeless situation, with various invincible forces arrayed against herself. Given their disparate dispositions, Lovelace is able to disregard his flaws and even laugh about his luckless state, whereas Clarissa is, for a while, tempted to submit to despair but eventually resigns herself to her fate.

Both positions, strong as they may be, are, however, gradually undermined by a sense of irony which pervades the novel. Without ever fully realizing their strategic limitations, most representatives of the different sides are trapped in their own constructions, that is, in the images they have created of themselves or others. Their actions, therefore, although they may seem to be assertions of power, may really only be expressions of self-defense. In a novel in which apparently influential and potent characters admit their fears of their social inferiors and frantically try to subvert the strategic movements of their already weakened enemies, the discourse of power is always also a discourse of resistance, especially if all attempts at strengthening one's control over others persistently result in its loss.

Clarissa and the Assertion of the Will

The convenient disposal in marriage of a young woman is the primary cause for the exertion of power in Richardson's novel. Since most of the characters, the female protagonist included, are convinced that they have a right to make decisions regarding Clarissa's future and steer her life in a direction which will enhance their own position, they are eager to pursue their interests and subordinate everything else to their cause. As a result, a conflict arises in which Clarissa's body becomes the prize to be awarded to the faction which possesses the greater willpower and endurance. While Clarissa only asks to be granted what she considers the basic form of self-determination -- she wishes to have a say in the choice of her marriage partner<sup>5</sup> -- the Harlowes and Lovelace turn the argument into a matter of honour, that is, a question of pride and of clashing principles between a well-to-do middle-class family and an arrogant aristocratic debauchee. Behind the personal aspirations of individuals thus also loom considerations of class which may occasionally intrude and restrict the options as well as parameters of action available to the opponents.

Many of the initial problems in the novel have their origins in the characters' need to project their notion of the self on others. Misunderstandings as well as serious differences in opinion arise out of each side's adherence to an inflexible notion of how things ought to be done and hence on a decided disparateness in the priorities of the parties involved. The Harlowes, describing themselves as an "embattled phalanx" (253; I. 305) and thus viewing themselves as an alliance united against an enemy, use the



idea of family as a pool of common values and interests against what they perceive to be selfishness on the part of Clarissa and Lovelace. They firmly believe that their youngest daughter will behave according to her upbringing and professed disposition, when the family's aggrandizement through an advantageous marriage to Solmes is on the agenda: "they have all an absolute dependence upon what they suppose to be a meekness in my temper" (65; I. 37), Clarissa complains, indicating that she can see through them. Since in their rather traditional view of family there is no room for individualism, especially not in a woman who, paradoxically, had been brought up to think for herself, the Harlowes know that they have to assert their power, if they wish to remain in control. In order to impose their will on Clarissa, they incorporate into their authoritarian position an important part of the young woman's own self-image, namely, her need to be always dutiful, obedient, and respectful to her elders. In other words, they strengthen their own discourse of power through the appropriation of an essential part of Clarissa's discourse in an attempt to undermine her position:

"Remember also what is expected from a character so extraordinary as yours:

remember it is in your power to unite or disunite your whole family for ever" (179; I.

195). At least temporarily, they are also able to diminish Lovelace's influence on her,

when they proceed to point out that it is the libertine's power over her which is at

least partially responsible for her neglect of filial obligations. Through her elopement,

however, Clarissa thwarts her family's plans and quickly puts an end to their hopes.

Unable to bring about a reconciliation, she eventually replaces them with a new

family, but not without initial difficulties. It is only after a short but painful and

nightmarish episode, during which the widow Sinclair and her helpmates become a surrogate family, that Clarissa finds understanding and acceptance with Mrs Smith and Mrs Lovick, who assume the roles of caring mother and sister respectively, while Belford becomes the concerned brother. Finally, however, she transfers her familial ties onto a purely spiritual level and accepts as her real and only family God as the heavenly father, who holds absolute authority over her, and Jesus Christ as her celestial husband. In so doing, she is able to elude once and for all her oppressors. This strategy, moreover, allows her to exert posthumously her influence on them, and which provides her with the opportunity to be submissive and assertive at the same time. Although defeating the will of the Harlowes, Clarissa is able to realize the image of the perfect daughter, without having to give up her sense of integrity and her understanding of herself.

While they are fending off the attempted impositions by the people around them, both Clarissa and Lovelace are also trapped in their own self-images which they are seeking to impose on each other. Lovelace sees himself in the role of the dashing conqueror whose attractiveness no woman can resist for long and Clarissa believes herself endowed with equally influential qualities, although she wishes to see hers restricted to the moral plane. Within each discourse of power, there is room for the other: the other must necessarily be what he or she is in order to incite the imagination to create an opposite which then becomes a fundamental, stimulating element in the accumulation and exertion of power. Clarissa must be morally accomplished, self-confident, and disdainful, in order to be worth Lovelace's efforts at conquest, while

Lovelace has to display a certain degree of profligacy and depravity in order to be deserving of Clarissa's rescue and salvation. The necessary inclusion of the other in one's own discourse of power functions as a source of inspiration and energization. This recognition of the other for what he or she is gives Clarissa and Lovelace the opportunity to test their abilities and increase their reputation. As a result, each of them wishes to project his or her self-image on the other: Clarissa tries to improve Lovelace and change him into a morally acceptable husband, while Lovelace wishes to bring her down to his own level of immorality. They both also express their willingness to resign some of their power, however, should that be possible on their own terms. Since the surrendering of power requires signs of submission which may indicate a weakening of their position, both restrict their concessions mainly to the level of rhetoric and concentrate instead on the advancement of their own causes. Against their wills, their words may, at times, reflect their real intentions. When Clarissa calls Lovelace "a man so uncontrollable" (290; I. 358), her words may suggest two things: Lovelace can neither control himself nor can he be controlled by others. As a hot-tempered, potentially dangerous and yet attractive and engaging young man who does his best to evade other people's influence on him, Lovelace presents the ideal object for Clarissa to test her accomplishments on and unleash her reformatory skills. In order to assert her will, Clarissa has to turn Lovelace into the opposite of what he is. She is, of course, unaware that Lovelace, who calls their interaction "the struggle, whether I am to have her in my own way, or in hers" (809; III. 92), pursues the same goal when he makes every effort to render her more

compatible to him: "if I could pull her down a little nearer to my own level; that is to say, could prevail upon her to do something that would argue imperfection, and be better able to comprehend one another: and so the comfort would be mutual, and the remorse not all on one side" (450; II. 69). As he indicates to Belford, Clarissa, too, has to become her own opposite. Lovelace's intention to ruin her, however, is not merely based on his need to gain power over her but also on his wish to be closer to her and to share with her his feelings of guilt and regret, which occasionally emerge. The desire to impose ideal constructions of the self on the other extends, in both cases, beyond the point of their separation, even beyond death. While from her deathbed and in her posthumous letters Clarissa calls on Lovelace to reform, and thus continues to promote her self-image of the benevolent and forgiving martyr-saint, Lovelace, regarding himself as Clarissa's husband and therefore entitled to exercise his power over her, desperately strives to regain at least physical control over her by giving instructions on how to dispose of her body. Both characters thus appear to display a reluctance to impose closure on their respective discourse of power. Unwilling to admit to themselves that they have already defeated the other -- Lovelace through his physical intrusion on, and disruption of, Clarissa's conception of the self and Clarissa through her immediate reorganization and reconstruction of her identity and integrity on a substitutional basis which cannot replace what she has lost but will do for the moment -- they unceasingly chase their fantasy of shaping and directing the lives of the people around them.

## Writing as a Means of Control

Although letters are, of course, constitutive of the genre of epistolary fiction, they play an especially important role in Richardson's novel, as they are essential tools in the battle raging between the different sides and are used, by most of those involved, to undermine and control the positions of others. While the letters certainly fulfil their usual function of conveying a sense of immediacy of thought and emotion, they also and, more importantly, reveal individual strategies which the protagonists disclose to their respective confidants, apparently in the hope of meeting with their approval as well as obtaining their advice, but more likely to put their own proficiencies on display. Thus Belford is well-informed about Lovelace's ever-changing plans of bringing Clarissa into his possession and Anna Howe is familiar with the indecision of Clarissa, who hopes patiently for a reconciliation with her family and avoids a marriage with Solmes by placing herself under the protection of Lovelace. The two friends may occasionally be invited to offer constructive criticism on projected measures, but frequently Clarissa and Lovelace are already firmly set on their stated plans. The verbalization of strategic ideas, however, helps them to proceed with or refine them.

Either actively or in a seemingly passive fashion, most characters use writing as a weapon in their interaction with others. The Harlowes, at times, resort to communicating their decisions to Clarissa in a written form, not only in order to appear authoritative but also in order to avoid Clarissa's verbal and physical

protestations and counter-movements. Aware of their limitations in rhetorical and epistolary skills, they fortify their letters with declarations of their parental rights and reminders of Clarissa's filial obligations, in an attempt to obviate any incipient rebellion on their daughter's part. Knowing that Clarissa's writing can pose a serious danger for them, they do their utmost to stop her, through monitoring her correspondence, confiscating her writing utensils, and confining her to her room. Although most of their own letters to Clarissa are quickly questioned and refuted, or met with superior, logically more coherent, arguments by the recipient, they do occasionally have a powerful effect. When, several weeks after Clarissa's departure from her father's house, both her sister, Arabella, and the two uncles enquire about the young woman's possible pregnancy, their bluntly phrased letters provoke hysterical fits and longlasting despondency in Clarissa: "The upbraiding pen of an uncle," causes her "to be wounded by a cruel question, put by him in a shocking manner" (1193; IV. 101), and certainly has its share in her progressive decline. Clarissa, who at that point, however, has already decided to make her story known by letting a collection of letters speak for itself (1176-7; IV. 78), is able to counter her family's painful attacks on her by criticizing her uncle in a few lines to Mrs Norton: "Such a letter as I believe was never written to any poor creature, who by ill health of body as well as mind was before tottering on the brink of the grave" (1199; IV. 109). Throughout the novel, Clarissa's ability to undermine successfully the epistolary attempts of her opponents allows her to keep the upper hand as far as that kind of power is concerned which

comes from a sense of integrity and an infallible reputation, although physically she does not escape the most severe of consequences.

Lovelace and Clarissa, although equally active and fervent letter writers, differ substantially in their epistolary accomplishments. Each of them primarily carries out and then intensifies his or her writing because of the other, either in order to work toward taking possession of the other or in order to devise a way of eluding the opponent. The process of writing not only helps them to rethink and reshape their strategies, as new venues are opened through the act of putting thoughts into words, but it also gives them the opportunity of exposing their plans to the scrutiny and criticism of friends or of sending, for manipulative purposes, specific messages to the opponent. Thus letters in Richardson's novel are occasionally employed for purposes outside their normal domain of mere communication of information, emotions, and ideas, and turned into strategic tools. Yet, while Lovelace's forte lies in the crude manipulation of other people's letters, Clarissa shines in the subtle orchestration of meaning in her own writing. Lovelace, predominantly a man of action, who attains most of his success through contriving plots around Clarissa, such as the false fire alarm or his self-inflicted illness, distinguishes himself through "external" meddling with correspondence, that is, through the interception, alteration, and falsification of other people's writings rather than through ingenuity in his own. Recognizing, for instance, an equally determined and dangerous spirit in the surprisingly forward and sharp-tongued Anna Howe, he is particularly worried about her letters to her friend Clarissa, as he can expect from Anna both interference with his plans and a negative

representation of his character. He therefore repeatedly tries to stop or undermine the correspondence between the two women. His greatest epistolary manipulation consists, however, in inducing Clarissa to stay with him at Mrs Sinclair's by sending her forged letters, in which his aunt, Lady Betty Lawrence, and his cousin, Miss Charlotte Montague, vow emotional support as well as moral and financial assistance. Although temporarily successful in his designs, Lovelace never quite loses his apprehensions of counter-strikes. His knowledge of his limited access to Clarissa's correspondence and his fears of an impending plot against him are at least partially responsible for his plan of raping Clarissa, since the cruel act will, as he thinks, interrupt and perhaps bring to a halt her writing: "If she write, I shall see what she write. But I believe she will have other employment soon" (877; III. 188), Lovelace tells Belford shortly before the rape. Although reluctant about carrying out his intention, he urges himself on, hoping to gain, once and for all, complete knowledge of her and to restore his reputation of being the better tactician.

In spite of being subjected to severe mental and physical hardships, Clarissa finally reveals herself as superior to Lovelace in the role of epistolary schemer. Although patience and passivity seem to predominate within her for a long time, her rape appears to energize her to strike back. During a period of utter distraction, she warns Lovelace of the dire consequences her writing may one day have for him: "let me have pen, and ink, and paper, allowed me -- It will be all my amusement -- But they need not send to anybody I shall write to, what I write, because it will but trouble them: and somebody may do you a mischief, maybe" (896; III. 212). Unknowingly,



Clarissa seems to foretell Lovelace's fate. Once her innocent view of life has been disrupted and she has had a glimpse of the evil side of human nature, she is compelled to confront all the truth there is and to acquire all the knowledge she needs to evaluate friend and foe and to represent herself to them in the light in which she wishes to be seen. Most of Clarissa's writing carried out during the remaining two months of her life is directed toward telling her story and making her will known, through such measures as subtle hints in her posthumous letters or symbolic messages on the lid of her coffin. Standing up to Lovelace in his own metier, Clarissa admittedly resorts to deceit when she sends him an allegorical letter, informing him of her imminent departure for her "father's house" (1233; IV. 157) and thus ensures that he desist from pursuing her further.

Although Clarissa claims to offer forgiveness to her family and Lovelace, which would require her to be silent about the wrongful treatment she had received, she is tempted to reveal the truth. Although her sense of modesty does not permit her to be explicit about her trials, phrases such as "the most premeditated baseness," "the violator," and "when virtue, when chastity is the crown of woman" (1301; IV. 250) are sufficiently suggestive to inform Morden of the rape and are thus eventually responsible for Lovelace's death. With the help of ingenious epistolary manipulations, Clarissa is able to impose her will on others and to have the final word on the matter. Although she cannot protect and preserve her physical integrity, she succeeds in directing the interpretation of her life in her favour. While fending off attempts by others to curb and control her discursive potential, Clarissa manages to re-invent and

re-establish her lost self on the basis of the word which will never cease to tell of her in an advantageous way.

### Stratagems and Manipulations

Manipulative action, in its various forms, is employed by most characters in Richardson's novel either in order to evade coercive movements undertaken by others or in order to manoeuvre others into desirable positions and entice them to specific conduct. At the centre of a character's wish to influence others is the need to force them to action which will allow that character to continue with his or her own performance of a projected role. Since most forms of behaviour are tied to specific discourses of power -- Clarissa's suppression of sexuality and her occasional display of helplessness and timidity, for instance, constitute significant elements of the conduct required in a young, unmarried woman in bourgeois society, while Lovelace's relentless pursuit of women is a necessary form of behaviour for someone who draws most of his reputation and self-esteem from his successful activities within the libertine code -- individuals restricted by or trapped in such discourses will try to circumvent or subvert burdensome impositions. Yet unlike many Shakespearean plays, in which manipulative behaviour and the (unwilling) adoption of roles are often presented in the form of mere masks which characters may put on for a while and later take off,<sup>6</sup> Richardson's novel exhibits protagonists who try to force others into

substantial, often permanent changes. It is Lovelace and Clarissa, the two main characters and most prolific letter writers, who are responsible for the most coherent and extensive strategies, and also, therefore, for the majority of power fluctuations in the discourse. While the two may differ widely not only in their dispositions but also in the goals which they have set for themselves, the nature and outcome of their manipulations may at times be surprisingly similar.

For much of the time, Lovelace and Clarissa either pursue their individual little ruses or work on their larger schemes and stratagems; however, they occasionally clash in a test of wills which points to as well as illustrates the grand design of the novel. At these moments, they represent characters who, on an allegorical level, embody incompatible principles which are forced into violent and destructive interaction, yet which also need one another for the very purpose of their existence and self-definition. During the very few times in which Clarissa and Lovelace face each other in eye-to-eye conflicts, often provoked in order to determine whose will is stronger, Richardson's protagonists are presented as individuals who desperately try to divine the other's thoughts and plans, in order to forestall his or her next move. Although they may be right in their strategic assumptions, they hardly ever achieve the expected result. Lovelace easily wins the first test which arises from the question of where Clarissa should live in London. Although they both feign ignorance and disinterestedness when discussing several options, Clarissa lacks the experience and knowledge to see through Lovelace's deception, and thus finds herself manoeuvred into taking up lodgings at Mrs Sinclair's. When, a few weeks later at Mrs Moore's,

Lovelace continues with his well-tested and previously successful strategy of lying shamelessly but charmingly to all the people around him, he scores another victory. It is unclear whether Clarissa's sense of delicacy, her naïveté, or perhaps her exasperation with him prevents her from interrupting his tale of lies and telling her story. Her calm response to him, "But I will, now that I have escaped from you, and that I am out of the reach of your mysterious devices, wrap myself up in my own innocence ...and leave to time, and to my future circumspection, the re-establishment of my character" (797; III. 75), could be interpreted as either a severe mistake on her part or an indication of a well-founded knowledge of and reliance on her eventual rehabilitation. Their next and clearly most severe confrontation is the rape which, owing to Lovelace's careful manipulations, does not give Clarissa any opportunity for self-defense and which, interestingly enough, is triggered not only by the incitement of the prostitutes but also by Lovelace's own feeling that Clarissa is increasingly invading his territory and therefore has to be stopped.<sup>7</sup> Hence he is willing to answer what he considers a challenge by Clarissa through violence: "I'll teach the dear charming creature to emulate me in contrivance! -- I'll teach her to weave webs and plots against her conqueror! -- I'll show her that in her smuggling schemes she is but a spider compared to me, and that she has all this time been spinning only a cobweb!" (879; III. 191). Seeing himself as magisterial contriver and Clarissa as an inferior but increasingly bothersome dilettante, Lovelace is steeling himself for the violent act which is soon to follow and in which he is certain he will be victorious. Yet his strategy lacks foresight, as it is based only on a general knowledge of women, a

knowledge which he has constructed for himself. Clarissa's unexpected response -- of anger rather than submission -- marks the beginning of his gradual loss of power and reaches an unforeseen degree during the "penknife scene," one of their last meetings and the occasion which allows Clarissa to thwart his attempts to do her further harm.

By having Clarissa apparently lose most of the immediate and painful struggles between herself and Lovelace, but also through frustrating, at the same time, Lovelace's ultimate wish of achieving complete control over Clarissa, Richardson arranges for the ideologically important victory of the middle classes over the aristocracy and the allegorically necessary defeat of "evil" by "good." Yet this clear-cut outcome of victory for the one and defeat for the other, set up again as binary opposites, may distort the complexity of the two characters, who are both winners and losers, although at different times. Instead, their individual strategies display not only their similarities and differences but also the failures and mistakes responsible for the downfall of both.

There is a clear difference between Clarissa's strategies before and after the rape, a difference which is associated with her growing awareness and acceptance of the ruthlessness of those around her, her new evaluation of herself as a "fallen," yet inherently innocent and pitiful woman, and her need to be appreciated, even admired, to whatever degree this may be possible after the loss of her "honour." Her early strategic manoeuvres can be characterized as predominantly defensive, whereas her activities designed and carried out after the rape are of a more aggressive, perhaps even hostile, sort. Clarissa's measures at fending off her family's marriage schemes

consist of a variety of rather harmless acts. She displays passivity and voices her wish to be compliant, while frantically consulting with Anna in her letters about a solution which would satisfy everyone; she plays for time by continually postponing meetings; she puts out epistolary baits, which she calls "artifices" (365; I. 465), in order to influence her family's opinion of her; and she surprises the Harlowes by occasionally acting completely against their expectations, as for instance, by her admission that she prefers Lovelace to anyone else or by her defiance and aggressiveness during her arranged meeting with Solmes. Her strategies with regard to Lovelace are less clear and consistent: while she tries to keep him at a distance and wishes to be seen to be negatively inclined toward him, she is open to his advice and even friendly to him, when she hopes that she can promote her plans for a reconciliation with her family. After the rape, Clarissa is able to shed her mixed attitude of resignation and hopefulness, and to become active and goal-oriented. Her repeated attempts at escaping from Lovelace, undertaken with the help of bribery and disguise, her eagerness to investigate and uncover Lovelace's schemes, and her new, surprising candour about her painful experiences indicate Clarissa's resoluteness and determination, and gradually culminate in the decision to tell her story. Since Clarissa manages to puzzle and, at times, antagonize those around her, reactions of others to her conduct add new fuel to the power struggle incited and cultivated by the Harlowes and Lovelace.

Aware of women's apprehension of libertine conduct and convinced that, in addition, Clarissa takes her filial obligations seriously, Lovelace carefully plans his

own strategies of overcoming the young woman and spiting her family. Lacking Clarissa's single-mindedness and ability to endure, however, Lovelace's schemes are by necessity of a different nature from Clarissa's and are characterized by a protean flexibility and variability which enable the rake to adjust his measures to the requirements of the moment but which also prevent an uninterrupted pursuit of his aims. In fact, Lovelace's delusion about his invincible power, authority, and reputation render the young man too sure of himself and too confident of his ways. His ability to play to perfection the roles of which Clarissa will approve, as he knows, proves a great advantage in the early stages of their relationship: portraying himself as mistreated and ill as a result of his courtship, he succeeds in evoking pity for himself.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, he wins Clarissa's admiration when his benevolent treatment of Rosebud gives him the appearance of a man who is able to exercise self-control and is therefore on his way to reform. Later on, however, Lovelace's insistence on taking his deceptions to ever new heights -- for instance, he presents himself as a tearful and sensitive young man at Mrs Moore's: "Out then I pulled my handkerchief and, putting it to my eyes, arose and walked to the window -- It makes me weaker than a woman! ...And having rubbed my eyes till I supposed them red, I turned to the women" (786; III. 60) -- raise suspicions at least in those who know that Lovelace's voluntary subjection to a process of feminization is likely to serve no other means than the fulfilment of his male desire. And yet Lovelace's chameleon-like character occasionally proves an asset, because it allows him to break down Clarissa's system of defence from different angles: "My divine Clarissa has puzzled me and beat me out of

my play. At one time I hoped to overcome by intimidating her, at another by love; by the amorous see-saw, as I have called it. And I have only now to join surprise to the other two, and see what can be done by all three" (717; III. 492). Although Lovelace is temporarily successful with the help of his many-faceted schemes, much to his surprise, he also triggers an unforeseen reaction to his deceits in the form of Clarissa's own well-devised and varied measures.

Although the two protagonists in Richardson's novel are marked by differences in character and conduct, their respective façades of the deceitful libertine and the innocent paragon may well conceal similarities between them. Both profess to have one goal toward which they are working, but, at the same time, they seem to deflect attention from other hidden aims and motivations: while Clarissa apparently directs all her energies toward the fulfilment of her duties toward her parents, her prospective husband, and her heavenly father, and while Lovelace claims his main interest to be the possession of Clarissa, both share the wish and need for the confirmation of their self-images, the assertion of their power over others, and the heightening of their reputation. Relying on her ability to influence others, Clarissa cannot refrain from criticizing Lovelace at inopportune moments. And she does not avoid his company, even though she suspects that he is dangerous.<sup>9</sup> Lovelace, too, relies too much on his self-confidence and continues with his extensive ruses and manipulations, although he must fear that he will not go undetected for long. Both of them are in the hands of others when they expect it least. Clarissa is directed by Lovelace when she thinks she is making independent decisions, as in the choice of her lodgings or in her dealings



with "Tomlinson," while Lovelace is urged on by the women at Mrs Sinclair's to rape Clarissa. Although he admittedly abhors the idea of having to proceed with this act, it is probably their tendency to ridicule and question his sexual abilities which induces him to proceed: "these plaguy women are so impertinent, so full of reproaches," he complains about their pressure, "they are for helping me out with some of their trite and vulgar artifices" (674; II. 428).<sup>10</sup> No matter how well-designed and well-developed their strategies may be, both Clarissa and Lovelace occasionally fail to consider factors of subversion and resistance, not only directed at them by others but also emanating from themselves.

#### Discourses on Power and Resistance

Power and resistance to that power are, as Foucault has repeatedly argued,<sup>11</sup> not necessarily separate entities; neither are the discourses in which, and through which, power is produced and disseminated and those which are intended to undermine and defeat that power. On the contrary, each discourse has the potential of being a discourse of power as well as a discourse of resistance at different times or even simultaneously. Richardson's Clarissa constitutes a prime example of a novel in which fluctuations of power and resistance -- between social groups, between individuals, and even within characters themselves -- bring forth energies and constellations which, in turn, render this work a fascinating and engaging text.

Richardson's novel, with its frequent instances of assertion and subsequent subversion of authority and influence, reveals the contradictions inherent in the traditional notion of power. Positions of power are tied to specific sets of values or ideologies which furnish them with the necessary clout but also render them vulnerable, as these beliefs restrict them to particular niches in which they can be easily attacked. Clarissa, for instance, adheres to the strict code of the moral paragon, which requires her to observe narrowly circumscribed forms of behaviour and which allows others to wield power over her. Although her success in developing an excellence in the observance of desirable conduct provides her with a great degree of authority and influence, it also greatly restricts her options. Yet, since there is always the danger that a person's position of power will be undermined by opponents, a system of defense, which forms a necessary and natural part of a discourse of power, allows the individual to strike back. Clarissa, in spite of being subjected to many infringements and hardships, manages to do that in a remarkable way. Her opponents, the Harlowes and Lovelace, are both informed by specific ideologies from which they draw much of their strength. The Harlowes, for example, derive their power from an uneven parent-child relationship which authorizes them, so they believe, to make unreasonable demands on their daughter and decide about her life. Yet the rigid assertions of their will derive partially from their envy and fear of Clarissa who has, as Mrs Norton later tells her, repeatedly intimidated them: "some of them were as much afraid of meeting you, as you could be of meeting them" (1260; IV. 193). The bourgeois ideology of the Harlowes, which is based on the patriarchal notion of

complete filial obedience, is countered and undermined by Lovelace's aristocratic way of life which takes for granted the exertion of power over socially inferior individuals. Since it is her body which would, either in its state of physical integrity and radiant purity or in its "fallen" condition, advance the position of one of the two opposing sides, the young woman has to tread carefully between them and use her exceptional approach to life as a balancing element and an invisible boundary between the Harlowes and Lovelace. Clarissa knows that her perfections are both assets and liabilities. While they are sources of strength -- "I know my powers, but have not the least thought of exerting it" (200; I. 230) -- they are also a fortune which others will try to exploit or attempt to destroy. One of her family's techniques of weakening Clarissa's determination, for example, consists of simultaneously affirming and resisting her power when their own interests are endangered: "The very ground you walk upon is dear to most of us. But how can we resolve to see you? There is no standing against your looks and language. ...you have but made us stand the closer and firmer together" (253; I. 305). Like the Harlowes, Lovelace, powerful and manipulative though he may be, is repeatedly struck and infuriated by Clarissa's inexplicable influence on him, as he angrily reports to Belford: "And hast thou not thyself frequently observed to me how awkwardly I returned to my usual gaiety, after I had been within a mile of her father's garden wall, although I had not seen her?" (401; I. 514), and "if thou but beheldest, the abject slave she made me look like" (424; II. 32). Although in positions of social superiority, both sides opposed to Clarissa are occasionally prompted to gather their forces of resistance when confronted with the

young woman's awe-inspiring presence or her epistolary proficiency. As a result, their own discourses of power may temporarily change direction and focus, and become discourses of resistance.

For most of the characters involved in the struggle for Clarissa's body, the notion of power gradually takes on a disturbingly paradoxical meaning: instead of yielding additional strength, power produces apprehension, confusion, and despair. For Lovelace, for instance, who, after many successful schemes, speaks of himself as "the man whose fear of her has been above his passion for her" (742; II. 526), the concept of power becomes increasingly unstable. Reluctantly, he realizes and accepts the fact that physical control over another person does not necessarily entail ultimate and all-encompassing control. "For never knew I what fear of man was -- nor fear of woman neither, till I became acquainted with Miss Clarissa Harlowe; nay, what is most surprising, till I came to have her in my power" (958-9; III. 301), Lovelace admits and indicates that he is now aware of the possibility that his values and beliefs will not go unquestioned. Clarissa's progressive decline and eventual death, which have to be seen not only as the consequences of the physical strains put on her by rape and imprisonment but also as deliberate acts of self-defense and resistance, introduce the gradual silencing of her opponents. In a poignant reversal of his plan of stopping Clarissa's writing through her rape and her subsequent pregnancy, Lovelace is temporarily deprived of the power to continue with his own letters and subjected to a period of distraction when he hears of Clarissa's death. Both he and the Harlowes are eventually defeated and reduced to sorrow and regret as the result of their unremitting

insistence on their wills. Clarissa's absolute withdrawal from the power struggle, that is, the irreversible removal of her body, the source and object of contention, from the sphere of action and discussion, brings to a halt, once and for all, the relations of power inside the discourse.

Yet, since Richardson's novel is made up of a multitude of letters which, owing to the immediacy and intimacy that the technique of "writing-to-the-moment" involves, reveal uncensored and unedited contradictions and ambiguities in the individual characters, the play of power and resistance may continue outside the text. As readers, we can never be quite sure if the Harlowes would eventually have refrained from forcing their daughter into a marriage with Solmes, if Clarissa feels more for Lovelace than she admits, and if Lovelace would have been able to reform, had Clarissa been more affectionate toward him. Since no narrator, or intruding editor, gives directions or interpretations, at least not in the novel's first edition,<sup>12</sup> characters exert their influence on the readers of their letters, on those inside as well as those outside the discourse, engage them in their trials, and try to manipulate them in their favour. Thus, the novel, a vast discourse of power and resistance, at once controls and resists the reader, and hence allows for a variety of readings.

## II. The Cultivation of the Self

“What care ought we to take not to confound the distinctions of right and wrong when self comes into question!” (398; I. 509)

Since ancient times, the care of the self, that is, the act of disciplining and monitoring the self in order to bring it to perfection, has played a central role in the lives of certain individuals.<sup>13</sup> A number of techniques, such as writing about the self, examining one’s conscience regularly, seeking the advice and guidance of others, and practising self-denial and altruism, often served as tools in the realization of one’s potential. Important goals of one’s endeavours were, and still are, the discovery and acceptance of the truth about oneself in order to be able to work toward self-improvement and, at the same time, be beneficial to family, friends, and society. While technologies of the self in ancient times were directed at making one’s life a “work of art,” that is, bringing it to perfection in the here and now, Christian technologies expected their followers to renounce the self, especially those elements which are associated with the body, and required instead that believers concentrate on the salvation of the soul. Since both approaches considered the right balance of body and soul of the utmost importance, they provided the foundation for the increased investigation into concerns of the self in a variety of discourses. In Richardson’s novel Clarissa, for instance, the notion of the care of the self finds expression in many ways:

while the female protagonist is obsessed with the idea of her perfection and tries to model herself after the lives of virgin saints and martyrs, other characters either encourage her in her endeavours or try to divert her from her chosen path by confronting her with their own “perverted” notions of the care. Furthermore, the epistolary genre, in which the novel is written, lends itself well to the establishment and exploration of subjectivity which, through Richardson’s pioneering technique of having his characters “write to the moment,”<sup>14</sup> is taken to a level of perfection never before reached in English fiction.

#### The Constitution of the Self as Subject (of Desire)

The presentation of subjectivity in early fiction is most likely connected with the “psychologization” of the novel, that is, with the endowing of its characters with introspection and reflection. By presenting individuals who convey their thoughts, wishes, and concerns in their letters, Richardson added a new psychological dimension to his characters, which was lacking in protagonists of earlier works of fiction. Driven by their economic needs and their dire financial circumstances, Defoe’s fictional heroines, for example, are forced to concentrate on the requirements of the moment and seek ready solutions to their problems. In their difficult world in which money and status are of primary concern, moral considerations have to be put aside. As a result, in Defoe’s novels, emotional, religious, and ethical concerns are added mainly by way

of retrospection: speaking, many years later, from a point of awareness, a character, such as Moll Flanders or Roxana, reflects on her past life and is able to recognize earlier mistakes and accept them as such. But even then her examination of past events is minimal and her account is a description of incidents rather than a reflection of its implications.

Richardson's fictional works, however, are among the first which address and analyse the question of female desire. The epistolary technique, with its concentration on the speaking subject, contributed greatly to the success of this exploration. While much of Clarissa's writing is undertaken for the purpose of constructing a stable self which is to be admired and imitated, the young woman is occasionally able to be critical about herself. Even if the construction of a positive and flattering self-image may be at the centre of her discourse, the writing "I" is occasionally able to distance herself from the self, that is, to succeed in stepping out of herself, looking at her situation from a point of removal, and analysing herself. Yet even in those rare but important moments, Clarissa, the female subject, seems to be only partially aware of her desires. It is her actions rather than her words which reveal her wishes. In fact, her desire is constituted in the text in various forms: occasionally as clearly stated aspirations, although the real motivations behind them may be obscured; often in the form of denial, when Clarissa is responding to the suspicions and accusations of the people around her; and, most importantly, as behaviour which is diametrically opposed to her professed intentions. Clarissa's wish to reform Lovelace and thus save a fellow



human being from perdition, as she thinks, represents a clear instance of an admitted and stated desire in the young woman:

And then has the secret pleasure intruded itself, to be able to reclaim such a man to the paths of virtue and honour: to be a secondary means, if I were to be his, of saving him, and preventing the mischiefs so enterprising a creature might otherwise be guilty of, if he be such a one. (183; I. 200)

Although Clarissa's goal appears to be strictly altruistic, other, rather more personal and egotistical, motives may be lurking behind her façade of piety and morality: not only may she wish to increase her own reputation as an accomplished and impressive moral being by exerting an admirable influence on those around her, she may also hope to gain the young man for herself. If either of the two should be the case, then Clarissa's desire is in sharp contrast to the convictions of Richardson and many of his contemporaries who held that a rake can never truly reform and that pride in one's achievement is incompatible with the notion of Christian humility.<sup>15</sup> Clarissa's hesitation between two diametrically opposed positions – altruism and egotism – may then account for the precariousness of some of her actions and assertions: she initially denies, for instance, that she is attracted to Lovelace but later admits that she prefers him to every other man;<sup>16</sup> she continues her correspondence with the rake against her family's wishes and in spite of her own awareness of possible dangers; and she claims that she left her father's house against her will, although she consciously made the decision to meet Lovelace outside the family's garden (in fact, she opened the gate and stepped outside)<sup>17</sup> and followed the young man when he urged her on. Although readers are invited to encounter and appreciate Clarissa during moments of self-

effacing subjectivity, they have to be careful not to disregard contradictions in her self-portrait.

Some of the ambiguities in Richardson's main characters are perhaps attributable to the process of "subjectivization" itself, which presupposes objectivity, that is, honesty about and, if necessary, rigour toward the self. Individuals are required, as it were, to separate themselves from their egos and display a critical and analytical attitude toward themselves. Informed by the tension between desire, will, and socially expected conduct, both Clarissa and Lovelace are at times torn between different sides and therefore unable to keep up the appearance of a stable and (in Clarissa's case) unified self. Clarissa's regretful remark after the elopement that "[her] duty should have been the conqueror of [her] inclination" (506; II. 166) indicates that conflicting forces, internal and external, are exerting an influence on her. Struggling to accommodate different demands on her, such as her attraction to Lovelace, her wish to be obedient to her parents, and her desire to be regarded as perfect by others, Clarissa desperately tries to please everyone, without, however, compromising her own will. Owing to his protean character and his fluctuating desire, Lovelace is drawn to many people and engaged in a variety of things. Although he apparently puts his will to power and his interest in the physical above all other concerns, he still seems to be strangely attracted at times both to the thought of reform and to Clarissa's mind rather than her body. Yet while Lovelace claims to be mainly burdened by the difficulties and failures of his many schemes, it is his unstable self which is really his greatest problem. Never being able to set his mind on just one thing, he is constantly driven to

pursue new goals and employ new methods. For example, when Lovelace wishes to acquire knowledge of Clarissa's correspondence, that is, of the workings of her mind, he displays physical desire for her, as befits his role as the reckless libertine, yet, at the same time, exercises self-control in order to gain access to a text:

And clasping her closer to me, I gave her a more fervent kiss than ever I had dared to give her before: but still let not my ardour overcome my discretion; for I took care to set my foot upon the letter and scraped it farther from her, as it were behind the chair. (572; II. 272)

Lovelace's interest in Clarissa is thus ambivalent: no matter how attractive she may appear to him and others, he does not primarily desire the possession of her body but rather wishes to attain the power and satisfaction which he knows will derive from successfully completing his many manipulations.

Although Lovelace and Clarissa, especially in times of utmost crises, are able to be brutally honest about and with themselves, they often prefer to create their own realities, that is, to distort the truth in order to confirm their wishful thinking. For example, in order to avoid any admission of weakness, Clarissa engages in strange rhetorical manoeuvres to divert her attention from the thought that she might be in love with Lovelace:

I like him better than I ever thought I should like him ...better perhaps than I ought to like him; ...were he now but a moral man, I would prefer him to all the men I ever saw. (185; I. 203)

I never saw a man, whose person I could like, before this man; ...But now I see him in nearer lights, I like him less than ever – Indeed, I never liked him so little as now. Upon my word, I think I could hate him (if I do not already hate him) sooner than any man I ever thought tolerably of. (507; II. 167)

Although her confession to Anna indicates an awareness of her wishes, Clarissa is able, during the train of her thoughts, to check, suppress, and then redirect her desire. Perhaps afraid of the potential of depravity in herself, the young woman, applying her rhetorical skills to herself, thus manages to talk herself out of any desire for the rake - - at least so she thinks -- and bring herself back into line with her usual admirable conduct. Similarly, Lovelace, desperately looking for any evidence of Clarissa's attraction to him, interprets any attentiveness on her part in his favour, and considers his assumptions confirmed when, during the ipecacuanina episode in which he stages his own illness, Clarissa displays concern for him. Surprisingly, in a rare moment of awareness of, and candour about, herself, Clarissa is able to face the desire she had tried to suppress for so long: "I am really very uneasy. For I have, I doubt, exposed myself to him; ...[it] has taught me more than I knew of myself; ...I hope my reason will gather strength enough from his [Lovelace's] imperfections ...to enable me to keep my passions under" (679; II. 438). For a brief moment, Clarissa realizes that she has perhaps failed in her care of the self, and that she may have been deficient in giving equal attention to concerns of both the body and the soul: "I have not had heart's ease enough to inspect that heart as I ought" (679),<sup>18</sup> Clarissa criticizes herself, indicating that the right measures and the appropriate technologies, which will ensure her reputation and the protection of her integrity, are not yet in place.

It is only during the most severe of crises that a literal division occurs between the speaking "I" and the self that is to be examined. Both Lovelace and Clarissa are able, when reflecting on moments in which their selves were under the greatest duress,

to analyse their conduct from a distance and speak about themselves in the third person. Clarissa describes her departure from her father's house and her return to Mrs Sinclair's, where she is eventually raped, as follows:

Oh Lord! -- help, help, cried the fool, all amaze and confusion, frightened beyond the power of controlling; ...I ran as fast as he, yet knew not that I ran ...my voice ...contradicting my action. (380; I. 44)

...my feet complied against my speech, and my mind; ...Lord be good unto me! cried the poor fool! (1006; III. 364-65)

Lovelace, similarly embarrassed and pained by his cowardly conduct during and after the rape, describes himself, when under verbal attack by Clarissa, as "the fool, the miscreant ...hesitating his broken answer" (902; III. 222). Both apologetically claim that, in these circumstances, they had acted against their intentions. Hence they employ the method of disassociation of self from self in order to put a distance between their earlier problematic conduct and their more enlightened position at the time of writing. Although the narrative technique used in these instances may then assist in creating dramatic immediacy of their accounts as well as contribute to their self-defense and eventual rehabilitation, both Lovelace and Clarissa are, for a very brief period, able to see themselves as subjects in the truest sense of the word. They analyse and judge their conduct from the outside and thus gain a new understanding of their weaknesses and an awareness of their desires.

### Shaping the Self (Technologies of the Self)

In order to cultivate the self and bring it to perfection, individuals have for centuries had tools and techniques available to them, with the help of which they could strive to achieve the kind of life they had projected for themselves (see chapter 2. III.). These techniques are often presented in religious treatises and conduct books, since many of them serve as guidelines which the Christian pastoral established in order to assist its followers in attaining the salvation. They are frequently applied in order to ensure the moral survival of the individual who, in a world dominated by corruption and intrigue as well as materialism and egotism, is under the constant danger of digressing from the "right" path.

In Richardson's novel, we find several characters who have adopted technologies of the self in order to regulate their lives and give them a particular direction. Although our knowledge of these techniques in action is restricted to the protagonists, who are the major letter writers and who are also those to whose thoughts and emotions we have greatest access, Richardson's Clarissa yields a fascinating analysis of the care of the self, especially since in this work at least two disparate visions of the desirable state of life are competing with each other. Both Clarissa and Lovelace seem to have clear notions of their selves and the direction their lives are to take: while the former has built her existence on the Christian concept of moral perfection and oriented her life toward sainthood, the latter has come to live

according to his own secular values and delights in his reputation for being the most accomplished and successful of libertines. Although both appear to have chosen extreme ways of life which require a rigid adherence to the principles entailed – Clarissa is drawn toward religious asceticism, the suppression of the body, and the denial of life-affirming forces, while Lovelace has opted for the assertion of the will, the enjoyment of pleasures, and the neglect of the state of his soul – they are also both occasionally either attracted to or impressed by the life of the other. Both of them seem to strive toward a balance: Clarissa ideally would like to attain a harmony between body and soul by marrying, with her family's consent, the man who is at once morally acceptable and physically attractive, and Lovelace seems to long for the woman who can reduce to absurdity his categorization of the female per se and who can bring out in him the compassionate and ethically considerate man. Yet the crisis and phase of disorientation into which they are respectively catapulted through their equally taxing mutual encounters induce both of them to drift further in one particular, narrow direction, while an important, although suppressed, part of their selves is transferred onto their close friends. Owing to what might be called a “doubling of the self,” Anna Howe and John Belford gradually come to embody what Lovelace and Clarissa could have been and thus fulfil their friends' aspirations and potentials: Anna enters the kind of marriage Clarissa had imagined for herself and Belford mends his ways and achieves the balance of body and soul which Lovelace, in moments of deep regret, had longed for.

During the last year of their lives, that period with which we are so closely acquainted through their extensive correspondence, Lovelace and Clarissa, both of whom are historically products of a society in which rigorous Protestant approaches to life had gained increasing influence, use similar technologies of the self, albeit to differing ends. This should not come as much of a surprise if one keeps in mind that the two may well represent different sides of Richardson. Since it was the author's professed intention to expose Lovelace as a negative example of a despicable, but prominent contemporary phenomenon,<sup>19</sup> he may have had his male protagonist "pervert" Clarissa's techniques concerning "moral survival" for the very purpose of demonstrating the extent of the rake's depravity. Yet Clarissa is not always as persistent as she had intended in the adherence to the principles she has voluntarily imposed on her life. Far too often, self intrudes, as she herself realizes during a period of utter despair after the rape (974; III. 321), and unsettles the scheme of perfection she had projected for her life. While each in his or her own way is aiming at an accomplished state of existence, both Lovelace and Clarissa, although faithfully following their principles and beliefs, are occasionally working against themselves.

### Self-Examination and Self-Control

Self-examination and self-control, two important ingredients of the Christian notion of the proper care of the self, can be found at work in many of the letter writers. They go



hand in hand as one is often the motivating element for the activation of the other. Exploring one's own hidden motivations is frequently the first step to a re-evaluation and redirection of one's life. "My calamities have humbled me enough to make me turn my gaudy eye inward; to make me look into myself! -- And what have I discovered there? -- Why, my dear friend, more secret pride and vanity than I could have thought had lain in my unexamined heart" (333; I. 419-20), Clarissa tells her friend Anna and indicates that she is dissatisfied with her present care. Through detailed and in-depth self-examination in their letters, meditations, and memoranda, Clarissa and Lovelace gain awareness of their weaknesses -- both realize, at some point or other, that they have had too much confidence in themselves and underestimated the other -- but they are not always able to act on their new self-knowledge. Instead, their impatience and the wish to assert their wills are frequently the results of their difficulties in accepting their own inner realities. While Clarissa initially has enormous difficulties dealing with her family's unceasing impositions -- both angrily and desperately, she complains to Anna, "I don't know what to do, not I!" (224; I. 265), and urges her, "Pray for me, that I may not be pushed upon such indiscreet measures as will render me inexcusable to myself" (183; I. 201) -- she later confidently confronts Lovelace with the assertion that she knows how to deal with him and the trials in her life, should he think of putting her under increased pressure:

do you suppose that I had not thought of laying down a plan to govern myself by, when I found myself so unhappily over-reached, and cheated, as I may say, out of myself? -- When I found that I could not be, and do, what I wished to be, and to do, do you imagine I had not cast about, what was the next proper course to take? (852; III. 152-53)

Although her statement may already be more than a mere rhetorical move on her part to make him reconsider his scheme of taking possession of her, it is only after the rape that Clarissa is able to exhibit true and efficient self-control, when she successfully suppresses and even eliminates considerations of the body in favour of her spiritual well-being and when she eventually transfers meaning from her spiritual body to her textual corpus.

Owing to her exemplary self-discipline, Clarissa is able to achieve much of her desired perfection while still alive through impressing and changing the people around her. Lovelace and Belford, the two libertine friends and principal recipients of her reformatory efforts, are each affected very differently. Her influence on Lovelace is limited to creating unease and even disease in him, as Clarissa's approaching death evokes spells of madness and despair in him: "Already there is a hell begun in my own mind" (1340; IV. 304), Lovelace writes to Belford, and "I am but seeking to run out of myself in hope to lose myself" (1347; IV. 326). His words indicate that the young woman has, perhaps permanently, disrupted and undermined Lovelace's sense of self. While Lovelace, at last confronted with the limitations of his behaviour, fails to face up to the truth about himself, Belford, witnessing much of Clarissa's suffering and dying, reforms and changes. Adopting Clarissa's conduct and sentiments as models for himself, he begins to monitor and discipline the self in an equally exemplary manner. In order to avoid a regression to his former libertine mode of life, he takes precautions and measures of the kind which were also recommended in devotional and instructional literature of Richardson's time:<sup>20</sup> for example, he

surrounds himself with virtuous people by taking the widow Lovick as housekeeper and befriending Lovelace's cousin, Miss Charlotte Montague, an accomplished young lady; he reads his notes on Clarissa's remarks during her last illness; and, most of all, he vows to peruse various letters, should he ever feel the inclination of returning to his old way of life: "whenever I am in danger, I will read some of the admirable lady's papers: whenever I would abhor my former ways, I will read of thine, and copies of my own" (1435; IV. 448). Unlike Lovelace, who continues to imagine what might and should have been -- "By all that's good, I am bewitched to her memory. Her very name, with mine joined to it, ravishes my soul, and is more delightful to me than the sweetest music" (1483; IV. 525) -- and who never ceases to indulge in egotistical projections of his life, but also unlike Clarissa who, after the rape, accepts, for the moment, what is given but then quickly exchanges this reality, through rigorous self-discipline, for a new transcendental and textual existence, Belford assumes an affirmative and constructive position. Yet, although his present way of life may appear to be stable, because he has learned to use techniques of self-control which he has acquired through the positive and negative examples of Clarissa and Lovelace respectively, his future, that is, his long-term ability to lead a moral existence, remains uncertain.

## Caution and Advice

Religious and conduct literature frequently encouraged individuals to exercise caution and suspicion as well as urged them to seek guidance, either from friends and superiors, or in printed matter, in order to care efficiently for the self. Since women, in particular, were considered in danger of compromising their reputation through faulty conduct, much of the advice concerning proper care was directed toward them.

Addressing the severe spiritual consequences which immoral behaviour might have, the seventeenth-century divine, Richard Allestree, in his Ladies Calling, for instance, emphasizes the need to pay equal attention to the body and the soul.<sup>21</sup> Clarissa, aware of the possible dangers to which women may expose themselves through a lack of vigilance when in the company of men, comments on the state of mutual distrust existing between herself and Lovelace: "We are both great watchers of each other's eyes; and indeed seem to be more than half afraid of each other"(460;

II. 93).<sup>22</sup> Although Lovelace often considers Clarissa as "vilely suspicious" (569; II. 268), and thus indirectly compliments her on her proper precautionary measures, he also points out that, in the long run, the young women may prove to be too naive and lacking in foresight: "if a woman will continue with a man whom she suspects, when she can get from him, or thinks she can, I am sure it is a very hopeful sign" (633; II. 362). Clarissa seems to exhibit a strange mixture of fear and self-assurance which, under the influence of Lovelace's verbal and practical manipulations, increasingly weakens her and renders her confused and helpless: "I know not what to do; what I

can do; nor what I ought to do!" (796; III. 374), Clarissa tells Anna when she is torn between staying with Lovelace and leaving him on account of her suspicions. Neither of the two, however, seems to realize the extent of the other's danger or their own limitations.

Both Lovelace and Clarissa appear to share the ancient belief, later appropriated by Christianity, that individuals need guidance and advice on their journey through life.<sup>23</sup> Not only do both of them turn to other writers for their instruction and edification -- Clarissa has over the years shaped the self mainly with the help of devotional literature, while Lovelace looks for support for prejudices about women in the works of ancient misogynist authors<sup>24</sup> -- both of them, to a greater or lesser extent, also appeal to their friends for advice and assistance. Yet while both often tend to be condescending to their friends and seem to prefer to give advice rather than receive it, Clarissa at least earnestly asks for Anna's evaluation of her dismal situation: "give me your opinion and advice what to do in this disgraceful situation, ...and what you think my prospects are, and what you would do in my case" (66; I. 39). Yet although she repeatedly invites criticism from Anna -- "tell me my faults" (257; I. 309), Clarissa begs, "give me your free opinion of your conduct" (283; I. 349) -- she also occasionally tries to direct favourably the advice she expects to receive from her friend. She appeals, for example, for Anna's opinion on her appointed meeting with Lovelace at the garden-gate:

My dearest friend, tell me, have I done wrong! -- Yet do not say I have, if you think it; for should all the world besides condemn me, I shall have some comfort, if you do not. The first time I ever besought you to flatter me. That,

of itself, is an indication that I have done wrong, and am afraid of hearing the truth -- Oh tell me (but yet do not tell me) if I have done wrong! (343; L 434)

Clarissa, who cannot cope with genuine criticism, as her reaction to her cousin Morden's reprimanding letter demonstrates,<sup>25</sup> longs for and even expects advice which will confirm her self-image and wishes. Yet even if Clarissa and Lovelace genuinely had the desire to be counselled and led by others, there would be no suitable guides available. The people whose opinions Clarissa most cherishes, such as Dr Lewen, Mrs Norton, and Anna, are generally dependent on others and are therefore either reluctant to give effective advice or cannot be of any practical help to her, while most of Lovelace's friends, from whom he actually never seriously seeks guidance but whom he rather uses in order to find confirmation in his role as leader and chief strategist, are either completely lacking in moral stature or themselves still in the need of ethical instruction and spiritual growth.

### Activities of Writing

As the Puritan preoccupation with diaries, spiritual autobiographies, and saints' lives reveals, the act of recording the process of one's personal development and spiritual growth formed an important part of the individual's daily life in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. In fact, writing about the self, either for and to oneself or others, has for centuries been among the most prominent technologies of the self. Since the establishment of Protestantism had brought about the decline of the clergy's

direct interference in and influence on the lives of believers, individuals themselves had to take on the responsibilities of monitoring and directing their actions. Since the smallest, even most personal matters, could have severe consequences for the state of one's soul, writing about the self required a close attention to minutiae, to the smallest details and most explicit truths about one's mental, spiritual, and physical condition. Thus, while there was no place in a Puritan's life for the kind of confession to which Catholics subjected themselves, confessional practices still survived, now on a more personal level, and mainly for the purpose of self-examination. Through telling themselves or close friends, in a written form, intimate details of their lives, individuals hoped to gain new awareness of themselves or tried to create, as Cynthia Griffin Wolff aptly phrases it, an "alter ego ...a mirror in which the hidden self may be revealed and judged" (39).

In Richardson's Clarissa, the two main protagonists do most of their writing out of considerations for the self, with differing results, however. Clarissa, praising the act of giving a detailed written account of her actions and thoughts as an ideal technique to improve on herself, clearly acknowledges the benefits which may accrue from facing the truth about oneself:

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 ...but when I set down what I will do, or what I have done on this or that occasion; the resolution or action is before me, either to be adhered to, withdrawn or amended; and I have entered into compact with myself, as I may say; having it given under my own hand, to improve rather than go backward, as I live longer. (483; II. 128)

Yet although she claims to regard highly the recognition and evaluation of the self in the form of epistolary confessions, she often prefers to shape in a certain way or even slightly distort the representation of herself. Furthermore, Clarissa's letters may, in response to Anna's early encouragement -- "If anything unhappy should fall out from the violence of such spirits as you have to deal with, your account of all things previous to it will be your justification" (40; I. 2) -- not only be directed toward the monitoring and controlling of the self, but also serve the purpose of gathering evidence for her subsequent self-defence and accusation of others. Thus, although Clarissa is the only character in the novel who, in her practice of the care, comes closest to the ideal of exploring the self through the production of a discourse of truth on it, even she fails, on rare occasions, to be persistent in her endeavour.

In a grave distortion of its original intention, Lovelace uses and applies this technology in a negative and harmful manner, aiming not at the improvement of himself but rather at the ruin of others. His main reason for writing -- his own letters and memoranda as well as his notes to others -- is to develop his stratagems and to record every detail which he can hold against his enemies. For example, he comments on a conversation he overheard between Clarissa and Tomlinson: "I had my vellum-leaved book to note all down" (823; III. 111), or, sending Belford a stolen letter, written by Anna to Clarissa, he asks his friend "to make a list of the virulent terms with which the enclosed letter abounds" (886-7; III. 173). Lovelace's principal motivation for collecting information on others (rather than on himself) is to steel himself for the pursuit of his vengeful thoughts and actions. Imitating cynically and, at



the same time, perverting the technique of recording impressive events and moral sentiments in order to have them ready for subsequent edifying perusal, he informs Belford of his future plans of reforming himself and others:

As I propose in my more advanced life, to endeavour to atone for my youthful freedoms with individuals of the sex by giving caution and instructions to the whole, I have made a memorandum to enlarge upon this doctrine; to wit, that it is full as necessary to direct daughters in the choice of their female companions, as it is to guard them against the designs of men (865; III. 171).

Although Lovelace's intentions are supposedly well-meant, his cynicism reveals the ironic implications of his instructions, as they will eventually assist fellow libertines in exerting their influence on young women rather than protecting the latter from seduction. Similarly, Lovelace's plan of writing a treatise on his dream of metamorphosis and sex change (925; III. 255) constitutes a distorted imitation of Clarissa's notes and meditations. Having his rake indulge in a sexual fantasy which was most certainly considered abnormal and shocking by the contemporary bourgeois reader, Richardson tried to disparage further the male protagonist and prepare the way for the eventual disintegration of Lovelace's self and, by contrast, the redemption and the rehabilitation of Clarissa.

### The Self in Crisis

Although determined in their wills and uncompromising about the ways in which they wish to be seen, both Lovelace and Clarissa are, through their interaction, subjected to

a severe existential crisis which not only forces them to face unpleasant truths about themselves but also gives them the opportunity to re-organize and redirect their lives. Much against their wishes, they are both repeatedly thrown off of their old balance, mainly because, at some time or other, they are attracted to the opponent's side. Thus, Clarissa's exclamation, "Ever since I knew you, ...I have been in a wilderness of doubt and error" (777; III. 47-48), is matched by similar moments of confusion and unease in Lovelace's life: "yet I don't know how it is, but this lady, the moment I come into her presence, half assimilates me to her own virtue" (658; II. 400). Although, in many ways, the two share, often unknowingly, some of their traumatic experiences, they choose different solutions to their mental ordeals and eventually resort to specific measures which return each respectively to the psychological and spiritual disposition he or she had initially exhibited.

In spite of all his protean propensities, his love of variety, and his interest in process and change, Lovelace remains a fundamentally static character, defined by circular movements which, although temporarily exciting and entertaining, always take him back to where he started from. His potential for development, which surfaces in rare moments of self-doubt and despair, thus remains largely unrealized. After the fire scene, for instance, he is astonished about his own ability to hurt Clarissa -- "Divine excellence! -- Happy for so many days together! -- Now so unhappy! -- and for what? -- But she is purity itself -- And why, after all, should I thus torment -- But I must not trust myself with myself, in the humour I am in" (733; II. 514) -- but lacks the inner strength and determination to exercise self-control. Although occasionally

aware of the contradictions in himself, he avoids acting in a morally responsible way by pitting his will against his doubts -- his movement against himself is symbolically represented in the killing of his conscience (848; I. 45-46) -- and by continuing with his old life. Only the loss of Clarissa, first through her escapes and later through her death, temporarily rouses him out of his recurring bouts of complacency and induces him to direct his attention to his inner state: "having lost her, my whole soul is a blank" (1023; III. 388), Lovelace, rather helplessly, exclaims, and "I am sick at my soul!" (1109; III. 511). Unable to relate to life on a spiritual level -- Lovelace misinterprets both Clarissa's letter, informing him of her departure for her "father's house" (1233; IV. 157), and his dream about Clarissa's ascension (1218; IV. 136) -- he seeks an escape from his problems by returning, almost under compulsion, to his old way of enjoying himself at the expense of others.<sup>26</sup> Even when Clarissa's death and his own share in it loom heavily over him -- "how my conscience ...tears me! -- Even this moment I would give the world to push the cruel reproacher from me by one gay intervention! -- Sick of myself! -- Sick of the remembrance of my vile plots" (1310; IV. 263) -- Lovelace's response consists of an unnatural, almost uncanny, cheerfulness: "This is the laughing-time of my life" (1310; IV. 263). Displaying a distorted form of the care of the self, Lovelace deals with pain and regret by denying their existence. He refuses to admit and accept the fact that his encounter with Clarissa has changed his life forever and that the scars this woman has left on his soul are too deep for him to get over them. Hence he frantically tries to hold on to a notion of the self which probably had begun to deteriorate long before he ever met Clarissa.

Clarissa's understanding of the self, based on a balance between body and soul (both are equally important to her, although officially she has to place greater value on the latter),<sup>27</sup> is shattered when she is forced to realize that both the demands of society and her own suppressed wishes are working against it. While she is able to reject her family's request to marry the morally defective and physically despicable Solmes, she has difficulties in keeping the attractive Lovelace at a distance. It is only after the ipecacuanha scene that Clarissa realizes she is mistaken in her assumptions about herself: not only has she, until then, failed to recognize that she cares for the libertine, but she has relied, and continues to rely, on her ability to influence and change the lives of others. Although in a crisis ever since she returned to Harlowe Place to find that both Lovelace and Solmes have become important parts of her life, it is her rape which proves to be the most detrimental blow to her conception of the self, because, through it, an outsider tried to impose his identity on her or, as he phrases it, to "make a LOVELACE of her" (1041; III. 413). Unlike Lovelace, who, despite all setbacks, feels that he can always return to where he started from,<sup>28</sup> Clarissa, victimized by contemporary ideologies on the state and fate of "fallen women", has to resort to innovative measures.

### The Transformation of the Self

The rape constitutes a turning-point in Clarissa's life, as it marks the disruption and eventual destruction of her old understanding of the self. Her fragmentary writing after the event reveals her utmost confusion about her status: she knows that according to what society will think and what she herself has internalized through the intake of religious and moral discourses, she is no longer the same and never will be. Yet part of her rebels against this notion, since her will, as she later asserts, is and always will be inviolate (1254; IV. 185-86). Clarissa's severe identity crisis is characterized by an overwhelming sense of fragmentation. She speaks of her "best self" (974; III. 321) and her "lost self" (974; III. 321), which she believes irrecoverable, and thus indicates that she has ceased to consider the harmonious balance between a sound body and a sane mind an option available to her. Increasingly identifying the self, which she now loathes, with her body, Clarissa writes to her friend:

Oh! my best, my dearest, my only friend! What a tale have I to unfold! -- But still upon self, this vile, this hated self! -- I will shake it off, if possible; and why should I not, since I think, except one wretch, I hate nothing so much! -- Self, then, be banished from self one moment (for I doubt it will for no longer) to inquire after a dearer object, my beloved Anna Howe! -- whose mind, all robed in spotless white, charms and irradiates. (974; III. 321)

Although still in the depth of despair, Clarissa hesitatingly approaches what will be the solution to her existential dilemma: she gradually realizes that if she should wish to survive emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually, she will have to take a daring step toward a redefinition of the self. In order to arrive again at a satisfactory conception of

the self, Clarissa has to restrict herself to the life of the mind which, “all robed in spotless white, charms and irradiates” (974; III. 321). Transferring her own ideal notion of the bodily self onto Anna, whom she continues to encourage to marry the morally unblemished Hickman, Clarissa ensures that her physical potential will be realized -- her two friends later name their first daughter “Clarissa,” -- before she proceeds to re-invent her own self in the form of pure spirit and on the basis of the word, which becomes the medium through which the spirit is disseminated. In an effort not to become “the Other,” that is, the property of Lovelace and a “LOVELACE” herself (1041; III. 413), Clarissa chooses to be “nobody’s” (1420; IV. 429), all mind and soul, and eventually text.

In order to shape her self in a way which will be satisfactory to her and admired by others, Clarissa tries to place herself physically in the tradition of the virgin martyr and textually in that of the saints’ lives.<sup>29</sup> Resuming her earlier orientation of her life toward perfection, she strives, with renewed fervour, to live according to the ideals propagated by the religious and moral literature of the time. While she resides with the Smiths, she imposes severe self-restraint on herself, regarding her progressive decline as an “atonement for [her] fault” (1159; IV. 55), prays regularly at nearby churches “to calm [her] disturbed thoughts, and to bring [herself] to that resignation which [she] aspires after” (1140; IV. 27), and meditates frequently in order to subdue and mortify her “proud heart” (1189; IV. 95). Conducting herself in an exemplary manner, she arranges for the proper disposal of her body and then achieves perfection in the recommended way of dying. Throughout

her final months, Clarissa's conversations with the people around her are interspersed with moral exhortations and religious instructions, with the help of which she continues not only to present herself as extraordinary in the fulfilment of her Christian duties, but also to build on her reputation as a mistreated, venerable, and saintly woman.<sup>30</sup>

Although renouncing her body and devoting the remainder of her days to the salvation of the soul, both forms of behaviour essential in a person who wishes to be perceived in the tradition of a martyr and saint, Clarissa still displays elements which align her with older practices and which undermine her professed Christian endeavours. Regulating her life according to the ancient principle of the "arts of existence," that is, through "actions by which [individuals] not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being, and to make their life an *oeuvre*" (UP, 10), Clarissa strives to render her character and conduct exceptional. Yet she is not only interested in the eventual state of her soul but also, and perhaps more importantly so, in her reputation among her contemporaries. Much against her own professions, she is never able to disregard completely what others think of her. Clarissa's actions after the rape may thus not only present an exemplary illustration of her proficiencies in self-control and the art of dying, but may also serve the more dubious purposes of concentrating power on the young woman's side and assisting her in obtaining the proper retribution for her oppressors. Through a variety of manipulations related to writing, that is, manipulations which elevate her lived experiences onto a new textual and spiritual

level, Clarissa succeeds in making her life a literary work of art. Not only does she decide to have the story of the most crucial phase of her life told in the form of a book, but she also uses graphic and pictorial means in order to present her version of the events surrounding her decline. For example, the emblematic arrangement on the lid of her coffin, designed by her to comment on her “fall” and destruction, accompanies in a poignant way her will and her posthumous letters, which at once extend her forgiveness and blessings to her opponents and strike back at them in subtle, accusing ways. Thus, the crowned serpent, with its tail in its mouth, an old and well-known emblem of eternity (1305; IV. 257), which Clarissa appropriates for her own case in order to strengthen her story and with which she surrounds her name on the coffin, may take on a new meaning, when seen in relation to the many references, throughout the novel, to Lovelace as a serpent or when read as Taylor’s and Drexelius’ “worm of conscience,”<sup>31</sup> the frightening embodiment of a sinner’s feelings of guilt. Aware of the possibilities for simultaneous rehabilitation and revenge, Clarissa remains ambiguous and undecided even after her death.

The successful reform of an utterly depraved and perhaps lost fellow human being appears to be an essential piece in Clarissa’s understanding of her life as an oeuvre. Although she is able to have a substantial influence on Belford, it is Lovelace she really wishes to change, with the help, if necessary, of his best friend Belford, whom she repeatedly encourages to write to Lovelace, in an exhortatory manner, about the shortcomings of libertinism: “I should be glad, ...that you could have written an account of it [the death of Belton] in the style and manner you are master of, to your



gay friend. Who knows, as it would have come from an associate and of an associate, how it might have affected him?" (1248; IV. 177). While the cynicism, underlying her words, suggests that she is indeed doubtful of Lovelace's ability to improve, her efforts in redirecting the rake's life are unceasing. Yet a reformed Lovelace or, at least, the image of a Lovelace in need of, and urged to, reform, are fundamental elements in the work of art which represents Clarissa's life. Both Lovelace and Clarissa try to shape their lives according to aesthetic notions which are characterized and determined by the element of accumulation of reputation, each in a different area. However, both also believe that they can only bring their existence to perfection by drastically changing the life of the other. In fact, only the destruction of the other's vision of a perfect life will guarantee the success of their own. Although both of them fail to achieve what they desire – a mutually beneficial incorporation of the other in their own understanding of the self – Clarissa at least attempts to give herself the appearance of being victorious through the forceful direction of the interpretation of her life:

My will is unviolated. The evil (respecting myself, and not my friends) is merely personal. No credulity, no weakness, no want of vigilance, have I to reproach myself with. I have, through grace, triumphed over his deepest machinations. I have escaped from him. I have renounced him. The man whom once I could have loved, I have been enabled to despise: and shall not charity complete my triumph? And shall I not enjoy it? – And where would be my triumph if he deserved my forgiveness? – Poor man! He has had a loss in losing me! I have the pride to think so, because I think I know my own heart. I have had none in losing him! (1254; IV. 186)

It is owing to the immediacy of the epistolary style that the boundaries between fiction and reality may at times become fluid for the readers of Clarissa. On those occasions,

Clarissa and Lovelace may speak to them directly, engage their interest, and try to move them to their side. Since Clarissa is the dominant character in the novel and since she has the final word by making her experiences known in various forms of writing, the story of her life continues as a work of art, in a very literal sense, making it difficult for its readers to elude potential manipulations and directions.

### III. Representations of the Corporeal Self

“What a poor, passive machine is the body, when the mind is  
disordered!” (303; I. 377)

Despite Richardson’s professed intention of placing the emphasis on “minds endowed with the noblest principles of virtue and religion,”<sup>32</sup> it is really the perfect, yet vulnerable body of the female protagonist which is at the centre of his novel, Clarissa. By the mid-eighteenth century, that is, at a time when the body had come to be the focus of an expanding, thoroughly investigated field of scientific knowledge, when sexuality and desire were increasingly exposed and rejected in non-fictional moral and religious discourses, and when physical matters were treated with caution and reluctance in fictional literature, Richardson’s novel displayed great ambiguity in its mixture of candour and secrecy about the body and sexuality. Although Clarissa’s body, desired, exploited, maltreated, and eventually transformed, constitutes the object which is used to promote the social aggrandizement of the Harlowes, to increase the reputation and self-esteem of an infamous rake, and to assert the superiority of the middle classes over the aristocracy, it is often endowed with an aura of the hidden and mysterious. Important topics in the novel, such as virginity, rape, prostitution, and pregnancy, are frequently only alluded to and dealt with in the forms of gaps and silences. Although Clarissa seems to belong to those discourses in which the

enunciating subject is of primary importance (as, for instance, in diaries, letters, and autobiographies) and is therefore likely to address personal and private matters, Richardson's novel is also one of those early bourgeois texts in which the subject displays "a self-disciplinary fixation predicated on the outlawing of the body and its passions as the absolute outside" (Barker, 59).

Since Clarissa's body is meant to represent the bourgeois female body which, through its purity, can advance the reputation of those associated with it, it is elevated particularly through its opposition to vile bodies and is eventually discarded when it can no longer fulfil its social function. Richardson then shifts the emphasis from Clarissa's body to her mind and spirit. Yet although the author intended to draw a female protagonist who is perfect, "as far as she could be perfect, considering the people she had to deal with and those with whom she was inseparably connected,"<sup>33</sup> he endows Clarissa, perhaps unconsciously, with ambiguities. Clarissa is not only an utterly innocent and virtually perfect young woman who, after being ill-treated by society and a depraved rake, is sacrificed by Richardson because he wishes to affirm middle-class morality and steadfastness; she is also a woman who cannot always control her desires and whose individualism is eventually punished by death. Richardson's ambivalence toward the body of Clarissa is further expressed in the author's simultaneous reference to a number of contemporary ailments where she is concerned and his elusiveness regarding the precise cause of her death. He thus places her case within the medical context of the time, while at the same time raising Clarissa onto a transcendental level.

The act of writing Clarissa may well have given Richardson the opportunity of dealing with his own experiences with disease.<sup>34</sup> Clarissa and Lovelace, arguably two sides of the author himself, not only display similarities in their approaches to power and to the care of the self, but also share the causes and symptoms of various ailments. Both of them fit into the categories of the hysterical woman and the hypochondriac man respectively, and both of them are afflicted by, or “blessed with”, nervous sensibility, as was Richardson himself.<sup>35</sup> Since most of those characters who are, at some time or other, depicted as suffering from a disease, die in the course of the novel, the author seems to see the body as a burden. It may in fact represent a challenge which characters as well as author try to overcome through its transposition from the physical level onto a spiritual and textual plane.

### Desire and Disease

Repeatedly in Clarissa, we encounter a cause and effect relationship between mental processes and physical manifestations. What happens in a character’s mind may have repercussions on the body. Strong emotions, in particular, such as, desire, fear, hate, or disgust, may evoke symptoms of disease. Although often rather ironic in her letters, Clarissa’s friend, Anna Howe, appears to have a good understanding of the interaction of mind and body when she explains to her friend, in an extended comparison, that

love is like a disease which comes unbeknownst over the individual and has an incapacitating effect:

When a person gets a great cold, he or she puzzles and studies how it began: how he -- she got it: and when that is accounted for, down he -- she sits contented and lets it have its course, or takes a sweat or the like, to get rid of it, if it be very troublesome -- So, my dear, before the malady [love] you wot of, yet wot not of, grows so importunate as that you must be obliged to sweat it out, let me advise you to mind how it comes on. For I am persuaded, as surely as that I am now writing to you, that their indiscreet violence on one hand, and his insinuating address on the other, if the man be not a greater fool than any body thinks him, will effectually bring it to this, and do all his work for him. (173; I. 187)

Anna diagnoses Clarissa's dismal situation as a medical case and puts herself in the position of a physician, giving her friend information and advice on an affliction Clarissa would rather not deal with or admit. Pointing her finger at Lovelace and the Harlowes as the likely causes of the ailment, the viruses, as it were, who will eventually bring about the outbreak of love, Anna not only makes Clarissa aware of the dangers lying in wait for her but also holds the mirror up to her friend in order to force her to acknowledge her susceptibility. Thus she enables Clarissa to be on guard and take preventive measures, if necessary. Through controlling her desire and demonstrating the virtue of patience, Clarissa may learn to avoid the various diseases waiting to break out inside her. Although cautioned against this particular danger, Clarissa does not realize, for a long time, that the cause and effect relationship, desire - disease, may occasionally be reversed and may thus create unforeseen problems for the individual: only when she is confronted with the possibility that Lovelace is seriously ill, perhaps because of her -- he claims to have caught a severe cold while waiting for a letter from her (261; I. 314-15), and later subjects himself to

massive, self-induced convulsions in order to gain her attention (676; II. 435) -- only then does Clarissa become aware of her feelings, even of her desire, for him.

Similarly, Lovelace's desire for Clarissa grows stronger each time he sees her suffer and literally drives him to distraction when she approaches death.<sup>36</sup> Most of the major characters, at one time or another, take on the roles of patient or doctor, in a frantic attempt not to "cure," as they may profess, but in fact to control and subject the bodies of others, or to curb their own desires and channel them into socially acceptable forms of behaviour: presenting a distorted form of a doctor, Lovelace, for instance, has a drug administered to Clarissa before the rape in order to make her body subservient to him;<sup>37</sup> yet in a reversal of roles during his brief illness and after Clarissa's final escape, Lovelace longs for her presence in order to calm his mind and help him improve his health; and Clarissa, who permits her body to undergo a progressive deterioration and thus becomes a patient, perhaps in order to avoid a confrontation with her hated corporeal self, refuses to be her "own doctress" (1082; III. 468) and work toward the restoration of her health, as Dr H. advises her to do. For both, the failure to attain what they wish for is thus partially related to their difficulties of acknowledging the realities of their physicality and using the relationship between body and mind to their advantage.

## Nervous Sensibility

Although Richardson portrays his two main characters as afflicted by various physical disorders, he always ensures that the psychological causes of their sufferings are clear and undeniable. Even if his depiction of Clarissa echoes age-old apprehensions about women (see chapter 2. I.) and even if his characterization of Lovelace may appear to be a mere reworking of a well-known type (see chapter 2. III.), Richardson does in fact place his two protagonists in the contemporary medical context and thus enables his contemporary readers to naturalize them. In a movement parallel to procedures in scientific discourses, for example, the novelist subjects many of his female characters to what Foucault describes as a process of “hysterization” (HS, 104), that is, the systematic reduction of woman to her reproductive organs and her subsequent endowment with a variety of diseases. At the same time, Richardson incorporates the latest discoveries in the field of nervous physiology, by having Clarissa and Lovelace suffer from fashionable diseases, usually related to the precarious state of their “nerves and fibres.” Most of the ailments described in the novel are, in some way or other, connected with sexuality and can be attributed to the psychological disposition of the afflicted individual.

Richardson’s female protagonist possesses par excellence what Barker calls the “tremulous private body,” the kind of body which is overwhelming and impressive in its textual presence but also elusive and mysterious in its absence from the level of the spectacular.<sup>38</sup> By portraying the young woman as excessively delicate and prone to



hysterical fits and fainting spells in emotionally taxing situations, Richardson takes to an extreme various constructions of the female mind and body which can be found in the medical literature of the time (see chapter 2. II.). Owing to her fear of sexuality as well as her inability to deal with suppressed, hence unacknowledged desires, which may lead to severe physical manifestations, Clarissa is representative of woman, considered by her very nature as susceptible to illnesses. Commenting on various ailments in the eighteenth century which were connected with the new medical phenomenon of nervous sensibility and whose symptoms were explained in such fashionable terminology as “the passions” or “the vapours,” Foucault points out that women were considered prime candidates for these afflictions, since scholars held that “the womb, with the brain, [was] the organ that maintain[ed] most sympathy with the whole organism” (MC, 153). Throughout her many trials, Clarissa displays, to a great degree, feminine sensitivity, that fashionable disposition which is closely related to diseases of the nerves. The unexpected encounter with Lovelace in the gardenhouse, for instance, provokes fainting spells and excessive trembling which leave her “fatigued to death” (388; I. 495). Her extreme reaction to her father’s curse -- “this dreadful letter has unhinged my whole frame” (513; II. 176), Clarissa tells Anna, and “I think it has touched my head as well as my heart” (512; II. 176) -- induces Lovelace to regard her as a potentially “vapourish wife” (520; II. 187). Clarissa’s strong emotional and physical responses to unpleasant experiences indicate the close relationship between the young woman’s mental and corporeal selves and suggest that she suffers from those nervous illnesses which were “located within a certain ethic of

desire”, as Foucault explains: “they represented the revenge of the crude body: it had been as a result of violence that one became ill. From now on one fell ill from too much feeling” (MC, 156-157).

Having founded her notion of the (unified) self on the balance and integrity of mind and body, Clarissa’s feelings are particularly strong whenever she considers her body under attack. Her first meeting with Solmes in his role as her suitor gives rise to a hysterical fit on her part, owing to her physical disgust and fear of the man. Although she is attracted to Lovelace, she reacts similarly to his advances, perhaps because she knows that any encouragement on her part may not only compromise her chastity but also her social position and the state of her soul. Lovelace, who is, of course, aware that unexpected situations, especially when of a sexual nature, put a great mental strain on her and throw her body in disarray, weakens Clarissa’s self-defence and self-assuredness by repeatedly approaching her physically. Her extreme reactions to any of his attempts to touch her -- she trembles excessively when he puts his arms around her knees (646; II. 383) and she expresses great discomfort and confusion when he takes the liberty of kissing her breast (705; II. 476) -- prompt him to remark on her obvious difficulties with the mere idea of sexuality, let alone the act: “Her terror is too great for the occasion -- Evils in apprehension are often greater than evils in reality. ... Sacrilege but to touch the hem of her garment! -- Excess of delicacy! -- Oh, the consecrated beauty! -- How can she think to be a wife!” (646; II. 383). Clarissa’s over-abundance of modesty and sensibility, however, not only make her vulnerable to those who are of a stronger constitution and are willing to use their

knowledge of her weaknesses against her, but also endow her with those properties which identify her with the period's notion of the desirable woman.<sup>39</sup> Displaying her special powers in what appears to be not only a hysterical fit but also a veiled re-enactment of the rape, Clarissa places herself in the position of a martyr, inviting Lovelace to put an end to her life: "baring with a still more frantic violence, part of her enchanting neck -- here, here, said the soul-harrowing beauty, let thy pointed mercy enter!" (913; III. 238). While surrounding the actual rape with silence and secrecy, Richardson, on this occasion, gives us the image of Clarissa's blood flowing from her nose when she falls and hits the edge of a chair (914; III. 240). Thus, Clarissa's body, which, despite its built-in, nerve-related system of defence, did not prove immune to earlier attacks and encroachments, seems to reach the height of its visibility during the period immediately following the rape. It is during this transitional phase that she reconsiders her concept of her self, devalorizes her body, and permits her physical and psychological afflictions to take a new direction which will eventually bring her earthly existence to a halt.

### Lovelace and Passion

Although Lovelace claims to have found a cure for various nervous afflictions when he proposes more variety in life through contracting a marriage for one year only --"as for the spleen or vapours, no such malady would be known or heard of," he suggests

as the likely result, and further “fresh health and fresh spirits, the consequences of sweet blood and sweet humours (the mind and body continually pleased with each other” (873; III. 182) – he himself is not free from being occasionally subjected to violent attacks of passion, anger, and despair. While some of his libertine characteristics, such as his indecision and his protean variability, already put him into the category of Blackmore’s definition of hypochondria,<sup>40</sup> the male version of hysteria which is, as in women, caused by “the Tenderness and delicacy of the nervous Fibres, and the too fine and fugitive Disposition of the Animal Spirits” (Blackmore, 28), he moreover suffers from complete physical breakdowns as well as severe mental afflictions whenever he feels his influence on Clarissa faltering. Clarissa’s conversation with “Tomlinson,” for example, in which the young woman accuses Lovelace of being “capable of any vileness” (822; III. 110), leaves him raving: “I had such dartings in my head at the instant, that I thought I should have gone distracted. My brain seemed on fire. What would I have given to have had her alone with me! – I traversed the room: my clenched fist to my forehead” (822; III. 110). Lovelace’s erosion of power, over Clarissa as well as over his friends and relatives, frequently manifests itself physically: while Clarissa becomes assertive and accusing after the rape, Lovelace is forced by his own actions into a defensive and evasive position. In a clear role reversal, Lovelace displays the kind of behaviour which he had expected of Clarissa. His “lips trembling, limbs quaking, voice inward, hesitating, broken” (900; III. 220), he appeals to her for forgiveness: “I snatched her hand, rising, and pressed it first to my lips, and then to my heart, in wild disorder; ...all my soul in

my eyes, and my heart's blood throbbing at my fingers' ends" (938; III. 271). Either perceiving of himself as a victim of Clarissa's cold-heartedness and unforgiving attitude or perhaps wishing to be closer to her after her escape and share her pain, Lovelace increasingly suffers with Clarissa, at the same time and perhaps to the same extent. When he hears about Clarissa's removal to the sponging house, an event for which he is at least partially responsible and which introduces and precipitates her bodily decline, he speaks of "the relaxed fibres of [his] mind, which have been twitched and convulsed like the nerves of some tottering paralytic, by means of the tumults she has excited in it" (1085; III. 475). Much to his surprise, Clarissa's trials affect Lovelace physically, if only for a short time, and open his eyes to the limitations of his power over others.

Endowing them with exceptional sensibilities, Richardson depicts both of his protagonists as equally susceptible to nervous disorders. Yet he subjects them to these illnesses for different reasons: while he shows that Clarissa's body cannot cope with the indelicate and outrageous treatment inflicted on it and therefore resists and strikes back through the gradual withdrawal and termination of its functions, he has Lovelace's body mainly suffer for reasons of self-punishment and self-defence. Angry about his inability to regain control over the young woman, Lovelace is at times very resentful of and adamant about his own victimization: "I will overcome the creeping folly that has found its way to my heart, or I will tear it out in her presence and throw it at hers, that she may see how much more tender than her own that organ is, which she and you and everyone else have taken the liberty to call callous" (1184; IV. 89-

90). The extraordinary image he uses to describe his frustration expresses not only his defiant spirit and his potential for further violence but also echoes Clarissa's continual appropriation of the heart as a centre of values.<sup>41</sup> Later on, temporarily imitating Clarissa's lingering illness, Lovelace, in a rather defensive mood, again makes the heart the focus of his attention when he complains to Belford: "Neither eat, drink, nor sleep! -- A piteous case, Jack! If I should die like a fool now, people would say Miss Harlowe had broke my heart -- That she vexes me to the heart is certain" (1201; IV. 113). Although he portrays his male protagonist as pitiful in his afflictions, Richardson in fact seems to draw a close parallel between the ailing Clarissa and the affected Lovelace only in order to expose the rake's perverted mind. Lovelace appears to be deeply shaken by what befalls Clarissa: "I must again lay down my pen -- Oh Belford, Belford! I am still, I am still, most miserably absent from myself! Shall never, never, more be what I was!" (1428; IV. 439), he writes, and "At present I can neither eat, drink, nor sleep. Yet are my disorders nothing to what they were: for, Jack, my brain was on fire day and night: and had it not been of the asbestos kind, it had all been consumed" (1430; IV. 441). Yet, since Lovelace's regrets only last for a short while and he soon resumes his old life, he cannot be redeemed.

In the end, Richardson rejects and condemns the rake by depicting him as incapable of reform. Although Lovelace's nervous disorders may be interpreted as expressions of sympathy for the dying woman, Richardson seems to categorize his rake, together with Belton and Sinclair, as sinners who are forced to undergo mental and physical torments in partial retribution for their disgraceful conduct. Interestingly

enough, though, through the nature and the degree of his suffering, Lovelace is associated with both the “innocent” Clarissa and the debauched sinners. Perhaps owing to the potential for goodness that exists in him and his many similarities with Clarissa, he initially shares with her those ailments which are of a psychological origin and manifest themselves predominantly in ways which leave the body intact and render it elusive. Toward the end of his life, however, when he dies a painful death and is disembowelled and embalmed, Lovelace is assigned a place among the irrevocably doomed whose vile bodies are exposed in all their spectacularity.

#### The Body as Mirror of the Soul

Apart from establishing ties between his fictional work and medical discourses of the time, Richardson also places his novel within another, prominent tradition, that of the religious and moral conduct book. Since instructional literature during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries tended to view the body with great misgivings -- authors like Allestree, Drexelius, Taylor, and Law favoured the mind over the body and encouraged their readers to denigrate and reject their corporeal selves<sup>42</sup> -- Richardson likewise repudiates physicality and juxtaposes it with the notion of the perfect, inviolate body. In the early parts of his novel he advances arguments which are ideologically similar to those of his contemporary, the Anglican clergyman William Law, who held that virginity “frees from worldly cares and troubles and furnishes

means and opportunities of higher advancements in the divine life” (Law, 271):

Richardson creates a female protagonist who tries to fend off attempts by others to control her body and who wishes for a single life, dedicated to her own spiritual development and to the care for others. In sharp contrast to the “divine” Clarissa, the author presents a group of people whose misconduct has consequences for the condition of their bodies. Appropriating the graphic descriptions of eternal misery for the sinner which writers like Drexelius had propagated,<sup>43</sup> Richardson depicts their suffering as a reflection of the dismal state of their souls and renders it a spectacle. Exposing the depraved and therefore ailing body as a foil to Clarissa’s “shining,” perfect, and hence almost invisible, body, Richardson makes moral judgements and employs images of either corporeal integrity or physical decay for his didactic purposes.

Occasionally deemed worth saving, Lovelace, in the many letters Belford exchanges with him, is one of the main recipients of Richardson’s moral instructions in the discourse. Since Lovelace, at times, reveals positive aspects in his character -- he displays mercy and benevolence toward Rosebud and treats his servants and tenants well -- Belford’s messages of memento mori, concentrated in horrifying images of the disintegrating body, are intended to incite in his friend the wish to change. Belford repeatedly warns Lovelace of the dire consequences the libertine way of life may have for those individuals who do not reform in time:

I often wish thee present but for one hour in a day, to see the dregs of a gay life running off in the most excruciating tortures that the colic, the stone, and the gangrene, can unitedly afflict. (715; II. 49)



It is, after all, a devilish life we have lived. And to consider how it all ends in a very few years: to see what a state of ill health this poor fellow [Belton] is so soon reduced to. (1090; III. 42-43)

Belford later exemplifies his general statements by explicit and extensive descriptions of the deaths of Belton, who succumbs to a “consuming malady” (1088; III. 480), leaving him an “emaciated carcase” (612; II. 331), and Sinclair, who “lies foaming, raving, roaring, in a burning fever” (1378; IV. 368) after a domestic accident.

Belford’s verbal depiction of physical deterioration greatly contributes to the element of the spectacular in the novel: the reformed rake warns his fellow libertine about a sinful life by presenting him with images of suffering, severely punished sinners. Yet it is the exposure of Lovelace’s inability to change, that is, his utter, irredeemable wickedness, which is perhaps the most significant by-product of the text’s spectacularity. The rake’s difficulties with giving his life a new direction are prepared for early in the discourse when he informs Clarissa about his injuries in a past duel – he had been subjected to a great loss of blood, followed by fever and a phase of depression (444; II. 60) -- and his subsequent determination to change his ways which faded quickly after he recovered his health. Clarissa, probably still thinking that she will be able to exert a beneficial influence on him, fails to recognize the serious implications of Lovelace’s tale. Since it was Richardson’s repeatedly expressed belief that rakes cannot and will not reform,<sup>44</sup> he already indicates early in his novel that the stories Lovelace will hear about his dying friends and even the knowledge of Clarissa’s death will not bring about a drastic and long-lasting change in him. Lovelace’s exasperated appeals to Belford to stop lecturing him on his life and

morals -- "Thou runnest on with thy cursed nonsensical reformado rote, of dying, dying, dying! and, having once got the word by the end, canst not help foisting it in at every period!" (1182; IV. 86) -- reveal the libertine as resistant to reform and immersed in his own narrow view of the world.

In order to enforce his moral lessons not only on various characters within the discourse but also on his readers outside, Richardson contrasts the fates of sinful and saint-like individuals by juxtaposing the spectacular, harrowing death of Sinclair with the quiet, aesthetically pleasing experience of Clarissa's passing.<sup>45</sup> Working with the age-old dichotomization of woman into angel and whore, he presents the female body in two extreme forms, one endowed with destructive, the other with redemptive capacities, and then condemns both of them to death. Sinclair's demise is rendered as a frightening, nightmarish portrait, perhaps a product of the male imagination, which at once expresses the fear of woman and suggests a way of exorcising that fear:

Behold her then, spreading the whole tumbled bed with her huge quaggy carcase: her mill-post arms held up, her broad hands clenched with violence; her big eyes goggling and flaming-red as we may suppose those of a salamander; her matted grizzly hair made irreverend by her wickedness (her clouted head-dress being half off) spread about her fat ears and brawny neck; her livid lips parched, and working violently; her broad chin in convulsive motion; her wide mouth by reason of the contraction of her forehead (which seemed to be half-lost in its own frightful furrows) splitting her face, as it were, into two parts; and her huge tongue hideously rolling in it; heaving, puffing as if for breath, her bellows-shaped and various-coloured breasts ascending by turns to her chin and descending out of sight with the violence of her gaspings. (1388; IV. 382)

Awe-inspiring and repulsive, the dying Sinclair, now reduced to a state of helplessness and despair but still surrounded by an aura of danger, embodies the great goddess in one of her darkest manifestations: she symbolizes Hecate, goddess of the underworld,

the horrible and devouring mother, surrounded by her handmaids and victims. In order to create a truly infernal atmosphere and render his description a revolting spectacle, Richardson pays close attention to audio-visual and olfactory details: the noise Sinclair makes “is more that of a bull than a woman” (1387; IV. 381); her handmaids are gathered around her “in shocking dishabille and without stays” (1387; IV. 381) and reveal

faces ...that had run, the paint lying in streaky seams not half blowzed off, discovering coarse wrinkled skin: the hair of some of them of divers colours; ...that of others plastered with oil and powder; the oil predominating: but every one’s hanging about her ears and neck in broken curls, or ragged ends. (1387; IV. 381)

and the old prostitute herself overwhelms all who attend to her with the great odour she exudes:

Nor is it to be wondered as, when it is considered that to the various ill smells that will be always found in a close sick-bed room, ...this of Mrs Sinclair was the more particularly offensive as, to the scent of plaisters, embrocations, and ointments, were added the stench of spirituous liquors, burnt and unburnt, of all denominations. (1393; IV. 388-89)

The death of Sinclair constitutes a memorable experience for Belford, the rake redeemed, confirming him in his belief in the rightness of his new life and inviting him to draw a comparison between Sinclair, the prostitute, and Clarissa, the “truly virtuous and elegant woman” (1388; IV. 381), who is a “lovely corpse” (1367; IV. 353) and displays the “charming serenity of her noble aspect” (1367) even after her death. When Richardson subjects Clarissa to progressive deterioration and thus enables her to exhibit her proficiencies and shine, he writes within the tradition of popular religious treatises, such as Taylor’s Holy Dying, which proposed that “Sickness is in

some sense eligible, because it is the opportunity and the proper scene of exercising some virtues" (Taylor, 89). In contrast to Sinclair's, Clarissa's dying is indeed exemplary and extraordinary: the young woman is spiritually and mentally well-prepared, arranges all her worldly affairs and for the disposal of her body, and continues, to the end, to give moral instructions and admonitions to those around her. Although Richardson presents Clarissa as essentially innocent and maltreated, he still chooses death for her. Since it is the author's professed intention to carry "our idea of her from woman to angel,"<sup>6</sup> Clarissa's body must be discarded and removed in order to concentrate all our attention on her sentiments and her spiritual radiance. By placing her death in opposition to Sinclair's -- both of them also occur at about the same time -- Richardson may have denied his female protagonist the continuation of her life in order to prevent the possibility that she may one day become another Sinclair. Since Clarissa considers herself "ruined" after the rape, she can assert the superiority and integrity of her soul only by a turning away from the world. Her increasingly elusive body, unravished and undisfigured by disease and death, reflects the essentially unblemished state of her soul.

Even after her death, the struggle over Clarissa's body continues, although it has been moved to a new level of signification. Defying the young woman's arrangements concerning the disposal of her body, Lovelace, still trying to establish a hold on her, hopes to take possession of what he could not have before. "Actually setting out with a surgeon ...to have the lady opened and embalmed" (1382; IV. 373),

as Mowbray informs Belford, Lovelace is particularly interested in obtaining Clarissa's heart:

But her heart, to which I have such unquestionable pretensions, in which once I had so large a share, and which I will prize above my own, I will have. I will keep it in spirits. It shall never be out of my sight. And all the charges of sepulture too shall be mine. ...I will have possession of her dear heart this very night; and let Tomkins provide a proper receptacle and spirits, till I can get a golden one made for it. (1384; IV. 376)

Since he knows that the heart formed the centre of Clarissa's understanding of herself and since he is probably also aware of her belief that it is the most important thing which he is lacking,<sup>47</sup> Lovelace seems to assume that he can win a double victory for himself, should he be able to seize the organ. Yet displaying again his inability to approach and experience life on a transcendental level, Lovelace replaces the metaphorical meaning with the literal. For him, it is the actual body, or different parts of it, which signify and constitute Clarissa and, for that matter, woman. Lovelace's command over her body, even if it is now an empty shell and no longer the container of moral sentiments, is therefore of the utmost importance to his sense of identity. Seeing himself in the role of leader and decision-maker, he decrees that Clarissa's corpse be buried in his family vault, except for the heart and "her bowels [which] shall be sent down to them [the Harlowes] -- to be laid with her ancestors" (1384; IV. 376). The rake's plans are, however, not only rendered futile but in fact reversed when, owing to his own inability to make, in time, due provisions for his body and his soul, he is subjected to a painful death and subsequent dissection. "He little thought, poor gentleman! his end so near, so had given no direction about his body," his valet, De La Tour, writes to Belford, "I have caused it to be embowelled, and deposited in a

vault, till I have orders from England” (1488; IV. 530). While Clarissa’s body remains unopened and untouched, as requested in her will (1413; IV. 416), and hence represents the proper vessel of a pure spirit and an accomplished mind, the dismemberment of Lovelace places the libertine once again in diametrical opposition to the dead woman and reflects his depraved state which is beyond redemption.

### The Transformation of Clarissa’s Body

While the female protagonist’s body is, of course, the main factor for the numerous exertions and manipulations of power in Clarissa, it is rarely explicitly mentioned in the first half of Richardson’s novel, except for Lovelace’s occasional praises of its individual parts, which he wishes to possess.<sup>48</sup> After the rape, however, Clarissa’s body becomes the centre of attention, mainly because, through its violation, it has temporarily lost its protected status and has to be re-evaluated and redefined. Although Clarissa’s eventual rehabilitation and glorification is prepared for from the beginning,<sup>49</sup> it is in fact the forced sexual act which accelerates her transformation from exceptional human being to saint and text. Thus, during the last few months of her life, the young woman’s body constitutes itself in three different forms: the physical, both in its absence, which defines the bourgeois female body, and its presence, as a result of the rape and the gradual dissolution of the body; the spiritual, in its initial victimization and martyrdom and its subsequent projection into an

unverifiable future; and the discursive, in the collection and re-organization of existing written material on, to, and by Clarissa in the form of a book. Owing to her rigorously defined concept of morality which induces her to equate her loss of "honour," clearly a physical category in the novel,<sup>50</sup> with her all-encompassing, worldly "ruin," Clarissa appears to welcome, perhaps even opt for, her corporeal transformation, probably believing that this choice alone may offer her a way of asserting herself and of regaining a sense of self which will leave her tolerably content.

During the transitional period in which Clarissa gradually establishes her new identity, she views her physical body as a burden which has to be overcome in order to prepare the way for her redemption and her personal victory over Lovelace and her family. Therefore, not only does her earlier loathing of physicality grow, but she is also increasingly overwhelmed by the process of "hysterization" to which her opponents try to subject her. Although physically attracted to Lovelace -- "I never saw a man, whose person I could like, before this man" (507; II. 167),<sup>51</sup> Clarissa admits to Anna -- the young woman displays throughout the novel a negative attitude toward sexuality, that is, she expresses opinions which are, for the most part, in agreement with the aura of delicacy and modesty she is supposed to exhibit.<sup>52</sup> Her negative response to the odious Solmes not only indicates her problems with intimate relationships but also foreshadows her eventual rape in its allusions to bodily violence: "My heart, as I have often, often said, recoils at the thoughts of the man, in every light" (203; I. 235), Clarissa tells Anna, "he even snatched my trembling, my struggling hand; and ravished it to his odious mouth" (319; I. 400). Owing to her

exceptionally delicate disposition, Clarissa seems to be unable to cope with male sexual desire and reacts to it in a frightened and intimidated manner.<sup>53</sup> Since she has made the life of the mind and the care of the soul the focus of all her efforts, her idea of matrimonial relations differs fundamentally from the notions of those around her: primarily interested in instructive, mutually beneficial conversation, the efficient management of the household, and the charitable conduct toward those in need of help, Clarissa's domain lies in her proficiency in words and the cultivation of sentiments. Thus, while most of her opponents wish to see her reduced to the category of woman as mistress, wife, and mother -- both Lovelace and the Harlowes suspect a pregnancy after the rape<sup>54</sup> -- Belford alone echoes Clarissa's own understanding of herself as being all mind:

Why should such an angel be plunged so low as into the vulgar offices of domestic life? Were she mine, I should hardly wish to see her a mother unless there were a kind of moral certainty that minds like hers could be propagated. For why, in short, should not the work of the bodies be left to mere bodies?  
(555; II. 243-44)

Although it is obviously Richardson's intention to prepare, in a subtle manner, Clarissa's gradual transition to sainthood, the denigration of normal functions of the female body and the devaluation of women's work within their narrowly circumscribed domestic social sphere could be held against the author as a misogynist way of thinking. While exhibiting in other places great sympathy for women -- for example, he exposes the contemporary plight of women and many of their social restrictions especially through the voice of Anna Howe -- Richardson occasionally seems to succumb to the tendency to reduce members of the other sex to their bodies



which he depicts negatively in his rake Lovelace.<sup>55</sup> When he has Clarissa achieve her victory only through the rejection of her body and presents her then as the ideal woman, that is, as a woman whose conduct is to be admired and imitated, Richardson perpetuates, in a very forceful and impressive manner, the age-old stereotype that the body of a good woman is in need of protection against accessibility either through its supervision and control by father or husband or through its removal by death.

In spite of her rape, Clarissa wishes to give her life the appearance of a work of art. Since the integrity of her body is essential to the overall wholeness she wishes to achieve in the afterlife, she continues to be evasive about physical details even after her violation, using images and circumlocutory language rather than directness in order to put into words the effect the rape has had on her:

Oh! Lovelace! if you could be sorry for yourself, I would be sorry too -- but when all my doors are fast, and nothing but the key-hole open, and the key of late put into that, to be where you are, in a manner without opening any of them -- Oh wretched, wretched Clarissa Harlowe! (894; III. 210-11)

With her corporeal self invaded and disrupted, Clarissa begins to restructure and redirect her sense of identity by creating a new body for herself, made up of the unified force of the saintliness with which she surrounds her conduct, her will and her wishes which she presents in the form of written material, and the memory of her untouched body which is deposited in the family vault.

Through the systematic orientation of her life toward sainthood and through her ability to monopolize the reputation of perfection, Clarissa gradually succeeds in establishing her spiritual body. Since she knows that the fame of being an exceptional individual is partially owing to friends and acquaintances who are instrumental in

contributing to and supporting her construction of the admirable self, Clarissa must necessarily be interested in impressing others or directing them in her favour. Therefore, comments such as Belford's remark that "she was born to adorn the age she was given to, and would be an ornament to the first dignity" (555; II. 243) assist Clarissa in becoming an icon: in her exceptional conduct, she is no longer representative of ordinary women but rather demonstrates the ideal nature of a good woman, should all of her extraordinary qualities be taken to an extreme. When Clarissa, after the rape, mourns the loss of her physical integrity and longingly speaks of the state of "saints and angels" who "have shaken off the encumbrance of the body" (974; III. 321), she already indicates that she may seek to build her new ideal self on the basis of spiritual purity. During the following weeks, Clarissa places herself in the tradition of a virgin martyr<sup>56</sup> and accepts her impending death as both a blessing and a punishment. Trying to overcome the burden of the body and substitute a spiritual essence for it -- "Yet how this body clings! -- How it encumbers!" (1265; IV. 201), Clarissa complains -- the young woman subjects herself to severe physical and spiritual suffering: "by Mrs Lovick's description ...the shortness of her breath, her extreme weakness, and the fervour of her devotions when at church, were contraries, which pulling different ways (the soul aspiring, the body sinking) tore her tender frame in pieces" (1308; IV. 260). Lovelace's dream of Clarissa's ascension, in which Richardson reworks and expands the same image, suggests that Clarissa has indeed achieved her goal and become pure soul, while Lovelace, associated with the flesh in

its most negative form and hence with that part of life which ought to be rejected, is drawn downward into hell.

Clarissa's exemplary care for the disposal of her body contributes greatly to her gradual endowment with the aura of sainthood. Although her corporeal self ranks low in her own estimation after the violent act, she displays extreme modesty about her body and gives precise instructions as to what ought to be done with it. Continuing with her earlier suppression of and secrecy about physical matters -- only Mrs Lovick and Mrs Smith are informed about her wishes regarding her corpse -- Clarissa surrounds her body with an elusiveness which helps to shift the attention of others to her mental and spiritual accomplishments. Reformed and much inspired by her conduct, Belford appears to assist her in her construction of a new desirable self when he sends Clarissa an expurgated version of one of Lovelace's letters. By removing "the warm description of her person in the fire scene" (1177; IV. 80) in order not to offend her modesty and by presenting her on other occasions as angel rather than woman,<sup>57</sup> he confirms and reinforces Clarissa's self-image of an individual "the world is unworthy of" (1299; IV. 248) and whose physical existence is of little importance to her. Drawing on images of transitoriness in the animal world, Clarissa not only puts, at the end of her life, her earthly existence in perspective but also reveals her hope for the future:

We flutter about here and there, with all our vanities about us, like painted butterflies, for a gay but a very short season, till at last we lay ourselves down in a quiescent state, and turn into vile worms: and who knows in what form, or to what condition, we shall rise again? (1337; IV. 299)

Although unsure and tentative about the eventual outcome of her life, Clarissa clearly plays with the idea of metamorphosis and seems to have a presentiment of what is to follow after her death: Clarissa will not go all too quietly and for ever, but rather, like a phoenix rising from the ashes, she will one day return in a new and more brilliant body than before, namely in the form of a text which will display and reflect the many shades of her story.

Clarissa's desire to become a text and her efforts toward achieving this goal grow out of her competition with Lovelace to establish a dominant discourse and hence have the last word. Since she must impose her own interpretation on the past events in order to attain the status of sainthood, her inclination to communicate in detail whatever happens to her is not only an act of self-defense, incited by Anna's early advice to collect information for later, but also an assertive motion on her part to overcome Lovelace's control. Occasionally in her correspondence, Clarissa already acknowledges her closeness to the texts she writes and even merges with her epistolary products: "I am but a cipher, to give him significance and myself pain. -- These griefs, therefore, do what I can, will sometimes burst into tears; and these mingling with my ink, will blot my paper" (567; II. 264). Thus her tears, parts of her corporeal self, interact and mix with the material which will later constitute as well as express her essence. Similarly, Clarissa's habit of hiding her letters in her stays (632; II. 361) and Lovelace's occasional preference of her correspondence to her body (570-572; II. 269-72) already foreshadows the young woman's eventual transformation into

a “cipher” or rather a text which is not only for Lovelace and the Harlowes to “decipher” but for all readers to unravel in all its complexities and ambiguities.<sup>38</sup>

Richardson evidently pursues political interests when he endows Clarissa’s body, which is representative of the bourgeois female body, with elusiveness, that is, when he makes it impossible for us ever to see that body clearly in order to grasp it mentally and understand it. Characterized by its textual suppression, the bourgeois body is constituted by its fame rather than its physical essence and given value and special meaning in Richardson’s novel particularly through its persecution and violation by a depraved member of a superior social class which, in turn, loses all credibility through this act. Having undermined, then, in his fiction, the aristocracy’s claim to power and exposed this social group for its shallowness and irresponsibility, Richardson asserts, through his female protagonist, the middle classes’ potential for morally commendable behaviour and their right to demand recognition for being an exemplary force in the society of his time.

Drawing on contemporary medical discourses as well as ancient mythological sources, Richardson succeeds in presenting us with a wide variety of impressive and haunting images of the body. Although his main objective is to relate these representations to ethical considerations and thus use them for didactic purposes, he does not disregard aesthetic aspects: Richardson’s novel not only imitates, on the narrative level, incidents in Clarissa’s life but eventually comes to embody, in the very sense of the word, that life. Not only is the young woman’s rape, the crucial, yet unspoken and unspeakable event in her existence, depicted as the gap in the fictional

work, and her slow, progressive deterioration reflected in the lengthy, drawn-out second half of the novel, but Clarissa, as a whole, consisting of a collection of letters, written either by herself or friends and foes, becomes, by her design, her account of herself, as do, on a smaller scale, the inscriptions on her coffin. Inorganic components, that is, words and images on pages or wood, thus come to fuse thoughts and emotions, and begin to shape the new body of Clarissa, which is no longer weighed down and restricted by the encumbrance of physical matter but is epistemologically free-floating, owing to its textual nature, and hence open to interpretation.

#### IV. Problems and Solutions

In all his novels, in some more successfully than in others, Richardson introduces and experiments with new ideas. Although following in the footsteps of earlier novelists when making a woman his protagonist, Richardson adds the element of introspection and, perhaps for the first time, gives a voice to female desire. He develops further the epistolary genre and points to its extraordinary possibilities for presenting subjectivity, now located in a variety of voices, without having to sacrifice his didactic goals. He clearly learns from his earlier mistakes, such as the concentration of the novel's consciousness in a fifteen-year-old female servant, his bungled characterization of Mr B., the would-be rake, or the ambiguities surrounding the female protagonist of his second fictional work, and tries to rectify those flaws in subsequent editions or in the next novel. In Clarissa, however, the author occasionally and, most likely, unconsciously, enters dangerous territory when, in his depiction of gender-related conduct, his characterization of the rake, and his representation of friendship, he begins to undermine his stated intentions<sup>59</sup> by hinting at new approaches to these issues: while putting in opposition, for instance, ideal and utterly negative categories of gender, Richardson does not display the former in any of his characters and blurs the latter by associating them with Clarissa, his centre of values; he subverts his portrayal of the utterly vicious and despicable rake, Lovelace, by endowing him with the character traits of the sentimental man and some of the qualities of the female

protagonist; and, setting the novel in a world in which there is great animosity between men and women and not much understanding between members of the same sex, Richardson appears to question the notion of both marriage and friendship. Since Richardson most likely did not know and certainly never admitted that he addressed controversial issues in his work, these areas of problematization are located in the subtext<sup>60</sup> of the novel but begin to emerge when Clarissa is investigated with regard to the contradictions inherent in the text and its relation to other, often conflicting discourses.

### Transgressions of Gender

Sinclair: "I never knew such work in my life, between a chicken of a gentleman, and a tiger of a lady!" (935; III. 268)

Richardson was certainly not the first to introduce transgressions of gender-related conduct into his work. The comic genre, in particular, had for a long time offered topsy-turvy worlds in which the reversal of hierarchies and the subversion of socially required behaviour were common characteristics. In English literature, these comic transformations, in the manner of Plautus and Terence, reached a new level of perfection in the plays of Shakespeare. In both As You Like It and Twelfth Night, for instance, Shakespeare has female characters adopt the roles and appearances of men, mainly in order to escape temporarily their narrowly confining (female) world but also



in order to test and reevaluate the life and sphere of the other. Yet, while Shakespeare lightly concludes his comedies by returning his characters to a world of fixed, commonly accepted values, he still allows for more variety in their conduct<sup>61</sup> than Restoration plays in which the sexes are portrayed as oppositions, far apart from the respective other and deeply indoctrinated with generalizations about “right” and “wrong” behaviour. With no longer much room to manoeuvre, then, early fictional characters had to transgress boundaries of gender if they wished to realize their human potential. Defoe’s Roxana, for instance, is forced to become a “Man-Woman,”<sup>62</sup> clearly a negative category in various discourses of the time,<sup>63</sup> in order to assert her individualism and to achieve independence and the personal freedom which she so much desires. Richardson continues Defoe’s exploration of gender transgression but emphasizes, as never before, the aspect of morality. Intending to depict extreme forms of behaviour, commendable as well as despicable, Richardson associates the adherence to and violation of codes of conduct with the moral and spiritual condition of individuals. Although his protagonists are designed as either virtuous or morally flawed, each of them also displays traits of the other, traits which are not always rejected as deviations but which are shown to be essential to the constitution of their respective character.

On the surface, Richardson has divided the people inhabiting his fictional world into strict categories, marking them as either positive or negative, according to the degree of their submission to gender-specific behaviour. But while he exposes the “masculine” woman and the “effeminate” man (186-187; I. 205), both of them

categories in which members of one sex move to the extreme of the other, he refrains from presenting their opposites as ideals, that is, he is also critical of individuals who adhere strictly to the socially assigned characteristics of their sex (“feminine” women or “masculine” men). Rather, Richardson appears to favour individuals who succeed in appropriating a few, exceptional traits of the other sex and using them to their advantage. Clarissa’s rejection of the fop as “coxcomb, ...the scorn of one sex, and the jest of the other” (186; I. 205) and of assertive or persistent men like her brother James and Solmes, who insist on their male prerogatives, as “the hard-hearted sex” (309; I. 386) sets the tone for Richardson’s treatment of gender-related behaviour. Clarissa, who later becomes the representative of all that is admirable and commendable in women, functions as the novel’s centre of values, against which the conduct of other characters is to be judged. Sensing the danger which may arise from domineering women, such as her sister Arabella, or Mrs Sinclair, who try to impose their will on her and direct her life, Clarissa dismisses them as “masculine,” hence monstrous and abnormal.<sup>64</sup> Yet masculinity can become a positive feature in women when it is directed toward the defeat of a despicable rake. Anna Howe chooses Mrs Townsend, a “manlike spirit [who] knows the world” (860; III. 165), in order to rescue Clarissa and punish Lovelace: “the horrid villain shall be repaid with broken bones, at least, for all his vileness” (860; III. 165). Yet even Anna whose determination, forwardness, and anger about men are certainly justified is at times critical of gender transgression:

I do not think a man-woman a pretty character at all: and, as I said, were I a man, I would sooner choose for a dove, though it were fit for nothing but, as

the play says, to go tame about house and breed, than a wife that is setting at work (my insignificant self present perhaps) every busy hour my never-resting servants. (476; II. 118)

Although her remarks here are not compatible with the overall design of her character as a mild version of a female rake, Richardson still has her comment, in a negative manner, on those categories of gender which he wishes to expose and exorcise. In contrast to various negative forms of conduct (the egotism of Clarissa's siblings, the weakness of her mother and the empty authoritarianism of her father, Anna's resoluteness, the meekness of Hickman, and Belford's pathetic rhetoric of conversion), Richardson presents Clarissa and, to a lesser extent, Lovelace as exceptions to the rule, because both of them, although seemingly entrenched in the immovable positions of virtuous paragon and depraved libertine, have the potential for stepping out of the roles which they have either imposed on themselves or into which they were forced, and use the knowledge of the other sex to their advantage.

Since the two protagonists are projected as extremes, even the slightest digression from the behaviour which informs their character and advances their reputation can result in the collapse and likely redirection of their extraordinary personalities. Thus, Lovelace's fame as reckless libertine and Clarissa's renown as obedient daughter and exemplary young woman are easily undermined, should either of the two exhibit characteristics of the other. Owing to her precarious situation, Clarissa is repeatedly forced to step out of the role which she has embraced: the code of conduct which she follows does not, for example, permit her to be disobedient to her parents, treat her suitors condescendingly and aggressively, or engage in a

clandestine correspondence with a dangerous young man. Although she is aware of these interdictions, she still ignores them. Since the accepted rules at the time concerning the proper female conduct were very strict,<sup>65</sup> any movement, on Clarissa's part, in the "wrong" direction, can negatively influence the way in which others perceive her. Hence, when she leaves her father's house, Clarissa's status quickly changes: she is no longer an exemplar to her sex but a warning, as her mother, until then generally sympathetic to Clarissa, points out when she describes her daughter as someone "who had by her advice saved even her over-lively friend from marrying a fop and a libertine, [and] would [now] herself have gone off with one of the vilest and most notorious of libertines" (585; II. 219). Similarly, the occasional instances in which Lovelace appears to act "out of character," such as in his benevolent treatment of Rosebud or his genuine awe of or admiration for Clarissa, undermine Richardson's plan of presenting an utterly black and evil persona. It is probably not only Richardson's own ambivalent relationship to his main characters but also the extraordinary length of the novel, both of which yielded an extensive psychological exploration of the protagonists, which contributed to the contradictions in Lovelace and Clarissa. Since at times both display features of the other, they also move closer toward each other and begin to undermine the categories in which they have been fixed.

Richardson's characterization of Lovelace and Clarissa is further complicated by the contradictory evaluation of elements of the other sex in each of them. Feminine traits in Lovelace are shown to be both good and bad; masculinity in Clarissa elevates

her to a level of heroism, but is only considered acceptable as long as it does not take away from her portrayal as perfectly “feminine” woman. Richardson exposes Lovelace’s “perverted” mind by having him speak, rather impudently, of his ability, owing to his natural modesty, to enter the minds of women:

But I was originally a bashful whelp -- bashful still, with regard to this lady! -- bashful, yet know the sex so well! -- But that indeed is the reason that I know it so well -- for, Jack, I have had abundant cause, when I have looked into myself, by way of comparison with the other sex, to conclude that a bashful man has a good deal of the soul of a woman; and so, like Tiresias, can tell what they think and what they drive at, as well, as themselves. (440-1; II. 55)

Since Lovelace employs his bashfulness (should it exist at all and not only be a rhetorical position) in the service of his strategies against women, it takes on negative undertones, hinting at the extent to which he is willing to manipulate others. Yet this very bashfulness may also be responsible for Lovelace’s hesitation to rape Clarissa, and thus becomes a positive aspect of his character. In fact, when the rake repeatedly is close to tears because of Clarissa’s impression on him and when he displays benevolence to others, he may well approach Clarissa’s ideal of the desirable man: “Gentleness of heart, surely, is not despicable in a man. Why, if it be, is the highest distinction a man can arrive at, that of a gentleman? -- a distinction which a prince may not deserve. For manners, more than birth, fortune or title, are requisite in this character” (453; II. 73). Hence, Lovelace is able, on rare occasions, to concentrate in himself qualities, usually associated with the period’s “new,” sentimental man and presented to perfection in Richardson’s own Grandison. Although Clarissa is frequently depicted as an idealized, almost unnaturally perfect woman -- her friend Anna perceives of her as “surrounded with such a flood of brightness, with such a

glory, that it would indeed dazzle; but leave one heartless to imitate it" (485; II. 131) - her behaviour at times places her outside the definition of femininity and gives her the appearance of an individual divided between necessity and inclination: "Weakness of heart ...with such a strength of will! ...her charming body is not equally organized. The unequal partners pull two ways; and the divinity within her tears her silken frame. But had the same soul informed a masculine body, never would there have been a truer hero" (647; II. 384). As Lovelace rightly observes, Clarissa possesses the potential for heroic status; yet it is her female body which brings her down and keeps her tied to a limited sphere of action. Clarissa would rather die, and eventually does so, than stand up to Lovelace and defy him on his own terms (either through legal measures or through violence, as members of her family as well as Anna suggest). Richardson seems to be aware of the advantages which the knowledge and the incorporation of the other into one's own approach to life can yield, yet he is forced to uphold the strict dichotomization of character which he has imposed on the novel from the outset by designing his protagonists as binary opposites.

Richardson has at times recourse to the presentation of extreme deviation from expected gender-related behaviour in order to emphasize the rigid division of Clarissa and Lovelace into good and evil. The deviant conduct which he exposes in each of them serves different narrative goals. While it endows the rake with an even darker, more repulsive dimension, it raises and ennobles the young woman. Thus, Lovelace's fantasy of crossdressing to attend churches for women, his temporary adoption of a female voice in order to pursue a new stratagem (856; III. 159), and his dream of sex

change in order to possess Clarissa one more time, all serve the purpose of portraying the rake as thoroughly depraved and irredeemable. In contrast, Clarissa's crossing of gender boundaries, such as her resoluteness in rejecting the despicable Solmes, her lack of reticence and embarrassment about the rape, and her determination to defy all her opponents through the withdrawal of her body from the area of contest, depicts the woman as following her convictions in a determined manner and thus wins her the admiration of many. Although Lovelace regards Clarissa's conduct during the last few months of her life as "female perverseness" (1099; III. 497) --

Strange, confoundedly strange, and as perverse (that is to say, as womanly) as strange, that she should refuse, and sooner choose to die ...than be mine, who offended her by acting in character, while her parents acted shamefully out of theirs, and when I am now willing to act out of my own to oblige her. (1107; III. 508)

he complains to Belford -- Clarissa's decision to resign her life of the body in favour of her life of the spirit places her above ordinary human beings. Transgressions of gender-related behaviour are therefore necessary for her in order to attain a new status, that of saint or angel, a state devoid of the body and hence sexless, while similar transgressions in Lovelace identify him with the side of evil. Lovelace's dream of his metamorphosis from man into woman, for example, has at its centre a repetition of the rape scene, in a reworked and far more explicit version than the actual event (the gap in the novel), and is followed by the fantasy of Anna's seduction, the pregnancies of both women, and the subsequent incestual relationship between their children. Although both Lovelace and Clarissa may go to extremes in the crossing of gender boundaries -- Lovelace in his distortion and exploitation of the female role in order to

accommodate his own, extravagant desires and Clarissa in her appropriation of a heroic stance in order to accomplish her vision of herself -- they differ markedly in the success of their endeavours: while Lovelace is exposed and denigrated for his wishes, Clarissa is placed on a pedestal and becomes an exemplar to her sex.

Richardson's attitude toward the importance of gender-related behaviour appears to be ambivalent. While rejecting the exponents of extreme conduct, such as Sinclair, the "man-woman," or Lovelace, the cross-dresser, as dangerous and detrimental to society and its standards, he seems to advocate the adoption of positive elements of the other sex. Not only does he present Anna and Belford, who both possess masculine and feminine traits respectively, as survivors and representatives of the new values of a better community which may arise out of the confusion and pain following the deaths of Clarissa and Lovelace, but he also has Clarissa herself speak affirmatively on the subject: "Let our sex therefore ...seek to make themselves mistresses of all that is excellent and not incongruous to their sex in the other; but without losing anything commendable in their own" (1468).<sup>66</sup> Clarissa and, through her, Richardson seem to make a plea for the mild modification of the concept of gender and of the conduct related and expected of members of the different sexes. Richardson himself seems to have valued highly the company of women in which he could enjoy a refined and well-mannered conversation and which he could use as a testing-place for his fictional ideas and a source of information about the opposite sex.<sup>67</sup> Since Richardson was also in the forefront of those who wished to "feminize" and hence improve society through the introduction of new bourgeois ideals, his



endowing important male characters with feminine, ultimately sentimental, traits will not come as a surprise. Yet it is precisely Richardson's wish to "feminize" men which will perhaps explain the problems the author encountered when he intended to create an utterly despicable rake but designed an intelligent and occasionally attractive and engaging young man.

#### The Subversion of the Libertine Code of Conduct

Richardson: "I intend in him a new Character, not confined to usual rules." (Eaves/Kimpel, 211)

Lovelace: "I am bewitched to her memory. Her very name, with mine joined to it, ravishes my soul, and is more delightful than the sweetest music." (1483; IV. 525)

Although Richardson continues, in his characterization of the rake, with earlier models, literary and living,<sup>68</sup> he adds a new dimension to his male protagonist by endowing him with qualities which may render him attractive and even endearing to other characters and the reader. While divisions and ambiguities in the persona of the libertine may in fact be a common feature of the type,<sup>69</sup> Richardson takes Lovelace in a new direction when he furnishes him with psychological depth and occasionally depicts him as a tortured individual, trying to break free from the cycle of exploitation, seduction, and abuse of women. Richardson's peculiar characterization of Lovelace is,

of course, quite problematic, especially for late twentieth-century readers, as it may reveal a great deal of sympathy for a rapist and constitutional deceiver. It may, however, also tell us much about the author himself, who seems to have become enamoured with his own creation, not only with his moral paragon, as he profusely confessed to his friends,<sup>70</sup> but also with his vicious rake, as is indicated in Richardson's appropriation, in some of his letters, of Lovelace's voice. Since much has already been said in critical studies about Lovelace's typification of the conventional Restoration rake-hero,<sup>71</sup> I will concentrate on the opposite argument and explore the differences of this character from earlier models. I will try to show that it is not only the ambiguities and contradictions, that is, the internal divisions, with which Richardson endows his rake, but also the similarities in disposition and conduct between Lovelace and Clarissa which bring the rake closer to the notion of the acceptable, perhaps even admirable, young man and thus make him an early, distorted, or rather aborted, prototype for the sentimental hero.

Although Lovelace displays most of the usual rakish traits -- he is cynical about life; he is proud of his ability in deluding the people around him; and he delights in tormenting others -- he stands out of the crowd of vicious and depraved rakes and also philosophical libertines (see chapter 2. III.) by being exceptionally attractive and seductive. Not only does Lovelace offer Clarissa, cornered by the stern and authoritarian males in her family and the dull, repulsive Solmes, a life of adventure and excitement -- "Your man ...will always keep up attention; you will always be alive with him" (514; II. 177), her friend Anna points out -- he also appeals

to Clarissa's notion of the physically and morally acceptable man. Even after she has left Harlowe Place and considers herself the unfortunate object of Lovelace's manipulations, Clarissa is still tempted to see positive things in the rake:

It must, indeed, be confessed, that there is in his whole deportment a natural dignity, which renders all insolent or imperative demeanor as unnecessary as inexcusable. Then that deceiving sweetness which appears in his smiles, in his accent, in his whole aspect and address, when he thinks it worth his while to oblige, or endeavour to attract, how does this show that he was born innocent, as I may say; that he was not naturally the cruel, the boisterous, the impetuous creature which the wicked company he may have fallen into have made him!  
(545; II. 229-30)

Clarissa's representation of Lovelace as a misguided young man goes, of course, hand in hand with Richardson's portrayal of the rake as a victim of the domineering women at Mrs Sinclair's who are later held partially responsible by rapist, rape victim, and critic alike for the act of violence against Clarissa.<sup>72</sup> Working against his professed intentions of depicting his male protagonist as "a devil, ...wicked ...intriguing [and] revengeful,"<sup>73</sup> Richardson deflects guilt from Lovelace by making him not only a victimizer but also a victim and hence a likely recipient of pity. Although the author may have tried to render his rake all the more culpable for being aware of his flaws and weaknesses but unable or unwilling to avoid them, he also endows Lovelace with manifestations of internal division and mental torment which provide him with sympathy from others. Lovelace says repeatedly that he hates himself for what he is and that he wishes to be different:

...my cursed character, as I have often said, was against me at setting out!  
(657; II. 398)

Thou sayest that I ever hated wedlock. And true thou sayest. And yet as true, when thou tellest me that I would rather marry than lose this lady. (719; II. 495)

I must keep my anger alive, lest it sink into compassion. ...But I must not trust myself with myself, in the humour I am in. (733; II. 514)

Oh Belford, Belford, how have I puzzled myself as well as her! -- This cursed aversion to wedlock how has it entangled me! -- What contradictions has it not made me guilty of! (734; II. 515)

Just as there is the possibility that Clarissa may swerve from her chosen path of virtue and morality, and become entangled in a web of deceit and desire, there is the opposite potential in Lovelace, namely, the chance that he will reform and begin a mutually rewarding life with Clarissa.<sup>74</sup>

The character of Lovelace profits further from the parallels in attitude and conduct which Richardson draws between him and Clarissa. Both of them are strong in their determination and unwilling to compromise. Clarissa's initial evaluation of Lovelace, for example -- she regards him as "one who has always had too much of his own will to study to accommodate himself to that of others" (410; II. 10) -- describes her own position very well. Both are concerned about their reputation, should they submit to the other's way of life respectively. While Lovelace is worried about making a bad "figure ...in rakish annals" (846; III. 144), Clarissa has similar fears, although her own situation differs substantially from his: "Were I to marry him, what a figure should I make, preaching virtue and morality to a man whom I had trusted with opportunities to seduce me from all my own duties?" (1116; III. 520). Furthermore,

both of them are rather naive in their assessment of the other. Although Clarissa is aware of the dangers which could arise from keeping company with a rake, not only can she hardly imagine the extent of his depravity but she also mistakenly relies on her own reformatory capabilities. Similarly, Lovelace underestimates Clarissa's ability to confront him with his own methods of deception. Believing that he has a monopoly on the invention and execution of stratagems, the rake is surprised and annoyed when he discovers that she successfully employed a ruse by sending him the allegorical letter: "I cannot but own that I am cut to the heart by this Miss Harlowe's interpretation of her letter. She ought never to be forgiven. She, a meek person, and a penitent, and innocent, and pious, and I know not what, who can deceive with a foot in the grave!" (1301; IV. 251). Each, at one time or another, recognizes part of himself or herself in the other. The frequent need to impose their understanding of life on the other and to have the other on their own terms indicates that they have both realized that their fates are irreversibly interwoven. "I cannot help wishing that she would bear me company in the rest of my journey, although she were to step out of her own path to oblige me" (870; III. 178), Lovelace speculates, and reveals, temporarily at least, the strong desire to end his old life. Lovelace and Clarissa, it seems, are meant for each other, even if that means their mutual destruction. Both of them are victims, not only of their own actions but also of the misfortune of ever having met. "I imagined for a long while that we were born to make each other happy; but, quite the contrary; we really seem to be sent to plague one another" (571; II. 270), Lovelace reflects on his relationship with Clarissa, and adds later: "It is certainly

as much my misfortune to have fallen in with Miss Clarissa Harlowe, were I to have valued my reputation or ease, as it is that of Miss Harlowe to have been acquainted with me" (970; III. 316). Their mutual encounter appears to be fated, as Lovelace suggests, and unavoidably destructive in both ways: Clarissa has become Lovelace's femme fatale -- he regards her as Arachne, the spider, weaving plots around him (400, I. 512; 879, III. 191), and calls her a "little witch" (690; II. 454) and his "adorable Nemesis" (718; II. 494) -- while Lovelace represents for Clarissa "a poisonous serpent," dangerous and deceiving (1320, IV. 276; 439, II. 53), a "wolf [in] sheep's clothing" (750; III. 11), and "the great fiend of all unchained" (755; III. 18), and thus increasingly takes the place of her homme fatal. Richardson endows his two protagonists with similarities in their behaviour and disposition, and further establishes subtle points of connection between them, either through shared imagery or common rhetorical devices.<sup>75</sup> Although he had initially set them up as binary oppositions, the author brings his main characters together in unobtrusive ways. Hence none of them ever completely embodies one form of behaviour, but always carries with him or her part of the other. Clarissa and Lovelace are two distinctive sides of one personality and their movements and sentiments are informed and fuelled, as it were, by Richardson's need to write himself in a variety of ways and, through this act, to recreate and to reevaluate continually his own existence.

Richardson further varies the conventional depiction of the rake by making Lovelace a "decent rake" (443; II. 59) or what might be called a "sentimental" rake. Taking him, perhaps accidentally, a step in the direction of Grandison and company,

the author depicts Lovelace now and then as a sensitive, considerate, and even tearful young man, although, at other times, he may appear to be the devil incarnate. It is Clarissa who exerts a beneficial, sobering and yet exalting influence on him, as he himself admits: "I don't know how it is, but this lady, the moment I come into her presence, half assimilates me to her own virtue ...the instant I beheld her, I was soberized into awe and reverence: and the majesty of her even visible purity first damped, and then extinguished, my double flame" (658; II. 400). Repeatedly, Clarissa arrests his frantic attempts to conquer her by making a deep impression on him, whether through her words, her convictions, or her conduct. On those occasions, she carries him out of his old self and turns him away from his life of profligacy and manipulation. As he later grudgingly concedes, she also evokes timidity and embarrassment in him, which slow down his plans of seduction and render futile his efforts to possess her: "sometimes I think that fainter and fainter would have been her procrastinations had I been a man of courage -- but so fearful was I of offending!" (493; II. 142-42). Lovelace himself emphasizes his difference from other rakes, not only in his proud declarations of being a masterly schemer but also in his acknowledgements of his weakness, such as his preference of the word over the action: "Were every rake, nay, were every man, to sit down, as I do, and write all that enters into his head or into his heart, and to accuse himself with equal freedom and truth, what an army of miscreants should I have to keep me in countenance!" (717; II. 492). Perhaps owing to his ability to "know the sex so well" (440; II. 55), Lovelace succeeds in addressing Clarissa in her own vernacular, the language of sentiment and

sensibility: "when I want to open my whole soul to you, you are always contriving to keep me at a distance; you make me inconsistent with myself" (642; II. 375), Lovelace tells her, "if ever I am to be happy either here or hereafter, it must be in and by you" (796; III. 73-74). Through expressing his devotion and helplessness, Lovelace may only try to impress Clarissa and sway her to his side, when he implores her in a familiar idiom; yet his subsequent mental torments, evoked by the knowledge of her suffering, lay indeed bare his potential for change and reveal the sensitive side in him. For a while, at least, Lovelace seems to be able to approach Clarissa on the level of mind and spirit when he confesses to his friend:

...my love for her is less personal, as I may say, more intellectual than ever I thought it could be to woman. ...I am confident ...I could love her with a purity that would draw on my own FUTURE, as well as ensure her TEMPORAL, happiness -- And hence, by necessary consequence, shall I be the most miserable of all men if I am deprived of her. (1309; IV. 262)

While Lovelace's recognition of his deepest, until then suppressed, needs is restricted to a few, fleeting moments only, it still endows Richardson's rake with a difference from his predecessors. "I am but seeking to run out of myself in hope to lose myself" (1347; IV. 326), Lovelace tells Belford a few days before Clarissa's death, "my soul's sick of them [his libertine friends], and of all the world; but most of myself" (1358; IV. 342). Trying to overcome those traits which fix him into a category, Lovelace at times loathes and rejects what he is and strives toward the kind of life which had once been open to him but which, owing to the author's strict moral notions, is now forever out of reach. Attractive and fascinating as he may be, Richardson's rake is eventually



reduced to his constitutional limitations and led back to the place reserved for him as the period's most accomplished and most despicable libertine.

Although Richardson indicates that the lives of both Lovelace and Clarissa may also take a different direction, he adheres to his initial design. In spite of their attempts to distance themselves from those factors in their existence by which they are defined and determined -- many of Clarissa's difficulties arise out of her ambivalent attitude toward her body and her desires, while Lovelace is, sometimes against his will, influenced and driven by his protean nature -- both of them are, in the end, caught in the narrow parameters which Richardson has assigned to them. Yet much of what he denies to his main protagonists for didactic purposes, the author permits, and realizes in, their close friends. Anna Howe, for instance, in many ways a female version of Lovelace, will marry the man Clarissa really deserves, and Belford, the rake reformed and hence, according to Richardson himself, a dangerous individual,<sup>76</sup> is rewarded despite, or perhaps, paradoxically, because of, his earlier life of depravity, and wins the hand of an intelligent and virtuous young woman.

### Experimental Ground: Friendship Versus Marriage

Belford: "There must be a more exalted pleasure in intellectual friendship than ever thou couldst taste in the grosser fumes of sensuality." (1132; IV. 16)

The exchange of letters in Richardson's epistolary novel primarily takes place not between the two protagonists but between each of them and his or her best friend. Since both marriage and its effects on their friendships are frequently at the heart of the characters' discussions, the author not only seems to join in the contemporary debate on the necessity and the advantages of "holy matrimony,"<sup>77</sup> but also presents and discusses divergent notions of friendship. Although Richardson evokes the dominant Protestant view on marriage when he has his female protagonist contend that "marriage is the highest state of friendship" (524; II. 192-93), the reality he creates in his fictional world is rather different: positive, mutually beneficial marital relations are practically non-existent among his characters; moreover, the marriage plans the Harlowes as well as Lovelace have in mind for Clarissa certainly do not constitute an improvement of her situation but aim at infringing upon the young woman's rights and her sense of individualism. Yet in, and through, the friendships of Clarissa Harlowe and Anna Howe as well as Robert Lovelace and John Belford, that is, in relationships which provide those involved with affection and comfort, Richardson opposes and explores the contemporary state of marriage. However, the author's solutions and

suggestions concerning the issues he raises are contradictory or at least confusing: like the subjects of gender transgression and the rehabilitation of the rake, Richardson cannot lead his projections to their logical conclusion but instead ends his novel with the moralistic compromise of having his protagonists die and their best friends continue with lives which could have been theirs.

Historically, the evaluation of marriage within Christianity took a new direction with the humanists who were the first to assign to it a place of importance. In contrast to the early Church Fathers, who had been inclined to view sexuality in general as a negative force in one's life and hence had considered marriage as a necessary state reserved mainly for the purpose of reproduction -- St. Augustine, for instance, regarded women as helpmates rather than companions (Rogers, 20-22) -- early Renaissance humanists, such as Erasmus, began to value the married state higher than virginity and celibacy and propagated a view which many sixteenth-century Catholics and Anglicans adopted (Leites, 82). Under their influence, English moral writers of the following century, such as Thomas Gataker, William Gouge, Richard Baxter, and Daniel Rogers, all of them Protestants who were suspicious of male friendships, considered marital relations as superior, "as spouses could trust and depend on one another" (Leites, 99). Furthermore, they overturned the notion of ancient and medieval philosophers that true friendship exceeded the physical and that there can be one soul in two bodies, and argued instead that the most accomplished state of friendship can only be attained in marriage (Leites, 112).<sup>78</sup> Richardson, of course, draws heavily on Protestant doctrines for the moralistic vision which he wishes to extend to his readers.

Yet by making two of his principal letter writers representatives of the libertine code of conduct in which the strong bonds of male friendship play a central role, Richardson uses his novel as an arena in which two conflicting notions of friendship are brought forward and pitted against one another. Neither is victorious, however, since the main proponent of each side eventually dies. Although Richardson's intention appears to be the praise of marriage as the desirable state of existence, the dark ending of the novel raises questions about his success. Instead, both Anna's previous negative views on marital relations and Belford's earlier libertine way of life render suspect the projected happiness of their marriages.

Although Richardson contrasts the "reasonable and practical friendship"<sup>79</sup> of Clarissa and Anna with that of Lovelace and Belford, the "two gentlemen of free lives,"<sup>80</sup> and clearly evaluates them from a moral perspective in terms of "virtuous" versus "rakish" friendship, he is inclined to obscure the similarities between them. Both defy the common negative clichés associated with friendships between either rakes or women and display mutual loyalty and affection to a degree which renders them exceptional and admirable. Furthermore, both friendships claim to be based on mutual criticism, yet in each of them the "dominant" friend uses the relationship in order to have his or her self-image continually confirmed. While Clarissa describes the basis of her relationship with Anna as the ability "freely to give reproof and thankfully to receive it, as occasions arise; that so either may have opportunity to clear up mistakes, to acknowledge and amend errors, as well in behaviour as in words and deeds; and to rectify and confirm each other in the judgement each shall form upon

persons, things, and circumstances” (484; II. 130), she herself seems occasionally reluctant to accept advice or criticism. Like Lovelace, whose correspondence with Belford enables him to promote the construction of his self-image as chief strategist and leader and who welcomes his friend’s response as an incitement to further schemes, Clarissa uses many of her letters to Anna as an opportunity to present herself in a positive light and lay the foundation for the justification of her subsequent actions. Since their various qualifications allow them to dominate in uneven relationships, both Lovelace and Clarissa refuse to listen to warnings and well-meant advice: Clarissa can neither bring herself to be more assertive toward her family nor to seek help from Anna, and Lovelace asserts his unwillingness to change his ways. Yet part of the protagonists’ reluctance to heed their friends’ recommendations is attributable to the confusing, often contradictory advice extended by Anna and Belford. Since both of them are, to some degree, fascinated by as well as afraid of their friends -- “I fear you almost as much as I love you” (486; II. 132), Anna tells Clarissa, and Belford wishes to change Lovelace in order to defuse the dangers emanating from the rake: “for no devil do I fear, but one in your shape” (1343; IV. 308) -- they either try to accommodate their friends’ wishes or voice their criticism only in a subdued way. Thus, Anna’s advice as to whether or not Clarissa should marry the libertine seems to vary almost from letter to letter and Belford’s moral exhortations and warnings concerning Lovelace’s treatment of Clarissa are interspersed with expressions of a voyeuristic desire to hear more about the excesses of the rake. It is therefore mainly the considerable self-confidence which both Lovelace and Clarissa

display that leads to their destruction, since it renders Anna unable to teach her best friend to read herself more efficiently and inhibits Belford from being more successful in inducing a fellow libertine to reshape his life. While set on celebrating the endurance of two exceptional friendships, Richardson undermines his project by endowing the relationships of his characters with clear weaknesses, such as their disparateness and their occasional lack of mutual understanding.<sup>81</sup>

Although each “pair of friends” (1114; III. 517) questions the validity and integrity of the other, both exhibit, to an extraordinary degree, loyalty and mutual affection. While both Lovelace and Morden voice the conventional view that women are incapable of strong and lasting friendships outside of marriage (637, II. 368; 1449, IV. 468) – “Friendship ...is too fervent a flame for female minds to manage” (1449; IV. 468), Morden writes to Belford, in spite of having already been proven wrong in the case of his cousin – Anna, intrinsically sceptical of marriage, asserts the superiority of her attachment to Clarissa. In fact, both female friends accord the greatest value to their relationship: while Anna praises Clarissa as “the true partner of [her] heart” (1114; III. 517), Clarissa not only places herself in the male tradition by comparing the friendship between Anna and herself to that of David and Jonathan (1114; III. 517),<sup>82</sup> but also contends that their mutual care surpasses familial relations: “How much more binding and tender are the ties of pure friendship, and the union of like minds, than the ties of nature!” (1114; III. 517). By emphasizing “purity” and “minds,” the young woman succeeds in subverting the other pair’s “ethical” stance, which is based on libertine profligacy, and she is furthermore able to establish

a link between her own and the ancient view of friendship which had placed importance on spiritual rather than physical aspects. Yet the friendship between Lovelace and Belford is certainly not of a superficial nature, informed and shaped only by common rakish interests. Instead, by calling it "companionship" (1100; III. 498), Lovelace raises their relationship to a higher level. In fact, the loyalty between the two men extends as far as Belford's reluctance to step in when he witnesses Clarissa's ruin and his speaking to Clarissa on behalf of his friend, while Lovelace offers to kill Thomasine, the mistress of their mutual friend Belton, in order to alleviate Belford's care for the fellow rake. Although both Lovelace and Clarissa display emotional cruelty when they eventually part with their best friends -- Lovelace ridicules Belford's appearance and blames him for having been too good a friend and hence not put a halt to his stratagems (1440; IV. 455), while Clarissa informs Anna that God has now taken the place she once occupied in her heart (1338; IV. 302) -- they seem to do so in order to wean themselves from what means so much to them. By endowing both pairs with friendships which provide comfort and support and which give rise to a great sense of loss when one of them departs -- Anna, in particular, mourns the death of Clarissa as the loss of "the principal half of one soul" (1114; III. 517) -- Richardson brings his main characters closer together, thus perhaps making it possible for subsidiary characters to assume eventually the positions of the protagonists.

Both Clarissa and Anna are concerned that marriage will eventually intrude upon and break up their friendship. Aware of the contemporary notion of marital relations, according to which "the very being, or legal existence of the woman is

suspended during the marriage,"<sup>83</sup> both women are apprehensive about the state of physical as well as spiritual bondage into which they fear they will be forced. Even Clarissa, who occasionally makes a feeble attempt to defend marriage, perceiving it ideally as a virtuous and equal union of two like-minded individuals (524; II. 192-93), increasingly claims to prefer a single life and rejects marriage as "nothing but trouble and vexation ... when once entered, one is obliged to go on with them, treading with tender feet upon thorns and sharper thorns, to the end of a painful journey" (358; I. 454). Clarissa's fears of Lovelace as domineering, lordly husband -- "Will he confine me prisoner to my chamber? Will he deny me the visits of my dearest friend, and forbid me to correspond with her?" (183; I. 200) -- are probably well-justified, given Lovelace's jealousy concerning her correspondence with Anna: "it vexes me to the heart to think that she is hourly writing her whole mind on all that passes between her and me -- I under the same roof with her -- yet kept at such awful distance" (463; II. 97). It is, however, none of the young women's persistent suitors, Lovelace, Solmes, or Hickman, who brings about the end of friendship, but Clarissa's choice of death (which Lovelace turns into a personified character and cynically describes as the latest competitor for Clarissa's hand [1097; III. 495]). Although Anna assures her friend that she will not allow her future husband to interfere with their relationship --

But let me tell you that if Mr Hickman, after marriage, should pretend to dispute with me my friendships, as I hope I am not quite a fool, I should let him know how far his own quiet was concerned in such an impertinence; especially if they were such friendships as were contracted before I knew him. (1151-2; IV. 45) --



Clarissa lacks the inner strength to hold on to Anna and instead shifts her attention onto a spiritual, hence less uncertain object: "the truly friendly love that has so long subsisted between my Miss Howe and her Clarissa ...has already given place to supream fervours" (1342; IV. 307). Death offers Clarissa an escape from the dilemma of not knowing any man who could possibly equal Anna in her understanding and affection. Both friendships, male and female, are interrupted and cut short by death. By increasing their protestations and admissions of deep concern and affection for each other toward the end of each friendship, Richardson seems to allude to other possibilities and happier outcomes. The dying Clarissa receives Anna's final letter with the words, "This is a friend ...worth wishing to live for" (1348; IV. 328), and Lovelace, having already arranged for a meeting with Morden and the subsequent duel, tells Belford in one of his last letters: "thou art really an honest fellow, and a sincere and warm friend. I could almost wish I had not written to Florence till I had received thy letter now before me. But it is gone. Let it go." (1479; IV. 519). Unable on their own to cope with the difficulties and trials which life holds for them and unwilling to ask for or accept assistance, Lovelace and Clarissa choose the path of lonely individualism which leads them, each within his or her own sphere, to heroic heights but ultimately undermines their position in society through their self-imposed exclusion from community.

Although consigning Clarissa and Lovelace to death, Richardson ensures that the kind of life which might have been possible for them will be realized in some form or other. Thus, each of his protagonists transfers his or her potential onto another

individual before dying. Unable to attain the kind of marriage she would have wished for herself -- "Oh my dear, that it had been my lot (as I was not permitted to live single) to have met with a man by whom I could have acted generously and unreservedly!" (1263; IV. 198) -- Clarissa urges her best friend, in numerous letters and her will, to marry Hickman:

Oh my dear Miss Howe, let it not be long before you permit his claim to the latter [Anna's hand] -- for indeed you know not the value of a virtuous mind in that sex; and how preferable such a mind is to one distinguished by the more dazzling flights of unruly wit; although the latter were to be joined by that specious outward appearance which is too, too often permitted to attract the hasty eye and susceptible heart. (1416; IV. 421)

Perhaps referring to her own attraction to Lovelace and her attendant feelings of guilt, Clarissa seems to perceive Anna's future as a second chance, as it were, for herself: not only does she transfer her hope onto her friend but she also seems to assign to Anna the responsibility of showing the world that reason can triumph over passion and that women can indeed lead virtuous and exemplary lives.<sup>84</sup> Similarly, Lovelace, before departing for the continent, generously affirms and encourages Belford on his newly chosen path: "Taking me aside, and clasping his arms about me, 'Adieu, dear Belford! said he: may you proceed in the course you have entered upon! ... I hope rather to follow your example than to ridicule you for it'" (1463; IV. 486-87). Belford's new mode of existence seems to represent for Lovelace the life he also desires but which he finds too difficult to achieve for himself. Since both pairs appear to be complementary -- Clarissa's is the meditative and spiritual side and Anna's the pragmatic and secular, while Lovelace's exuberance is balanced by Belford's hesitancy -- Richardson's solution to their separation seems to consist of the distribution of these

character traits among those who remain alive. Anna becomes sufficiently subdued to accept Hickman, who would have made a perfect husband for Clarissa and who now perhaps constitutes her replacement, whereas Belford adopts Lovelace's life of constant activity, redirecting it, however, into his unceasing efforts toward moral improvement. In the end, Richardson seems to opt for replacing friendship by marriage rather than showing that a combination or a union of the two is possible. His conclusion thus confirms the tragic mode of the novel and conveys a sense of futility.

Richardson's attempts to depict a noble friendship between women (the kind of relationship which had until then been only conceivable in men), and also to expose and undermine the notion of a lasting friendship among rakes end on an uncertain note because he fails to take either of his projects to its logical conclusion. Instead, he establishes similarities between the two friendships, thus subverting the particular nature of each of them. By having the two friendships converge, however, he also brings the two main characters whom he had clearly designed as opposites closer together. Indeed, it seems that both protagonists are so dear to the author's heart that he cannot let go completely of either of them. But since he is also under the pressure of having to deliver the moral vision he announced in his initial plan, Richardson must sacrifice friendship for the sake of marriage, that is, the form of living which is socially more acceptable. By concluding his novel with Anna's marriage to a man for whom she has little respect and with the soon-to-be-expected connection between a reformed rake and a virtuous young woman, Richardson may have returned to the place he started from.

## V. Richardson and the Burden of Authorship

Richardson: "I write to carry myself out of myself; and am not quite so happy, when, tired with my peregrinations, I am obliged to return home" (Correspondence, III, 190-191)

In his novel Clarissa, Richardson presents us with the voices and perspectives of members of opposite sexes and different classes. While Richardson's desire to create a sense of genuineness and immediacy through the use of first-person narrative perhaps may be attributed to his own background, his success in conveying moments of introspection as well as psychological depth and variety in his characters through confessional modes of writing and the technique of "writing-to-the-moment" has to be seen in the context of the literary developments of the time. Intellectually limited by the lack of a classical education and socially restricted by his affiliation with a class which only gained political importance during the late seventeenth century, Richardson was in many ways deprived of the opportunity of discovering and investigating new worlds. Because of his immense curiosity about the lives of others, in particular those of women, he embarked upon imaginary voyages which took him far beyond the confines of his own existence as a shy, taciturn, and hypochondriac middle-class printer in London and returned him with fascinating fictional works which inspired and invigorated subsequent novelists. Richardson's pioneering accomplishments in establishing the psychological novel were also aided from the outside, especially by

the growing interest in the construction and representation of subjectivity in literature as well as the incorporation of confessional modes of writing in public discourses. Early periodicals, for instance, such as John Dunton's Athenian Mercury, contributed significantly to the introduction and dissemination of private concerns when they either invited their readers to talk about themselves in "letters to the editor" or presented their own constructions of subjectivity in the form of fabricated correspondence or "authentic" accounts of personal experiences.<sup>85</sup> Since these early periodicals, together with contemporary fictional biographies and autobiographies, diaries, and collections of letters, spoke predominantly on behalf of the middle classes and increasingly turned their attention to the concerns of women, they laid the foundation for Richardson's own exploration in his novels of the individual caught between the public and the private, between the concern for others and the care for the self, and between the requirements of society and the demands of a narrow domestic environment.

Combining subjectivity and elements of the confessional with the epistolary genre, Richardson was able to use literature as a medium of instruction, while, at the same time, writing himself (or the many selves within him). He employed the different voices of his letter writers, often depicted as opposites, not only to discuss various moral issues (through which he tried to direct his readers to a desirable end) but also for his private pleasure, since his particular narrative approach enabled him to be different, to be someone else, through the very process of writing. Occasionally, however, Richardson lost himself in his fictional world, merged with the characters he had created, and thus neglected the didactic aims he had set for himself. Although

Clarissa is the one persona, for whom the author expressed most sympathy, both in his work and during his life, Richardson did not restrict his mental “peregrinations” (Correspondence, III, 190) to this character only.<sup>86</sup> He did not indulge himself in a simple form of authorial cross-dressing, that is, the mere appropriation of a female voice, in order to express either his feelings of inferiority concerning his social class or his apprehensions about disease, as some critics have argued,<sup>87</sup> but went far beyond that. In fact, Richardson’s own letters reveal the extent to which the author adopted the roles which he had given his characters earlier on, that is, the degree to which he tried to shape his reality in the image of his fiction. His correspondence with Lady Bradshaigh (“Belfour”), for example, appears to have provided him with an incredible amount of mental excitement, as it presented him with a flesh-and-blood, forward and argumentative Anna Howe: “I love Miss Howe next to Clarissa,” Richardson told his epistolary friend, “and I see very evidently in your letters that you are the twin-sister of that lady” (Correspondence, IV, 194). The bellicose personality of “Belfour” enabled the author to answer in the voice of either one of his protagonists or to come to their defence. As a result of his oral impersonations, his own position may at times have appeared confusing and contradictory. For example, he responded to Belfour’s pleas for Lovelace and her demands for a happy ending by denouncing his rake as “wicked, ...intriguing, [and] revengeful ...wretch,” whose character he had decided to throw into “deeper shades” (Correspondence, IV, 233-234), and justifying his own solution as the best possible: “Clarissa has the greatest of triumphs even in this world, the greatest, I will venture to say, even in and after the outrage, and

because of the outrage, that ever woman had" (Correspondence, IV, 224-225). But he also expressed, at other times, his sympathy with Lovelace, not only in a surprising defence of the libertine in a letter to his friend, Edward Moore -- "Let me ask -- Have you read Lovelace's Bad, and not his Good? -- Or, does the abhorrence which you have for that Bad, make you forget that he has any Good?" (Selected Letters, 89) -- but also in the occasional appropriation of the rake's voice when he tries to provoke his female correspondents with Lovelacean sarcasm.<sup>88</sup>

Probably unaware of his own identification with his characters, the "moral" as well as the "immoral," Richardson found it difficult to reconcile himself to the gap between his authorial intentions and the actual reception of his novel. Since Lady Bradshaigh was the one who dared to be most critical with the author, Richardson vented much of his irritation with his readers on her:

Why, I attempted to draw a good woman; and the poor phantom has set half her own sex against her. The men more generally admire her, indeed, because bad men, as I have quoted above from Lovelace, admire good women. But with some of the sex she is a prude; with others a coquet; with more a saucy creature, whose life, manners, and maxims, are affronts to them.

(Correspondence, IV, 82)

Accusing women of their lack of understanding and commending men on their favourable reaction to his weak, progressively declining female protagonist, Richardson revealed his own prejudices which were informed by centuries of dichotomous constructions and representations of woman as either angel or whore. After having presented his own male fantasy, that of the perfect, pure virgin, whose body is the centre of value and yet without value and whom he redeems by leading her to destruction and death, Richardson, who had often shown great sympathy for and

understanding of women, failed to comprehend the criticism of some of his female readers who refused to see Clarissa as an exemplary woman, worthy of imitation.

Lady Bradshaigh's angry comment upon finishing her reading of Clarissa shows one of the directions which subsequent critics also took:

But it is all over. And now I shall fall upon you, for drawing such an irreclaimable monster [Lovelace], and giving such a lover to Clarissa, that her matchless excellence could not have the power to reform. (There I think the glory you designed our sex sinks a little). (Correspondence, IV, 245)

Clarissa embodies perfection, physical and moral, and yet she paradoxically gains this perfection, and the reputation accorded to it, only through the loss of her physical integrity. Although increasingly perceived as angelic and saint-like, she also displays problematic aspects of her character when she extends her power beyond death (and the ending of the work) by bringing ruin on Lovelace and the Harlowes (and sowing dissent among her readers).

Although Richardson clearly intended to present a transparent work of art and never ceased to instruct his friends and his audience in the "meaning" of his novel, many questions remain. Some of the contradictions and ambiguities inherent in this novel are brought to the fore in, and through, those works which are written in the tradition of Clarissa. Apparently influenced by Richardson's characterization of his female paragon, his treatment of the body as both elusive and ever-present, and his specific forms of the care for the self and for others, later novelists, such as La Roche, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, and Wollstonecraft, reacted to their predecessor in various ways: they followed Richardson's example and appropriated what they perceived as exceptional and worth imitating; they engaged in a dialogue with the author by



modifying and questioning his work and producing creative variations on his themes;  
or they took a critical stance toward the novel and offered new solutions to issues  
Richardson had raised.

1. Only in his next novel, Sir Charles Grandison, will Richardson succeed in presenting his ideal man. This will be accomplished, however, at the cost of creating an unrealistically perfect and rather dreary male protagonist.
2. See Terry Castle's Clarissa's Ciphers: Meaning and Disruption in Richardson's 'Clarissa' (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982) and Terry Eagleton's The Rape of Clarissa: Writing, Sexuality, and Class Struggle in Samuel Richardson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982).
3. William Beatty Warner, Reading "Clarissa": The Struggles of Interpretation (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979).
4. Note, in particular, the correspondence between Richardson and Lady Bradshaigh (volume IV of Anna Laetitia Barbauld's The Correspondence of Samuel Richardson, 6 vols. [London: Lewis and Roden, 1804]), in which the tragic ending of the novel repeatedly forms the centre of discussion. Lady Bradshaigh, clearly fond of Lovelace, wishes to see him as the reformed husband of Clarissa (IV, 180-181), while Richardson is very adamant in his belief that Lovelace should not be rewarded for his dismal actions (IV, 180).
5. See Lawrence Stone's The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800 (New York: Harper & Row, 1977). Stone argues that, owing to growing individualism and the Protestant notion of "holy matrimony," rigid parental intrusion into and domination over children's selection of marriage partners did not persist beyond the turn of the century among the bourgeoisie. David Blewett, in his article, "Changing Attitudes toward Marriage in the Time of Defoe: The Case of Moll Flanders," The Huntington Library Quarterly, Vol. XLIV, No. 2 (Spring 1981), 77-88, shows that, owing to moralists such as the Rev. Dr. William Fleetwood, "an important shift from the old patriarchal family structure to a new view of the family which accorded greater personal liberty to individuals" (82) had occurred by the early eighteenth century.
6. I am thinking of comedies, such as As You Like It and Twelfth Night. In the middle section of these plays, that is, during a marked phase of emotional and physical upheaval (processus turbarum), characters knowingly and willingly overturn accepted codes of conduct. For instance, women may be tempted to play the roles of men (Rosalind; Viola). Eventually, they return to their previous status, often, however, after having achieved a significant personal or social change.
7. Andrew J. Scheiber, in his article, "'Between me and myself': Writing as Strategy and Theme in Clarissa" Texas Studies in Literature and Language, 1988 Winter, 30 (4), 496-509, points out the Clarissa's correspondence with Anna may well represent "a rival code, a subversive discourse, [and a form of] resistance" (500).
8. Lovelace claims to have caught a cold while waiting for a letter from Clarissa (261;

- I. 314-15), and later takes drugs in order to become ill and attract her attention (673-677; II. 427-36).
9. Clarissa, clearly sceptical of Lovelace's professions of love, writes to Anna: "What will not these men say to obtain belief, and a power over one" (171). Shortly after the elopement, she blames herself and seems to admit that she had succumbed to seduction: "Fie upon me! for meeting with the seducer!" (398; I. 509). Both statements indicate that Clarissa is capable of recognizing Lovelace for what he is.
10. Clarissa's fear of Sinclair after the rape -- she is terrified of the woman, much more so than of Lovelace, -- may indicate that the old prostitute was actively involved in the forced act. For an interesting view on this topic see Judith Wilt's article, "He Could Go No Farther: A Modest Proposal about Lovelace and Clarissa," PMLA, 92 (January 1977), 19-32.
11. Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality: Volume I: An Introduction (New York: Random House, 1978), pp. 92-94.
12. Richardson made substantial changes in later editions of his novel, not only in order to improve the style but also in order to direct his readers' interpretation of his two protagonists. William Warner, in his study, Reading "Clarissa": The Struggles of Interpretation (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979) discusses in detail the author's attempts to impose his understanding of Clarissa on contemporary readers. See also Shirley Van Marter's, "Richardson's Revisions of Clarissa in the Second Edition," Studies in Bibliography 26 (1973), 107-132, and her article, "Richardson's Revisions of Clarissa in the Third and Fourth Editions," Studies in Bibliography 28 (1975), 119-152.
13. See Michel Foucault's study, The Care of the Self: Volume 3 of The History of Sexuality (New York: Random House, 1986), for an extensive analysis of technologies of the self during the first two centuries A.D.
14. Richardson elaborates on this technique in his preface to Clarissa, emphasizing the element of immediacy: "the letters on both sides are written while the hearts of the writers must be supposed to be wholly engaged in their subjects: the events at the time generally dubious -- so that they abound not only with critical situations, but with what may be called instantaneous descriptions and reflections" (35; I. xiv).
15. In his preface to Clarissa, Richardson points out that it was one of his main intentions "to caution ...children against preferring a man of pleasure to a man of probity, upon that dangerous but too commonly received notion, that a reformed rake makes the best husband" (36). Richardson also repeatedly remarked on rakes in his correspondence. For instance, he told Lady Bradshaigh, who wished to see Lovelace and Clarissa happily married, that "there cannot be a more pernicious notion, than that which is so commonly received, that a reformed rake makes the best husband"

(Correspondence, IV, 190). William Law, the Anglican clergyman, emphasizes the importance of Christian humility: “let the world have nothing to view of you but the plainness, the sincerity, and humility of all your behaviour” (Serious Call, 271). Similarly, Lewis Bayly, in his treatise, The Practice of Piety, urges his followers to display humility in order to take proper care of their souls: “by our serious humiliation, and judging, of our selves, we may escape the Judgement of the Lord” (296).

16. Terry Castle, in her study, Clarissa’s Ciphers: Meaning and Disruption in Richardson’s “Clarissa” (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1982) argues that Clarissa only pretends to be in love with Lovelace because Anna wishes to see her in this romantic situation. Castle further holds that, as a result of her role playing, Clarissa does eventually really fall in love with him (78). Clarissa, however, informs Anna of her decision to surprise her family by the strategical move on her part to concede a preference for Lovelace (Richardson, 136; L. 136), but later repeatedly admits that she liked Lovelace more than any other man (1341, IV. 306; 1427, IV. 437).

17. See Janet Butler’s article, “The Garden: Early Symbol of Clarissa’s Complicity,” Studies in English Literature 24 (1984), 527-44, for an extensive analysis of Clarissa’s contradictory behaviour at the garden gate.

18. In his third edition of Clarissa, Richardson did not retain this quotation.

19. In several letters, Richardson rejects the rake. To Hester Mulso, for instance, he writes that “very many young women, in the article of marriage, though not before thought to be depraved, are taken by this green sickness of the soul, and prefer dirt and rubbish to wholesome diet” (Correspondence, III, 180). See also footnote no. 16.

20. Richard Allestree, for instance, in his Whole Duty of Man (London, 1658), suggests the following measures in order to maintain a state of chastity: “Fly temptation rather than fight with it, ...fly idleness, ...avoid depraved company, [and] pray to God to give you the spirit of purity” (165).

21. See Allestree’s comment on the volatile point of transition from purity to sinfulness on p. 100 of this study.

22. In several of his sermons, Richard Allestree, following Matthew, 6. 22-23, places his emphasis on the eye as “the light of the body” (see especially sermon 18 in Forty Sermons [London, 1655]) and concludes: “if thy heart be single and sincere, thy intentions be right to God, if in all thy actions thou intend his service and Glory, that thy good meaning will derive a goodness into all thy doings, thy whole body will be full of light, all thy actions holy” (248).

23. See the interview with Foucault entitled, "The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom," printed in James William Bernauer and David S. Rasmussen, eds., The Final Foucault (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988), p. 7.

24. When moving into her lodgings at Mrs Sinclair's, Clarissa is glad to find several copies of devotional literature in her room (525-6; II. 194-95). Lovelace, in turn, appears to be widely read in the works of ancient misogynist writers (429; II. 39).

25. Clarissa, in a severe crisis after she receives the letter of advice from her cousin Morden, blames herself: "One devious step at setting out! -- That must be it: which pursued, has let me so far out of my path that I am in a wilderness of doubt and error; and never, never shall find my way out of it" (566; II. 262-63).

26. Instead of trying to change his ways, Lovelace visits his relatives in order find diversion but only encounters more boredom: "I begin not to know what to do with myself here -- Tired with Lord M., who in his recovery has played upon me the fable of the nurse, the crying child, and the wolf -- tired with my cousins Montague, though charming girls, were they not so near of kin -- tired with Mowbray and Tourville, and their everlasting identity -- tired with the country -- tired of myself: longing for what I have not; I must go to town; and there have an interview with the charmer of my soul: for desperate diseases must have desperate remedies" (1149-1150; IV. 43). Although he is clearly in a crisis, his words suggest that there is not much hope for a decided change in him.

27. Clarissa's attitude toward the balance of both body and soul seems to be based on an ambiguous message disseminated by contemporary moralists, which required both the rejection of and the attention to the body and its desires. The seventeenth-century divine, Richard Allestree, explained that it only takes a small step in the wrong direction for a woman to forfeit her good reputation (see p. 100 of this thesis) and that she therefore has to watch her body at all times, and the Anglican clergyman, William Law, pointed out that the attention given to the body and its integrity has to be accompanied by the suppression of its natural needs and desires (for citation of the relevant passage, see endnote no. 42 of this chapter). While both writers exhibit an utterly negative view of the body, Law at least seems to recommend strict care for the body, if only to reject it later in favour of the soul.

28. See Ion Stratton's The Virgin Text: Fiction, Sexuality, and Ideology, (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), for a discussion of the subtleties of the concept of virginity in bourgeois ideology. Stratton argues that "virginity in the woman ...is determined not by the having of something, as demonstrated by the unruptured hymen, but by the act of the male." He adds that "the problem arises of demonstrating not that something has happened but that it has not" (18).

29. See Cynthia Griffin Wolff's Samuel Richardson and the Eighteenth-Century Puritan Character (Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1972) and Rita Goldberg's Sex and Enlightenment: Women in Richardson and Diderot (Cambridge, London, and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984). Both studies emphasize Clarissa's desire to put her story in the tradition of the saints' lives.

30. In her article, "Female Orders of Narrative: Clarissa and The Italian," in J. Douglas Canfield and J. Paul Hunter, eds., Rhetorics of Order / Ordering Rhetorics in English Neoclassical Literature (London and Toronto: Associated University Press, 1989), pp. 158-172, Patricia Meyer Spacks speaks of Clarissa's "self-aggrandizing uses of piety" (165) and argues that the young woman puts herself consciously and strategically in the tradition of the martyr saint: "Clarissa's strategy ...derives force from its exploitation of the social gap between profession and practice" (163).

31. In his Considerations upon Eternitie, Drexelius presents the "worm of conscience" as one of the main forms of torment in hell. This "worm," during the individual's lifetime only a state of mind, becomes, after death, a literal thing and constitutes a never-ending torture for the sinner: "their worm dies not," Drexelius says, and "thou shalt not shake off the Worm, that has now begun to gnaw thee" (101). In his treatise, Holy Dying, Jeremy Taylor, offers a similar warning in the form of an example from ancient mythology. He speaks of the ghastly sight of Cleomenes, a sinner: after his death, "a serpent grew out of his body, and wrapt itself about his head ...it presents the condition of some men, who being dead are esteemed saints and beatified persons when their head is encircled with dragons, and is entered in the possessions of Devils, that old serpent and deceiver; For indeed their life was secretly so corrupted, that such serpents fed upon the ruines of the spirit, and the decayes of grace and reason" (60-61).

32. See the preface to the third edition of Clarissa (Everyman's Library, 4 vols., London: Dent and Sons, 1962), xiii. Interestingly, Richardson seems to have added this statement only to the third edition of his novel, perhaps because he realized that the reception of his work was not according to his expectations.

33. Preface to the third edition of Clarissa (Everyman's Library, 4 vols., London: Dent and Sons, 1962), xiv.

34. See in particular Anne Robinson Taylor's Male Novelists and Their Female Voices: Literary Masquerades (Troy, New York: Whitston, 1981), in which the author argues that Richardson explores through Clarissa, "a woman who loses her mind and body, ...the disintegration of the self as we know it" (58).

35. See John Mullan's article, "Hypochondria and Hysteria: Sensibility and the Physicians," The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation, 25 (1984), 141-174, on nervous sensibility and Richardson, and Raymond Stephanson's study, "Richardson's 'Nerves': The Physiology of Sensibility in Clarissa," Journal of the

History of Ideas, 49, no. 2 (1988), 267-285, for an extensive application of eighteenth-century theories on nerves to Richardson's novel.

36. Richardson clearly endows Lovelace with a strong sado-masochistic inclination: in a repetitive fashion, the libertine derives great pleasure from subjecting Clarissa to mental and, at times, physical cruelties which then evoke in him pity for her as well as protestations of mending his ways, until, soon afterwards, he is driven again to repeat his attacks. For instance, during an episode in which she tries to harm herself with scissors, Clarissa begs Lovelace for mercy while, "wildly looking all around her" (725; II. 504), she also urges him to kill her. Lovelace delights in her fear and helplessness: "Her struggles! Oh what additional charms, as I now reflect, did her struggles give to every feature, every limb, of a person so sweetly elegant and lovely!" (726; II. 505).

37. Lovelace, placing himself in the role of a doctor, cynically justifies the unfair methods he employed in order to achieve Clarissa's physical submission: "I know thou wilt blame me for having had recourse to art. But do not physicians prescribe opiates in acute cases, where the violence of the disorder would be apt to throw the patient into a fever or delirium" (896; III. 213-14).

38. See Francis Barker's The Tremulous Private Body: Essays on Subjection (London and New York: Methuen, 1984) for a fascinating analysis of the simultaneously present and absent bourgeois body.

39. See Marlene Le Gates' article, "The Cult of Womanhood in Eighteenth-Century Thought," Eighteenth-Century Studies, 10 (1976), 21-39.

40. See Richard Blackmore's Treatise of the Spleen and Vapours: or, Hypochondriacal and Hysterical Affections (London, 1725), pp. 26-28. Blackmore explains that the hypochondriac's days are "varied and chequered with black and white, calm and stormy" (28). He further points out that individuals afflicted with this ailment are "incapable of being long pleased with the same Company, (the same Abode, the same Friends,) and the same happy circumstances" and therefore "pursue a Variety of objects, and pant and gasp after new Enjoyments: which when acquired, grow soon stale and disagreeable, like the former" (28).

41. See Robert A. Erickson's article, "'Written in the Heart': Clarissa and Scripture," Eighteenth-Century Fiction, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Oct. 1989), 17-52.

42. William Law clearly rejects the body as a constant source of danger to the well-being of one's soul: "As to your bodies, you are to consider them as poor, perishing things that are sickly and corrupt at present and will soon drop into the common dust. You are to watch over them as enemies that are always trying to tempt and betray you, and so never follow their advice and counsel" (Serious Call, 270-271). Drexelius, for instance, presents in his Considerations upon Eternitie horrifying images of hell, in the tradition of Dante's Inferno, in which the body is shown as being affected in

various ways: "there the damned inhabit fiery sties full of the most noisom stink, and that for ever, ...there they have neither a crumb nor drop to satisfie their hunger and thirst, they hunger and thirst, and that for ever. ...there shall be weeping but tearless, there shall be gnashing of teeth but fruitless, and that for ever. ...the most hateful society of the damned, and all the devils must be indur'd and that for ever. ...There their hearts are rent with continual despair, and that for ever. ...There fire is their bed and they never sleep and that for ever" (9-10). Jeremy Taylor, in his Holy Dying, speaks of the "whole body of sin" (57) which has to be prepared for death. He sees sickness as an opportunity to prepare the soul for immortality: "Then the flesh sits uneasily and dwells with sorrow, and then the spirit feels it self at ease" (86).

43. Drexelius (or the publisher of his book) presents rather graphic images of hell, probably to frighten his readers into a change of conduct. Each section of his work is introduced by a plate, showing various torments in hell. One of these illustration gives an image of the "worm of conscience" (plate facing p. 97): snake-like worms are wrapping themselves around the bodies of the damned and sometimes piercing through them. All the while, the tormented sinners are surrounded by flames.

44. Richardson writes to Lady Bradshaigh: "There cannot be a more pernicious notion, than that which is so commonly perceived, that a reformed rake makes the best husband" (Correspondence, IV, 190).

45. See Margaret Anne Doody's study, A Natural Passion: A Study in the Novels of Samuel Richardson, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), especially her chapter on Richardson's variations on dying.

46. See the preface to the third edition of Clarissa (Everyman's Library, 4 vols., London: Dent and Sons, 1962), xiv. Furthermore, in a letter to Miss Mulso, Richardson writes: "I laid indeed a heavy hand on the good Clarissa. But I had begun with her, with a view to the future saint in her character; and could she but by sufferings, shine as she does?" (Correspondence, Vol. III, 198).

47. Early on, Clarissa complains about Lovelace to Anna: "I used then to say, and I am still of opinion, that he wants a heart; and if he does, he wants everything. A wrong head may be convinced, may have a right turn given it: but who is able to give a heart, if a heart be wanting?" (184; I. 202). Later, she tells "Tomlinson," in Lovelace's presence: "There is not a creature of my sex, who would have been more explici, and more frank, than I would have been, from the moment I intended to be his, had I had a heart like my own to deal with" (842-3; III. 138).

48. Ever since his first acquaintance with Clarissa, Lovelace displays an inclination of seeing and admiring the young woman's body according to individual parts of it: "such a constant glow upon her lovely features; eyes so sparkling; limbs so divinely turned; health so florid; youth so blooming; air so animated (145; I. 148); ...Her wax-like flesh ...by its delicacy and firmness, answers for the soundness of her health. ...I



have never in my life beheld a skin so illustriously fair. The lily and the driven snow it is nonsense to talk of: her lawn and her laces one might, indeed, compare to those; but what a whited wall would a woman appear to be, who had a complexion which would justify such unnatural comparisons?" (399; I. 511).

48. Clarissa's eventual death, for instance, is alluded to from the beginning. Initially, she seems to wish for death mainly for the rhetorical purpose of making an impression on whoever listens to her or reads her letters: "I had rather be buried alive, indeed I had, than have that man!" (101; I. 187), Clarissa says, and "But death will I choose, in any shape, rather than that man" (180; I. 196). Increasingly, however, she is serious about it. For example, she appears to have misgivings about leaving Harlowe Place: "My heart strongly gives me, that once I am compelled to leave this house, I never shall see it more" (252; I. 303). Also, early on, Anna recommends to Clarissa to write down in detail whatever happens: "If anything unhappy should fall out from the violence of such spirits as you have to deal with, your account of all things previous to it will be your justification" (40; I. 2).

50. When Lovelace tells Belford, "I am the enemv of her soul, as well as of her honour!" (760; III. 24), he refers not only to Clarissa's fears for her moral and spiritual state, should she decide to accept the rake, but also to her specific fear of coming to any bodily harm through her association with him. For an explanation of the sexual connotations of the word "honour," see Rita Goldberg's Sex and Enlightenmenv: Women in Richardson and Diderot (Cambridge, London, and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 74.

51. In the eighteenth century, the word "person" was not restricted to the meaning of "individual" but also carried the connotations of "body" and "physical appearance". Samuel Johnson, for instance, in his Dictionary of the English Language (1755), lists "exteriour appearance" as one of several definitions (s.v. "person") and the Oxford English Dictionary presents the followig explanation: "a human ...being considered in reference to bodily figure or appearance" (s.v. "person").

52. See especially Marlene LeGates' article, "The Cult of Womanhood in Eighteenth-Century Thought," Eighteenth-Century Studies, 10 (1976), 21-39; John Richetti's study, "The Portrayal of Women in Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Literature," in Marlene Springer, ed., What Manner of Woman: Essays on English and American Life and Literature (New York: New York University Press, 1977), pp. 65-97; and Vivien Jones' anthology, Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity (London and New York: Routledge, 1990).

53. Confronted with a passionate Lovelace, Clarissa is quite taken aback, experiencing both fear and disgust: "The man, my dear, looked quite ugly -- I never saw a man look so ugly, as passion made him look ...And he so grasped my hands -- fierce creature! He so grasped my hands!" (643; II. 377). Clarissa's words clearly indicate her apprehensions about sexuality.

54. On the reception of Clarissa's ambiguous letter, Lovelace assumes that she is pregnant. He thus attributes her strange behaviour to physical causes and suggests to Belford that the young woman has probably decided to return home so "that she may set the better face upon her gestation when at her father's" (1239; IV. 165). Believing her pregnant, Mrs Harlowe voices a common notion when she fears that her daughter's sinful and immoral behaviour may have consequences for her offspring: "She may be with child! --This would perpetuate her stain" (1156; IV. 51). Other members of her family also try to reduce Clarissa to her bodily functions: "You may well grieve and repent! -- Lovelace has left you! -- In what way or circumstances you know best" (1160; IV. 56), Arabella insults her sister, and her uncle, John Harlowe questions her impudently: "Your mother can't ask, and your sister knows not in modesty how to ask; and so I ask you, if you have any reason to think yourself with child by this villain?" (1192; IV. 100).

55. In his correspondence, Richardson is repeatedly condescending to and patronising of the women who favour him with letters. "'Happy, happy.' That is such a word with you chits" (III, 214), he writes to Hester Mulso, and "Let him find flattery, and she will find credulity. Sweet souls! can they be always contradicting?" (III, 179).

56. See in particular Caroline Walker Bynum's Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1987) for extensive information on the history of virgin martyrs and saints.

57. Belford also scolds his friend: "How many opportunities must thou have had of admiring her inestimable worth, yet couldst have thy senses so much absorbed in the WOMAN in her charming person as to be blind to the ANGEL that shines out in such full glory in her mind?" (1299; IV. 248).

58. See also Terry Castle's Clarissa's Ciphers: Meaning and Disruption in Richardson's "Clarissa" (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1982).

59. See the preface to the third edition of Clarissa (Everyman's Library, 4 vols., London: Dent and Sons, 1962), in which Richardson points out that it was his aim "to investigate the highest and most important doctrines not only of morality, but of christianity, by showing them thrown into action in the conduct of the worthy characters; while the unworthy, who set these doctrines at defiance, are condignly, and, as may be said, consequentially, punished" (xv).

60. There is, of course, the possibility that Richardson knew what he was doing when he embarked on his ambiguous treatment of gender-related conduct. Madeleine Kahn suggests in her book, Narrative Transvestism: Rhetoric and Gender in Eighteenth-Century English Fiction (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), that some of Richardson's letters indicate that the author occasionally allowed a character to dominate and control his life. However, if Richardson really had such a deep

understanding of himself and if he then still tried to direct readers to moral issues, he clearly played a game and displayed a hypocritical attitude.

61. In the concluding scene of his comedy, The Taming of the Shrew, Shakespeare appears to suggest that perhaps Katharina is only playing the role of the obedient wife in order to humour Petrucchio. Since Bianca, the subdued and angelic young woman, transforms into a shrew after her wedding, Katharina, displaying “masculine” behaviour throughout the play, is in the end able to control her passions without having to change substantially.

62. Roxana argues, in a dialogue with herself, against a new marriage: “I knew ...that it was my Misfortune to be a Woman, but I was resolv’d it shou’d not be made worse by the Sex; and seeing Liberty seem’d to be the Men’s Property, I wou’d be a Man-Woman; for as I was born free, I wou’d die so” (212).

63. In various discourses, women were regarded monsters if they stepped outside of the boundaries of their gender. In his Sermons to Young Women (1766), for example, Dr James Fordyce, called them “monstrous”: “A masculine woman must be an unamiable creature ...any young woman of better rank, that throws off all the lovely softness of her nature, and emulates the daring intrepid temper of a man -- how terrible!” (Jones, 23).

64. Clarissa is astonished about her sister’s opposition to her which she attributes to fundamental gender-related flaws in her character: “she has been thought to be masculine in her air, and in her spirit. She has then, perhaps, a soul of the other sex in a body of ours. And so, for the honour of our own, will I judge of every woman for the future who, imitating the rougher manners of men, acts unbeseeming the gentleness of her own sex” (309-310; I. 386-87). Similarly, she is “frighted at [Sinclair’s] masculine air, and fierce look” (882; III. 195) and reacts especially negatively to her after the rape (during which Sinclair was present).

65. See especially p. 100 for comments made on this subject by Richard Allestree and Wetenhall Wilkes.

66. In his third edition of Clarissa Richardson did not retain this passage.

67. For further information on Richardson’s life see the following biographies of the author: Eaves and Kimpel’s Samuel Richardson: A Biography (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971) and Carol Houlihan Flynn’s Samuel Richardson: A Man of Letters (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982). In her study, The Bluestocking Circle: Women, Friendship and the Life of the Mind in Eighteenth-Century England (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), Sylvia Myers Harestark discusses some of the women who were friends of Richardson.

68. Richardson draws on the comedies and heroic plays of the Restoration, as Lovelace's repeated references to Dryden and other playwrights of that period indicate. He and Clarissa visit a performance of Otway's Venice Preserv'd, the action of which may serve as a foil to their own relationship. For a more detailed discussion of literary influences on Richardson's portrayal of his libertine, see Doody's chapter on the rake in her study, A Natural Passion: A Study in the Novels of Samuel Richardson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974). The living model for Lovelace is, of course, Lord Rochester, the infamous seventeenth-century rake.

69. See Jocelyn Harris' "Protean Lovelace," Eighteenth-Century Fiction, Vol. 2, No. 4 (1990), 327-346, and James Grantham Turner's "Lovelace and the Paradoxes of Libertinism," in Margaret Anne Doody and Peter Sabor, eds., Samuel Richardson: Tercentenary Essays (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 70-88.

70. Richardson admits to have fallen in love with his own creation: "Nor can I go through some of the Scenes myself without being sensibly touched (Did I not say, that I was another Pygmalion?)" (Letters, 90).

71. In most of the important studies on the rake, Richardson's Lovelace is depicted as the eighteenth-century libertine par excellence, that is, he constitutes a very accomplished stage in the development of the vicious rake of the Restoration. See, for instance, John Traugott's "The Rake's Progress from Court to Comedy: A Study in Comic Form" (Studies in English Literature 6 [1966], 381-407), Robert D. Hume's The Rakish Stage: Studies in English Drama, 1660-1800 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983), and Harold Weber's The Restoration Rake-Hero: Transformations in Sexual Understanding in Seventeenth-Century England (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986).

72. Lovelace puts much of the blame for Clarissa's rape on the women of the infernal house, who urged him to commit the act of violence: "A bad woman is certainly ...more terrible to her own sex, than even a bad man" (935; III. 268), he says about Sinclair. Both Clarissa's fear of Sinclair -- Lovelace describes the young woman as "visibly terrified at the sight of the old wretch" (935; III. 268), -- and Sinclair's condescending behaviour toward Clarissa after the rape seem to confirm his claim that the prostitutes were involved in the rape. For an interesting view on this subject see Judith Wilt's article, "He Could Go No Farther: A Modest Proposal about Lovelace and Clarissa," PMLA, 92 (January 1977), 19-32, which argues that an impotent Lovelace could not have committed the rape and that therefore the culprits must be sought among the women present during the crime.

73. Correspondence, IV, 233-234.

74. In his study, Reading 'Clarissa': The Struggles of Interpretation (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), William Warner builds much of his argument against Clarissa and for Lovelace on a number of key scenes, namely those episodes in

which the rake proposes to the young woman. He argues that those are the points in which the novel could have turned from tragedy into comedy and could therefore have had a happy ending.

75. When Clarissa's health is progressively deteriorating, owing to unknown causes but likely as a direct result of the rape, Lovelace asserts that he will die of a broken heart (1201; IV. 113). Echoing Clarissa's nightmare in which Lovelace stabs her and flings her into a pit, Richardson has his rake describe himself after the rape as "tumbling into the pit" (912; III. 236) and later ask his friend Belford to notify him of Clarissa's death which will then "stab [him] to the heart" (1303; IV. 254).

76. "There cannot be a more pernicious notion, than that which is so commonly received, that a reformed rake makes the best husband" (Correspondence, IV, 190).

77. For an extensive discussion of the notion of "holy matrimony" and its implications on marital relations in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, see Lawrence Stone's The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England, 1500-1800 (New York: Harper & Row, 1977).

78. Through marriage, husband and wife were, of course, considered one person. For more information, see, in particular, Sir William Blackstone's Commentaries on the Laws of England (1753) in which he cites the following statement concerning the legal union of married people: "By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being, or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband: under whose wing, protection, and cover, she performs every thing" (Jones, 112).

79. See the preface to the third edition of Clarissa, xiii.

80. See preface to third edition, xiii.

81. In order to strengthen his argument against Clarissa, William Warner, in his study, Reading "Clarissa": The Struggles of Interpretation (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), seems to see the two friendships as diametrically opposed. While granting the relationship between Lovelace and Belford elements of attachment and mutual affection, Warner deems Clarissa self-centred and "her friendship with Anna Howe chill and uninteresting" (39).

82. Endowing her with a heroic nature, as Lovelace notices (647; II. 384), Richardson now also puts her into a male tradition of friendship. This motion on the author's part may be an indication that Clarissa was perhaps closer to his heart than one should think.

83. Sir William Blackstone, Commentaries on the Laws of England (1753), in Vivien

Jones, ed., Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 112.

84. In her study, Women's Friendship in Literature (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), Janet Todd contends that "the dead Clarissa is manifested in the married Anna" (50) and thus rejects the possibility that an Anna who has adopted some of the character traits of her dead friend may well have found some happiness in her new state.

85. For an investigation of the representation of (female) subjectivity in early magazine literature see Kathryn Shevelow's Women and Print Culture: The Construction of Femininity in the Early Periodical (London and New York: Routledge, 1989). See also J. Paul Hunter's Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990).

86. In her article, "'Like Tiresias': Metamorphosis and Gender in Clarissa," Novel 19, no. 2 (Winter 1986), 101-117, Tassie Gwilliam argues that Richardson was divided between Clarissa and Lovelace (110), and William Warner, in his study, Reading "Clarissa": The Struggles of Interpretation (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), points out similarities between Richardson and Lovelace: "concealing himself behind a multitude of contradictory roles, [Richardson] alienates the text from himself so as to initiate a game that will involve every reader" (142).

87. In his "Narrative Cross-Dressing and the Critique of Authorship in the Novels of Richardson," in Elizabeth C. Goldsmith, ed., Writing the Female Voice: Essays on Epistolary Literature (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1989), pp. 95-113, James Carson argues that "Richardson identified with women in part because, given his position outside the social elite, he had been similarly denied educational opportunities" (101), and Anne Robinson Taylor, in her study, Male Novelists and Their Female Voices: Literary Masquerades (Troy, New York: Whitston, 1981) contends that Richardson, considering himself chronically ill, preferred to write from the perspective "of someone who is in a weakened state, a woman" (64).

88. Writing to Miss Highmore, the daughter of John Highmore, the painter, Richardson draws a daring comparison and echoes Lovelace (418-419; II, 22-23) in one of his most cynical moments: "But shall I not affront you, if I compare you girls to spiders? Here Arachne (we call the weaver) draws its web, spreads its snares; hangs up an entangled fly here; another there; a third, and a fourth, if she can get the buzzing insect into her purlieus; and then goes and turns one round, pats another, and enjoys her depredations as she pleases. But how miserably runs the recreant into her hole, when a powerful finger of some giant man brushes down or demolishes her cobweb! This may not exactly quadrate to any particular case; but it came into my head, and down it went" (Correspondence, II, 220-221). For further evidence of Richardson's appropriation of Lovelace's voice, see the discussion on Adam and Eve

(and their respective guilt in the fall), conducted between the author and Lady Bradshaigh over a period of several weeks (Correspondence, IV, 151-214).

## Chapter 4:

### Clarissa's Descendants: The Reception of Richardson's Novel on the Continent and in England (Selected Examples)

Dr. Young to Richardson:

Your Clarissa is, I find, the Virgin-mother of several pieces; which, like beautiful suckers, rise from her immortal root. ...Authors give works their merit; but others give them their fame; and it is their merit becoming famous, which gives them that salutary influence, which every worthy writer proposes, on mankind. (Correspondence, II, 27-27)

Owing both to his particular choice of themes and to the effective and impressive way in which he presented his fictional works, Richardson had an enormous impact on successive writers. Under the influence of Richardson and Rousseau -- the latter was, in many ways, a follower of the English writer -- many novelists of the second half of the eighteenth century turned to the description of morals and manners. Not only did domesticity, that is, the life of the small, familiar world, become central to their discussion of relationships and promote the treatment of the personal and private rather than the public, but it was also sentiments rather than events which became the centre of attention. Through his concentration on domestic life and familial relations, Richardson furthermore encouraged women to produce literary works, as he set an example which they could follow. While he demonstrated to them that a classical education, which he, and also most women, lacked, was no longer necessary in order to write admirable works, he opened the way for a treatment of concerns with which



they could identify and introduced, in his novels, themes for a discussion in which they felt the need to participate. In England, novelists such as Frances Burney, Sarah Fielding, Oliver Goldsmith, Henry Mackenzie, and eventually Jane Austen followed, to a greater or lesser extent, in Richardson's footsteps and continued with the author's emphasis on psychological aspects of characterization, the exploration of the problematic relationship between the sexes, and the concentration on the private and domestic rather than public life.

Shortly after their publication, Richardson's novels were translated into French and German, and then began to exert their influence on writers on the Continent. Novelists like Rousseau (La Nouvelle Héloïse), Marivaux (La Vie de Marianne), Laclos (Les Liaisons Dangereuses), or Diderot (La Religieuse) in France, and Gellert (Das Leben der schwedischen Gräfin von G.), Hermes (Miss Fanny Wilkes and Sophie), or Goethe (Werther) in Germany followed their English model,<sup>1</sup> either in the choice of their plots or their narrative techniques -- a number of them employed epistolary elements in their works, clearly after the fashion of Pamela and Clarissa -- their presentation of subjectivity, their close attention to the thoughts and feelings of their characters, and their concentration on aspects of morality and sentiment. The reception of Richardson's works took, of course, many different forms: successive writers, exposed to changing intellectual climates and political attitudes, objected to, experimented with, or modified ideas which Richardson had proposed. With the progress of time, the "Richardsonian novel," as one might call it, was first taken in the directions of sentimental, gothic, and romantic, and then back to realist writing. Male

characters, modelled on Sir Charles Grandison, emerge in novels, such as Frances Burney's Evelina (Lord Orville) or Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice (Darcy).<sup>2</sup> Remnants of the Clarissa figure can be detected in Dickens' Amy Dorrit (Little Dorrit), Stendhal's Clelia Conti (La Chartreuse de Parme), Dostoyevsky's Sonia Marmeladov (Crime and Punishment), or Thackeray's Amelia Sedley (Vanity Fair); and Richardson's contribution to the psychologization of fiction reaches as far as the novels of Henry James.

The following chapter will explore further those themes which have been dealt with in the previous sections of the thesis. My decision to concentrate on selected novels by Sophie von La Roche, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, and Mary Wollstonecraft has been influenced by the following considerations: rather than examining novels which have already been the subjects of extensive research, such as Rousseau's La Nouvelle Héloïse or Goethe's Werther, I chose to study works which are either lesser known or have been neglected as candidates for the succession to Clarissa. Also, I selected these novels because they are particularly suited for the study of such themes as friendship, subjectivity and (female) desire, the representation of the body, and techniques of caring for the self. Although the three works may seem, more or less, removed from Clarissa, they do possess elements which connect them, that is, they have common points of reference: while La Roche is clearly rewriting Richardson's novel in an ingenious way, as the structure of her plot suggests, Bernardin closely follows the English writer in the choice of his themes (virtue, modesty, bodily integrity, and veiled sexuality) and the creation of a moralistic and sentimental mood,

and Wollstonecraft explicitly places her female protagonist in opposition to Clarissa. Both women writers endow their heroines with their own first names -- Sophia and Mary respectively -- and thus seem to suggest that their creative acts of writing may also constitute ways of representing their selves, while for Bernardin the projection of Virginie involves an analysis and evaluation of the "other", that is, a new attempt by a male author to fashion woman according to his wishful thinking and confine her within a category. Hence the three novelists, all of whom were likely familiar with Richardson's oeuvre,<sup>3</sup> display three distinct ways of responding to their literary precursor: in his or her own subtle manner, each of them either repeats, rewrites, or rejects Richardson.

### The Suppression of Sexuality

Following the late seventeenth and eighteenth-century trend of marginalizing sexuality in non-fictional discourses, all three novelists are reluctant to analyse, in detail and with candour, aspects of desire, sensuality, and physicality, while conceding, at the same time, a place of importance to them, either as the motivating force in people's lives or as an obstacle, an element which brings about the fall of individuals. In Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's Paul et Virginie, the female protagonist's awakening to sexual desire implicitly constitutes the reason for the need to separate the children and hence for Virginie's departure, while it explicitly becomes the one thing which is not

to be talked about: “Madame de la Tour pénétrait bien la cause du mal de sa fille,” the narrator tells us, “mais elle n’osait elle-même lui en parler” (134). Instead, Virginie is advised to pray to God and remember her obligation to practise virtue, and Paul, eager to divine the cause of Virginie’s “mal” (134), is equally denied access to knowledge of the sexual functions of the human body. Both of them are deemed too young to be given information on and responsibility for their bodies and sexual conduct. It seems that considerations of the presentability of sexuality as a topic for discussion inform both characters and narrator/author who thus, in turn, endeavour to impose censorship and direction on those with whom they communicate. The rape of Sophia by her supposed husband, in La Roche’s Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim, for instance, or, in Wollstonecraft’s novel, Mary’s physical loathing of the man with whom she was forced into marriage and her desire for another, morally and spiritually more compatible, man are similarly relegated to the margins of the respective texts. Following closely in the tradition of Clarissa, all three novelists associate sexuality with depraved, immoral behaviour: La Roche, for example, depicts both the prince and the rake, Derby, clearly a kindred spirit of Lovelace, as desiring and hence profligate and morally despicable; sexuality poses the greatest danger for the aura of moral perfection with which Bernardin surrounds his Virginie; and it is arguably one of the main reasons which, for Wollstonecraft’s Mary, make any thought of her marriage unbearable. Yet the three writers are also dependent on the theme of sexuality, at least in the form of allusions, since it is this component which will enhance and complicate their plots. In La Roche’s novel, it is Sophia’s innocent, yet apparently compromising

conduct during a social gathering in the country -- like Clarissa, she leaves a garden at the wrong time and in the company of the wrong man -- which damages her reputation, since it suggests that she has willingly become the prince's mistress. This small step in the wrong direction allows Derby to exert his destructive influence on her and subject her to his sexual manipulations which amount to what could be called "a rape within 'marriage'". Derby proudly, and yet slightly disconcertedly, gives his friend in Paris an account of his successful conquest:

Ich schickte ihr Kammermensch weg, und bat sie, sich auf einen Augenblick zu entkleiden, um mich so glücklich zu machen, in ihr den Abdruck des ersten Meisterstücks der Natur zu bewundern. Schamröte überzog ihr ganzes Gesicht; aber sie versagte mir meine Bitte geradezu; ich drang in sie, und sie sträubte sich so lange, bis Ungeduld und Begierde mir eingaben ihre Kleidung vom Hals an durchzureißen, um auch wider ihren Willen zu meinem Endzweck zu gelangen. (222)

(I sent her chambermaid away and asked her to undress for a moment, to give me the pleasure of admiring in her the image of nature's first masterpiece. A blush of shame suffused her whole face. Furthermore, I received a flat refusal. I pressed her, but she resisted until my impatience and desire caused me to tear off her clothes from the neck down, and against her will I also accomplished my final purpose. [170])

The forced act clearly constitutes a gap in the novel, so much so that even critics are reluctant to comment on the rape and occasionally describe the violence as coldness on the part of Sophia who had, after all, married Derby, albeit reluctantly.<sup>4</sup> It also significantly changes the lives of the two people involved in it, inducing both a conversion and a lingering illness in the libertine and the rejection of the body as well as an attitude of all-encompassing altruism in the "ruined" woman. Here, as in many of the novels written in the tradition of Richardson, sexuality loses, in the course of

the work, its initial importance and is channelled into socially more acceptable conduct.

Through their insistence on the influence of the body and desire on the behaviour and way of thinking of individuals the three novels form discourses on sexuality, albeit in subtle, indirect ways. Sexuality may be central to plot and characterization but it exerts its impact through its absence rather than its presence. As Bernardin's novel shows, an atmosphere of virtuous innocence which greatly contributes to the presentation of a pastoral and sentimentally idyllic world may be created through the temporal and spatial transposition of sexuality: illicit or problematic sexual relationships are either relegated to the past -- the social disparity of their parents, for example, does, at one point, threaten the happiness and mutual understanding of Paul and Virginie, both of whom are the products of love and passion rather than reason and restraint -- they are moved into an unverifiable future, or transferred into imagery of nature. While Bernardin is willing to emphasize the closeness between Paul and Virginie in early childhood -- "La nuit même ne pouvait les séparer," the narrator tells us, "elle les suprenait souvent couchés dans le même berceau, joue contre joue, poitrine contre poitrine, les mains passées mutuellement autour de leurs cous, et endormis dans les bras l'un de l'autre" (89) -- he transfers allusions to sexuality onto surrounding nature, once the children have reached the age of puberty. For instance, two coconut-trees, planted when the children were born, suggest fertility:

Ils crurent tous deux, dans la même proportion que leurs jeunes maîtres, d'une hauteur un peu inégale, mais qui surpassait au bout de douze ans celle de leurs

cabanes. Déjà ils entrelaçaient leurs palmes, et laissaient pendre leurs jeunes grappes de cocos au-dessus du bassin de la fontaine. (117)

Furthermore, the important, intimate conversation between Paul and Virginie before the girl's departure to France is accompanied by "petits cris [et] doux murmures d'oiseaux, qui se caressaient dans leurs nids" (150). In the case of Wollstonecraft's Mary, sexuality finds its expression primarily in her negative attitude to her husband, whom she physically and intellectually loathes, and in the projected fulfillment of her desire in an unknown future and in a spiritual realm. It is clothed in and hidden by the language of sentiment and sensibility, and rendered inconsequential by Mary's caring devotion to others.

In keeping with their famous predecessor, all three novels endow female desire with ambiguity. While the female protagonists are presented as desiring, they are restricted in the expression, verbal and physical, of their wishes. La Roche's Sophia is clearly attracted to Seymour and occasionally proud of the appearance of her body, yet also detests herself at other times, especially when an unwelcome man takes too much notice of her (98) [99]. Wollstonecraft's Mary has displaced much of her longing onto sensibility. And Bernardin's Virginie, confused and embarrassed about the causes of her ailment but always mindful of the obligations which are associated with her name, works constantly and strenuously on restraining herself. Yet, while Bernardin depicts the island as an Edenic place in which Paul and Virginie grow up together as brother and sister in utter innocence -- "Virginie, douce, modeste, confiante comme Eve; et Paul, semblable à Adam, ayant la taille d'un homme avec la simplicité d'un enfant" (130) -- he subverts his utopian vision by endowing his protagonists with words and

actions which are not quite compatible with his design. While the innocent and naive Paul, for instance, addresses his "sister" with words which portend hidden, unacknowledged feelings for her, which may well be of a sexual nature -- "Lorsque je t'approche, tu ravis tous mes sens. ...Si je te touche seulement du bout de doigt, tout mon corps frémit de plaisir" (131) -- Virginia occasionally displays unusual behaviour in her excessive care for him: "Et avec son petit mouchoir blanc eile lui essuyait le front et les joues, et elle lui donnait plusieurs baisers" (132). Although both are meant to be wholly innocent and sexually ignorant, they are not always portrayed as such. Sexuality, although repressed, is clearly underlying their conduct and is in danger of erupting at any moment, breaking through the layer of socially responsible and moral behaviour the children have acquired over the years. Since it is Virginia's coming into sexuality and her subsequent desire which sets in motion the gradual deterioration of the happy island community, we are once again presented, as in Richardson's novel, with a female character whose difficulties with her body, or perhaps whose mere existence as a woman, may be responsible for her own fall as well as that of others.

### Corporeal Afflictions

Resting firmly in that period which was dominated and informed by the notion of sensibility,<sup>5</sup> all three works emphasize the harmony between body and soul and present instances in which this volatile balance is disrupted. In various ways, they



reflect those contemporary views of the body which associate physical infirmities of individuals with the weakness and susceptibility of their nerves and fibres: although it is again the female body which is the focus of attention -- it was believed to be more liable to disease than man's, owing to its inferior, delicate frame (see chapter 2. II.) -- men are also increasingly depicted as victims of nervous afflictions. Although Bernardin, La Roche and Wollstonecraft may take the representation of the body in various directions in their novels, we can still find clear traces of Clarissa and Grandison in many of the works written during the second half of the eighteenth century.

In the three novels under examination, sudden weakness, excessive modesty, and hysterical fits are often depicted as causes of various manifestations of the trembling female body. While Bernardin's Virginie is clearly meant to embody the new ideal of femininity which unites a strong mind with a weak and delicate body -- she approaches the master of the runaway slave with "le doux son de sa voix, qui tremblait ainsi que tout son corps" (97) -- La Roche's Sophia exhibits particularly strong symptoms of nervous susceptibility each time her reputation or her body are under attack. Her sudden realization at the masquerade that her own relatives are taking part in a scheme to make her the prince's mistress throws her body in disarray and provokes violent hysterical attacks on her part. With her peace of mind gone and her pride in her moral accomplishments suddenly undermined, she succumbs to fever and convulsions, interspersed with crying fits. Derby's rape and subsequent abandonment of Sophia induce in her repeated fainting spells, the wish for death, and

the temporary inability to eat or write. As in the case of Clarissa, excessive emotional and mental strain appear to affect and endanger the tender life lines of the young woman and render her physical condition precarious. Yet, while Richardson's female protagonist can neither endure the psychological pressures put on her through her bodily ruin nor cope with the physical demands made of her through and after the rape, La Roche's heroine overcomes her many trials by directing her attention away from the self toward others and by deriving strength from alleviating the suffering of others.

As already indicated in Clarissa, but there only in the form of subtle allusions, female desire may also constitute a frequent cause of bodily afflictions. Bernardin's Virginie, in particular, is depicted as suffering "d'un mal inconnu" (132), which surprises the twelve-year-old, unaware of puberty and its implications, and elicits unforeseen responses from her mind and body: "Ses beaux yeux bleus se marbraient de noir; son teint jaunissait; une langueur universelle abattait son corps. La sérénité n'était plus sur son front, ni le sourire sur ses lèvres. On la voyait tout à coup gaie sans joie, et triste sans chagrin" (132). Although clearly associated with manifestations of an unknown disease and hence a worrisome matter, Virginie's affliction renders the young woman more attractive than ever: "Ses beaux yeux bleus étaient remplis de mélancolie; et son coeur agité par une passion combattue donnait à son teint une couleur animée, et à sa voix des sons pleins d'émouions" (148). Since her mother's wish for a separation of the children, her aunt's desire to bring her to France in order to give her away in an advantageous match, and Paul's sudden sexual awareness, his

passion, and subsequent despair are all related to Virginie's reaching a marriageable age, Bernardin shows, as Richardson had done before him, how problems arising from women's bodies and female desire can wreak havoc among people concerned with the individual. Although Virginie is the primary victim of the manipulations and machinations of those around her, it is her body which has unknowingly set in motion the process of victimization directed at her. Bernardin thus follows in his characterization of Virginie in the tradition of the many male writers who tried to create a virtuous female protagonist but failed to free themselves from the inclination to see Eve lurking behind the Virgin Mary and therefore allow the madonna to metamorphose into the whore. In contrast, the two female novelists treat the relationship between desire and disease very differently. While La Roche concentrates on descriptions of physical reactions to unfulfilled desire in men rather than in women -- Seymour's symptoms of the "spleen" seem to increase whenever he feels that Sophia is moving away from him -- Wollstonecraft has her Mary either displace all her desire onto the care for others or transform it into strong negative reactions toward the man with whom she was forced into marriage: "when her husband would take her hand, or mention anything with love, she would instantly feel a sickness, a faintness at her heart, and wish, involuntarily, that the earth would open and swallow her" (185). Both women writers created female characters who have learned to assign a subordinate place to their personal wishes and who clearly give priority to the consideration of their souls and to the well-being of those around them.

Although it was Richardson's intention to design Lovelace as a despicable and cruel rake, he occasionally endowed his male protagonist with the ability to suffer, physically and mentally, in the same way as Clarissa, and, together with his invention of the virtuous Grandison, thus laid the groundwork for the subsequent depiction in novels of male sensibility. Yet, while Lovelace, only on rare occasions, displays the capacity deeply to sympathize, in the literal sense of the word,<sup>9</sup> with Clarissa, male characters in the three selected novels embody this talent to perfection. They are able to put themselves mentally and emotionally in the position of the woman they love, in order to understand her predicament and feel her pain. The degree of compatibility between male and female protagonist is hence reflected by the extent to which each shares in the other's suffering. After his arrival at the inn in which Sophia had resided with Derby, La Roche's Seymour, believing that the beloved young woman is no longer alive, succumbs to fever, distraction, and despair. Indeed, he tries to live, in his mind, what she had gone through:

Ich hatte das kleine Hauptküssen vom Sohn der Wirtin gekauft; ihr Kopf hatte sich mit der nämlichen Bedrängnis darauf gewälzt wie meiner; ihre und meine Tränen haben es benetzt; ihr Unglück hat meine Seele auf ewig an sie gefesselt; von ihr getrennt, vielleicht auf immer getrennt, mußten sich in dieser armen Hütte die sympathetischen Bande ganz in meine Seele verwinden, welche mich stärker zu ihr als zu allem, was ich jemals geliebt habe, zogen.  
(264)

(From the landlady's son I bought the little pillow on which her head and mine tossed in the same agony, which her tears and mine had moistened. Her misfortune links her soul forever to mine. Separated from her, perhaps forever, it was inevitable that in this poor cottage my soul's sympathetic bonds with her became even stronger. [194])

Although Seymour, owing to his passivity, is at least partially responsible for Sophia's ordeal, he is, in the end, rehabilitated on the basis of the strong emotions he feels and reveals for her: "ich muß sie erhalten oder sterben" (339) (I must either obtain her or die! [238]), he tells his brother and thus induces Lord Rich to court her on his behalf. It is his excessive sensibility which attracts Sophia to Seymour, so much so that she believes herself seized with his constitutional affliction when she arrives in England:

Vielleicht hat mich der Hauch der sanften Schwermut getroffen, welche die besten Seelen der britischen Welt beherrscht, und die lebhaften Farben des Charakters wie mit einem feinen Duft überzieht. (278)

(Perhaps I have been touched by the gentle melancholy that rules the best of the British and casts a subtle haze over their colourful characters [201])

Each of them projecting his or her wish for congeniality onto the other, Seymour and Sophia display the desire to participate, as much as they can, in the physical and emotional life of the other. Similarly, Bernardin's Paul spends the time of Virginie's stay in France cherishing the memories of a happy past. A papaw tree, planted by Virginie, becomes a substitute for her absent body (as did the pillow at the inn for Seymour): "il basait son tronc, et lui adressait des paroles pleines d'amour et de regrets" (174). Virginie's absence and, later, her death provoke much suffering and despair in Paul. Realizing that he cannot live without her, Paul wills himself to die. Unlike Wollstonecraft's Mary who is able to cope with Henry's death -- with him, she loses the only person with whom she had felt wholly compatible and who had truly understood and loved her -- Paul lacks the capacity to look beyond his personal loss and to turn his attention away from himself toward others. Although all three novels take their depiction of male sensibility to sentimental extremes, only Wollstonecraft

presents, with Henry, an utterly selfless and unfortunate male character who, by the time he meets the woman he will love, no longer has an option regarding his life.

Following in the footsteps of their predecessor, Richardson, who had assigned about a third of his novel to the ars moriendi of Clarissa, subsequent writers also accorded a place of importance to the progressive deterioration of the human body. All three novels, for instance, employ, for different purposes, descriptions of the people afflicted by various forms of consumption. La Roche has her rake Derby slowly and painfully waste away -- in the manner of Richardson's Belton and Sinclair -- clearly as a punishment for his lifelong immoralities and his many misdeeds. Wollstonecraft surrounds her female protagonist with people endeared to her, such as her mother, her best friend, and the man she loves, all of whom gradually succumb to wasting diseases. By this means, the author establishes her heroine, who bravely weathers the storm of her unceasing misfortunes, as strong and resistant. Both Bernardin and La Roche incorporate in their works instances of the consumption of grief which leads to the death of Paul and to a long period of emotional and physical hardship for Sophia. Yet both writers modify Richardson's solution to Clarissa in interesting ways. While La Roche has her heroine, through the experience of rape and betrayal, gain insight in the workings of her own and other people's minds and eventually learn to overcome her pain and her disappointments, Bernardin shapes his male, not his female, protagonist after the image of the weak and utterly devastated Clarissa. While he presents Virginie's death in one short paragraph -- "et Virginie, voyant la mort inévitable, posa une main sur ses habits, l'autre sur son coeur, et levant en haut des

yeux sereins, parut un ange qui prend son vol vers les cieux" (203) -- Bernardin meticulously describes the various stages of Paul's dying. Paul's gradual awareness of the unalterable loss of Virginie sets in motion in him a process first of emotional despair and then of physical deterioration:

...son chagrin paraissait augmenter à mesure que son corps reprenait des forces. Il était insensible à tout, ses regards étaient éteints, et il ne répondait rien à toutes les questions qu'on pouvait lui faire (211-2).

Dans cette vie sauvage et vagabonde [Paul visits, for the last time, all the places to which he had been with Virginie] ses yeux se cavèrent, son teint jaunît, et sa santé s'altéra de plus en plus. (214)

Bernardin's decision to subject his male protagonist to death by grief not only reflects the sentimental mood of his novel but also shows the extent to which the new character of the sensitive and suffering man had made its way into fictional works of the second half of the eighteenth century. Both women writers create similar personae. Yet, while La Roche and Wollstonecraft project, in the figures of Seymour and Henry, characters who fit into the category of the new man, they, at the same time, undermine the tradition of the weak and excessively delicate female character by introducing heroines who are able to overcome the demands of and the problems associated with the body by shifting their attention to the life of the mind and the requirements of others.

### The Body as Text

As Richardson's novel shows to perfection, female characters occasionally use writing as a means of coming to terms with the assaults on their bodies or as a medium through and on which they can displace their desire. Clarissa composes most of her letters, especially those to Anna, in order to deal with the direct and indirect assaults others make on her body: in her correspondence, she frantically searches for an escape from her dismal situation and considers her different options; at other times, she discloses in her letters her wishes and, sometimes, her suppressed desires; and eventually, she uses her written words in order to fend off and render ineffective the various methods of silencing to which others subject her. The organization of her letters into a collection which will tell her story and which will provide her with a new textual corpus allows Clarissa, in the end, to triumph over her opponents and to regain the kind of body in which she can take pride.

Although all three successive novelists incorporate in their works the use of letters and diaries, that is, make writing an important occupation of their fictional characters, they do not take this element to Richardsonian extremes. While Wollstonecraft's Mary resorts to written meditations in order to cope with the death of her best friend, Ann, and in order to vent her growing frustrations and disappointments in life, Bernardin's Virginie communicates her sadness and sense of deprivation in a letter to her loved ones on the Ile de France. In it, her feelings for Paul are



conspicuous by their absence -- it is probably not only her delicacy which prevents her from expressing desire and affection for the young man but perhaps also her knowledge that the arrival of her letter will assume the status of a public event and that her words will be read by various people -- but still find their way into her correspondence through subtle, indirect ways. For instance, Virginie expresses her fears for her body through a reference to "un vieux seigneur ...qui a ...beaucoup de goût pour [sa] personne" (162) and thus alludes to her aunt's match-making inclination which is directed toward the consolidation of the already high social position of the de la Tour family. Furthermore, Virginie clearly accords Paul a special importance in her life when she stitches, using strands of her hair as threads, his and her initials on a small purse filled with seeds. The combination of the various ingredients which make up this gift carries, of course, great symbolic significance: not only does Virginie try to cross and overcome the boundaries between body and text -- she uses parts of her body as a means of conveying a written message -- but, with the help of the seeds which are suggestive of future growth and fertility, she also signals the movement back to the body. Without violating the requirements of epistolary decorum, her letter becomes an expression of her desire for a union with Paul which goes beyond the relationship of a brother and a sister.

Constituting, in many ways, a rewriting of Clarissa, Sophie von La Roche's Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim follows closely Richardson's treatment of the connection between body and text. La Roche's novel shares with its predecessor the epistolary style and presents numerous letters in which the female protagonist informs

her friend Emilia about her thoughts and feelings, many of which concern her worries about her reputation and, later, her desperate reflections on her bodily ruin. Since they reflect the effusions of a mind, which, at that point in time, struggled with personal infringements and despair, her letters and diary entries gain significance with the course of the events. Echoing Clarissa's desire for having her story made known and for justifying her own action, Sophia appeals, after her rape and at a moment when she feels her life will soon come to an end, to Emilia and asks her to speak for her and tell her tale in words and gestures:

Rette indessen, o meine Freundin, rette mein Andenken von der Schmach des Lasters! ...Pflanzen Sie, meine Liebe, in Ihrem Garten eine Zypresse, um die ein einsamer Rosenstock sich winde, an einem nahen Felsstein. Weißen Sie diesen Platz meinem Andenken; gehen Sie manchmal hin; vielleicht wird es mir erlaubt sein, um Sie zu schweben, und die zärtliche Träne zu sehen, mit der sie die abfallende Blüte der Rose betrachten werden. Sie haben auch mich blühen und welken gesehen. (321)

(...oh my friend, save my memory from the calumny of apparent vice! ...In your garden, near a rock, plant a cypress, my dear, and let it be entwined by a solitary rose tree. Dedicate that place to my memory. Go there sometimes, and, perhaps, I will be permitted to hover about you and to observe the tender tears you shed as you watch the rose petals fall. You have seen me blossom and wither, too. [227])

Sophia's sentimental comparison of herself to a faded flower is reminiscent of Clarissa's image of the broken lily on her coffin and conveys the sense of loss and futility with which both women associate their lives. Since they bear witness, in particular, to the nobility of her mind, Sophia's writings are later greatly appreciated by her friends. Translated by Sophia from the German into English, her letters to Emilia provide Lady Douglass with the knowledge and the understanding of Sophia's suffering. Lord Rich, in particular, values the description of and the sentiments on her

ordeal so highly that he gives up his wish for her body in favour of a copy of her diary: "Es war die Seele, die Gesinnungen der Lady Seymour, die ich liebte" (It was lady Seymour's soul, her principles, that I loved!), Rich explains, after Sophia's wedding to his brother, his preference of her words over her person, "Ihre Papiere, die sie in der vollen Aufrichtigkeit ihres Herzens schrieb, beweisen mir, daß sie mir das Beste schenkte, so in ihrer Gewalt" (344) (Written with complete and heartfelt candour, her papers show that she gave me the best that was in her power to give [241]). Since he regards her virtuous notions as her true essence, Lord Rich's option appears to be identical with Richardson's own solution in his second novel. Both La Roche's fictional character and the English author seem to hold in high esteem those aspects in a woman which go beyond her corporeal self and deem them truly valuable if they have been cultivated in an admirable way. Therefore, they both give prominence to her written words as reflections of her mind and spirit and reject her body. La Roche, who greatly admired Richardson, may in fact have assigned a place in her book to the English novelist, as the similarities between fictional character and historical person concerning their names and their way of thinking suggest. In the end, however, the German writer appears to question and undermine Richardson's conclusion: not only does she project for her female protagonist a happy ending by leading her into a marriage with the man she loves, but she also has Lord Rich, arguably a Grandison figure, eventually envy his brother for his happiness with Sophia: "ihre schönen Briefe sind nicht sie selbst" (347) (I found that her letters were no substitute for her person, [243]), Lord Rich writes, thus indicating that the effusions

of a noble mind alone do not suffice but that a balance of mind and body is required. Unlike Richardson, La Roche does not reject the violated female body and replace it by the word. But she also refuses to accord excessive value to it in the first place. Instead, she describes Sophia's "ruin" as a temporary, albeit grave, misfortune which can be overcome, however, by putting the body - mind relationship in its proper perspective. In contrast to Richardson and Bernardin, who depict female bodies as indicators of the moral condition of individuals, both women writers seem to endow their main characters with a healthy attitude toward their corporeal selves when they confer upon them the ability to divert their attention away from their bodies.

### Considerations of the Self

Perhaps in reaction to the devastating consequences Clarissa's one-sided and possibly misdirected care has had on her life, later novelists seem to furnish their characters with different attitudes toward the self. While Richardson's female protagonist had directed much of her care for the self toward the cultivation of her many qualities, characters in the three successive novels seem to put the emphasis on the harmonious interaction with others. As a result, the well-being of those around them becomes so indispensable to them that most of their efforts are undertaken with a view to improving the lives of others rather than their own. Considerations of the self hence

become identical with considerations of the other and altruism reveals itself as the new reigning virtue.

In each of the three novels, the care for others is a motivating force in the life of the female protagonist. Putting aside any thought of personal inconvenience or hardship, Bernardin's Virginie literally goes out of her way to speak for and assist the runaway slave, while Wollstonecraft's Mary, neglected and ignored by her parents, thrives on helping and caring for those in need. In fact, she and La Roche's Sophia display remarkable similarities, as they are both always eager either to attend to or instruct other women, even at those times when their own situations are utterly dismal and disheartening. After losing Ann and leaving Henry behind in Portugal, Mary, for instance, still has the strength to care for a desperate woman on board the ship to England and later helps a sick mother and her family in London. And Sophia is not only willing, after her own negative "marital" experiences, to advise a young widow on remarrying but she is also able to bring herself to love Derby's illegitimate child. Both women succeed in putting their own interests last and in demonstrating, in an exemplary manner, their capacity for self-effacement and devotion to the needs of others.

Like Clarissa, who has been weighed down by severe misfortunes, the characters of fictional works after Richardson reveal a proficiency in various techniques of caring for and shaping the self: these range from a preference for solitude (Bernardin's narrator and Wollstonecraft's young Mary), over the need to distance oneself (Virginie), to the necessity of seeing oneself as part of a larger

community (La Roche's Sophia and Wollstonecraft's mature Mary). Mary, for instance, fights the temptation to give way to her feelings for Henry, by telling herself that "happiness [is] not to be found on earth" (97) and by removing herself from his company, while Virginie temporarily avoids Paul in order to exercise self-restraint: "Je voulais que tu m'aidasses à me séparer de moi-même jusqu'à ce que le ciel pût bénir notre union" (152), she later tells him. And both Sophia and the more experienced Mary suppress and deal with their worries by trying to ease those of others.

While Virginie and Mary learn to find outlets for their desire, their pain, and their loneliness, mainly by trying to forget their own selves, Sophia, repeatedly subjected not only to mental cruelty but also to physical abuse, undergoes, like Richardson's Clarissa, a severe identity crisis which brings her close to death. Twice, the first time immediately after the rape and the second after her abduction to Scotland, she wishes for death, writes her will, and blames herself for her dismal situation: "Warum bin ich von der vorgeschriebenen Bahn abgewichen?" (233) (Oh, why did I stray from the prescribed path [176]). Although the care of her friend Emilia contributes substantially to her first recovery, Sophia gains most of her new confidence from a reconstruction of her self, set in motion by her awareness of those around her. Her decision to change her name -- she calls herself "Madam Leidens" (234) [177],<sup>7</sup> a name which echoes Clarissa's adoption of the epithet "Wretchedness" (1052; III. 427) -- her adoption of a humble outward appearance, and her wish to spend the rest of her life in the service of others allow her to regain the strength to live. Unlike Clarissa, Sophia builds her new existence on the remnants of her inner qualities, that

is, those character traits which she has been able to isolate and cherish, after she has recognized and rejected her former vanity and selfishness:

Denken Sie nicht, beste Freundin, daß sich zu gleicher Zeit, dauerhafte Grundteile eines neuen moralischen Glückshauses in meiner Seele sammeln, worin meine Empfindungen Schutz und Nahrung finden werden, bis der Sturm von sinnlichem Unglück vorüber sein wird, der den Wohnplatz meines äußerlichen Wohlergehens zerstörte? (252-3)

(Don't you think, dearest friend, that at the same time the foundation for a new house of moral happiness is being laid in my soul, a house in which my feelings will find shelter and nourishment, until the storm of sensual misfortune has passed which has destroyed the dwelling-place of my external welfare. [translation mine])<sup>8</sup>

In sharp contrast to Clarissa, who equates the violation of her physical integrity with the end of her worldly expectations and likens herself to a lily which had been cut at the height of its bloom, Sophia uses for herself images which denote hope and renewed life. Although her trials are far from over, she compares herself not only to a boat, out on a stormy ocean and in danger of sinking and yet suddenly in sight of an island (315) but also to a mutilated tree in which there is still enough life left to grow again:

...bin ich nicht wie ein junger Baum, der in seiner vollen Blüte durch Schläge eines unglücklichen Schicksals seiner Krone und seines Stammes beraubt wurde? Lange Zeit steht der Überrest traurig und trocken da, endlich aber sprossen aus der Wurzel neue Zweige hervor, die unter dem Schutz der Natur wieder stark und hoch genug werden können, in einem gewissen Zeitlauf wieder wohltätige Schatten um sich zu verbreiten. Mein Ruhm, mein glückliches Aussehen, meine Stelle in der großen Welt habe ich verloren; lange betäubte der Schmerz meine Seele, bis die Zeit meine Empfindlichkeit verringerte, die Wurzeln meines Lebens, welche mein Schicksal unberührt ließ, neue Kräfte sammelten, und die guten Grundsätze meiner Erziehung, frische, obwohl kleine Zweige von Wohltätigkeit und Nutzen für meine Nebenmenschen emportrieben. (279)

(Aren't I like the young tree that has lost its crown and trunk while in full bloom, through the blows of an unhappy fate? For a long time the stump stood sad and dry, but finally new shoots sprouted from the roots, growing strong and high under the protection of nature, to spread shade in due time. My reputation, my fortunate condition, my position in the great world -- all these have I lost. For a long time, pain numbed my soul. With time, the roots of my life gathered new strength, and the good principles of my education grew into fresh, albeit small, shoots of beneficence and usefulness for my fellow men.

[202])

While Richardson has his heroine choose seclusion and solitude, that is, a form of self-imposed exile, in which Clarissa not only contemplates but also cultivates her miseries – putting all her emphasis on herself and directing her mental gaze inside herself, Clarissa laments, meditates on, and explores creatively her fate -- La Roche projects a female protagonist who is able to look beyond herself, literally and metaphorically, when she meets Derby's neglected and unloved child: "Von diesem Tag an rechne ich die Wiederherstellung meiner Seele" (308-309) (From that day I compute my soul's cure. [220]), Sophia writes, after she has responded to the girl's innocent and timid care for her by opening her own heart and extending her love to "the child of [her] murderer" [221]. Only by accepting herself for what she is, namely, a previously misguided and now unfortunate, perhaps "fallen" woman, can Sophia look to the future and make a new beginning on the basis of different priorities. Clarissa, however, enamoured with the vision of her own perfection, cannot stop thinking of the life she might have had and therefore tries to salvage the pieces of her lost reputation and reconstruct them into an image which will yield her new glory.

While Richardson seems to have Clarissa direct her technologies toward controlling the self for the sake of molding it into a work of perfection, subsequent



writers emphasize the element of disinterestedness in their female characters. In fact, self-effacement and altruism, taken to sentimental extremes, are the dominating traits of Virginie, Sophia, and Mary. All three women are, at one time or another, willing to sacrifice their personal happiness and peace of mind for others. Raised to take care of and care for others, physically and spiritually, they have accepted the practice of charity as an integral part of their lives. Sophia and Mary, conditioned by their own experiences of losing loved ones through death, are able to accept human suffering as an everyday occurrence and are capable of putting their own welfare last in order to alleviate the pain of others. The narrator's comment in Wollstonecraft's novel, "the distress of others carried her out of herself," (26) well describes Mary's propensity for attending to those around her and her progressive resignation to her own fate (177). Similarly, La Roche's Sophia is content with taking steps toward the alleviation of other people's distresses instead of improving her own position in life. Her predicament is, in fact, partially precipitated by her need to care for others: not only is she taken by Derby's apparent efforts to help a poor family but she also hopes to reform the known libertine through her own beneficial influence. Sophia's charity becomes a decisive factor in her fall when her eagerness to assist a poor family induces her to be neglectful of the prince's pursuits and thus draws upon her social disgrace and tainted reputation. Yet, owing to considerations of her family name and reputation, that is, for reasons which she also describes as "Eigenliebe und Empfindlichkeit" (210) (self-love and excessive sensibility [163]), Sophia concedes to marry Derby, only to find that excessive adherence to the requirements of family and

society may compromise her peace of mind and the salvation of her soul. Sophia and also Virginie, who, on her part, seems to heed Monsieur de Bordonnais' exhortation that "il faut ...se dévouer pour le bien de sa famille" (145), meet with deep distress when they follow personal loyalties, whether it is Sophia's wish to live up to the image her parents had once projected for her or Virginie's desire to be a virtuous daughter and a faithful and supportive companion. Yet, while Virginie, like Clarissa, clings to an ideal of femininity which she has internalized from an early age on and which, when followed strictly, is of advantage not only to herself but also to those around her, Sophia and Mary break with social impositions and display true altruism, which is completely free of considerations of the self. Sophia's courage to continue with her life and to pursue, more relentlessly than ever, the instruction of other women as well as Mary's enormous personal strength and flat refusal to accommodate, in any way, the wishes of her husband indicate that La Roche and Wollstonecraft, although influenced by Richardson, have created protagonists who defy the old stereotypes of the desirable woman and embody instead new visions of femininity.

### The Revaluation of Friendship

At a time when marriage was considered the most desirable state of existence, Richardson, as we have seen (chapter 3. IV.), exposed the problems deriving from it and contrasted it with various forms of friendship. Writers following in his footsteps

and hence able to draw on the contemporary ideology of marriage as well as Richardson's treatment of the subject continued with the examination of the value and the importance of friendship and came to different conclusions which, in one way or another, are already prepared for in Clarissa. All three novelists reveal in their works their own difficulties with defining and circumscribing their notion of friendship.

While Bernardin projects his whole pastoral as the narrator's mournful celebration of his long-gone friendly relations with the two families who had once lived on the island and then pursues the theme of friendship through various examples of this community -- he depicts friendship between the two mothers, as a transitional element in the relationships of Paul and Virginie as brother and sister and later as lovers, and between master and servants -- Wollstonecraft and La Roche explore friendship as a valuable alternative to or complement of marriage. Both Bernardin and Wollstonecraft use familial relations -- those of brother and sister or father and daughter -- as obstacles to more intimate relationships but reserve a place for friendship to ease, if necessary, the transition from one state to the other. At once protective of and subservient to Virginie, Paul displays to his "sister" an attitude which is mainly informed by immature and adolescent admiration, until Virginie declares her love for and attraction to him and until the old man instructs him in the advantages of mutual affection: "sans doute ...il n'y a point d'ami aussi agréable qu'une maîtresse qui nous aime. Il y a de plus dans la femme une gaieté légère qui dissipe la tristesse de l'homme" (191-2). Paul is to regard Virginie no longer as sisterly companion but as woman and friend. Yet his exaggerated devotion to her may well suggest that their

relationship can never be anything but an idealized union which is not possible in the world they live in. Bernardin perhaps refuses to develop any traces in Virginie of a realistic notion of friendship and marriage -- she appears to reject passivity when she single-mindedly speaks for the slave -- mainly because he wishes to endow his female protagonist with physical and moral perfection which makes an ordinary life impossible for her. It is her body, that is, her physical desire for the young man, which poses the greatest problem for the happiness of Paul and Virginie. No longer able, owing to Virginie's onset of puberty, to continue as the childhood friends they had been for such a long time, they are further prevented by external factors -- their close familial relations and their forced separation -- from cultivating their early notions of friendship and transforming them into stable marital relations.

Wollstonecraft's Marv; A Fiction, similarly conveying a sense of human loss and tragedy, presents friendship as the only kind of relationship which is valuable and possible for the main characters. Mary's needs for a companion and a "congenial mind" (44) are temporarily met when she is able to care for Ann and, later, for Henry, but are ultimately disappointed through the deaths of the two. In her relationship with both individuals, Mary becomes emotionally dependent on the other person. Since her feelings for Ann have taken the form of a "passion" (51), she has enormous difficulties in coping with Ann's approaching death: "I cannot live without her! -- I have no other friend; if I lose her, what a desert will the world be to me" (71). Friendship for Mary seems to be identical with selfless, disinterested care for and support of the other and thus becomes problematic for her when Henry, to whom she

is intellectually attracted, offers to be her friend. Not only does she feel neglectful toward Ann -- a sudden deterioration of her friend's health induces her to blame herself for "suffering a thought to have strayed from Ann" (87) -- but she is also confused about Henry's proposal to "rely on him as if he were her father" (95), made in a conversation the context of which alludes to a relationship which is of a different nature. Like Clarissa, Mary exhibits much naïveté in her understanding of the statements of others and a reluctance to examine her own feelings: "lost in a delirium, she never asked herself what kind of an affection she had for him, or what it tended to; nor did she know that love and friendship are very distinct" (96). Although Henry replaces Ann as the main recipient of Mary's care, both his terminal illness and her marriage put limitations on their relationship. All that is possible between them is a spiritual friendship, confined by time and darkened by the knowledge of their impending separation. Wollstonecraft follows Richardson's lead in projecting happiness into an unverifiable future and depicting the present as an existence filled with suffering and disillusionment. In both novels, satisfying marital relations are either non-existent or hard to achieve, while friendships, depicted as fundamental and beneficial to human interaction, are generally marred and disrupted by social impositions and physical infringements.

In sharp contrast to Richardson and Wollstonecraft, La Roche proposes in her novel, Die Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim, in an occasionally utopian vision of human relations, the compatibility and complementarity of friendship and marriage. Throughout La Roche's novel, the married Emilia represents Sophia's best friend and

confidante. It is to her that Sophia flees after the rape and it is from her and her husband that she receives shelter, encouragement, and support. Far away from Emilia and without the guidance and advice of the people she knows and trusts, Sophia is temporarily tempted to search for someone she can rely on. Owing to the initial friendliness but subsequent coldness of Fräulein von C. whom she wishes to be her friend but whom she also suspects to be a favourite of Seymour, Sophia distances herself from the man she is attracted to and thus falls prey to the manipulating Derby. Although she is victimized and exploited in part because she does not have a protective and advising friend about her, she, at the same time, finds the strength to sustain her through her trials because she still has a friend with whom she can correspond. In her first letter to Emilia after the rape, Sophia already speaks of her future plans and also expresses her gratitude to the other woman: "Es ist angenehm um sein selbst geliebt zu werden!" (237) (It is indeed pleasing to be loved for one's own sake! [179]). Emilia's assistance, in word and deed, seem to make Sophia more self-reliant and stronger. Unlike Clarissa, Sophia is not willing to resign herself to her fate and consider her life ended but rather begins to see herself as "fallen," yet independent and free to devote the rest of her life to the care of others. Her friend, Emilia, remains an essential and important part of her existence, even when her fortune turns and she agrees to marry Seymour. La Roche has her female protagonist cultivate a friendship which proves strong in the face of outside influences and persists through various adversities. Yet, in contrast to Clarissa, La Roche's novel is strangely devoid of representations of male friendships. Instead, the Lords Seymour, Derby, and

Rich appear to be solitary figures who devote most of their time either to melancholy meditations, bold manipulations, or intellectual pursuits. Like Wollstonecraft, La Roche opens her novel with a strong female friendship which she then gradually exposes to male intervention. In contrast to Marv: A Fiction, however, which concludes with the worldly separation of both friends and lovers,

La Roche's novel ends on a happier note, allowing for a co-existence between friendship and marriage.

#### Transparency in Characterization

The examination of recurrent themes in the selected novels by Bernardin, La Roche, and Wollstonecraft has shown that writers who could be called successors of the English novelist appear to adopt only specific aspects of Richardson's treatment of his characters: taking only one of the various sides of Clarissa and Lovelace, they develop it and turn it into the dominant character trait. As a result, their fictional personae lack the complexities with which Richardson had endowed his protagonists. Bernardin's *Virginie*, for instance, is determined by her obedience to the wishes of her elders and her excessive modesty and virtue, while Wollstonecraft's *Mary* and La Roche's *Sophia* are characterized by their ability to suffer and by their capacity to cope with their own pain and still think of others. *Sophia* most closely approximates the figure of *Clarissa* because, as in the case of Richardson's heroine, vanity, self-love, and too great a

confidence in her accomplishments have their share in her misfortunes. Yet, unlike Clarissa, Sophia is able to put her personal predicament in perspective and look to a life beyond the violation of her body. La Roche thus presents an alternative to Richardson's solution: perhaps implicitly criticizing the English author for his drastic measures with his female protagonist, La Roche redeems her heroine for a life in this world by concentrating on her mind and her character rather than her "flawed" outer shell. Furthermore, male protagonists in novels by writers following in Richardson's footsteps never reach the degree of ambiguity which Lovelace displayed. Instead, they are depicted as either good (Paul, Henry, Seymour, Rich) or evil (Derby) and predictably adhere to the assigned behaviour. In addition, all three writers, restricted by the brevity of their novels, when compared to Richardson's, do not ascribe much importance to secondary characters and therefore refrain from developing them.

Influenced by Richardson's Clarissa and, at the same time, reacting against it, Bernardin, La Roche, and Wollstonecraft present us with their versions of the desirable woman and the "new man". While Bernardin's protagonists are still informed by older stereotypical representations of the feminine and the masculine -- Virginie embodies virtue to perfection and Paul reminds us of the devoted yet tragically thwarted lover -- the two women novelists introduce heroines who distinguish themselves by their exceptional determination and sense of independence as well as male characters who could be seen as variations on Grandison. La Roche, for example, projects in Lord Seymour and Lord Rich two representatives of the commendable, sensitive, and understanding country gentleman. She places them in opposition to Lord Derby, the



reckless and inconsiderate libertine who, unlike his predecessor Lovelace, does not possess any redeeming features. Similarly, Wollstonecraft designs, in Henry, a man who, owing to his ability to understand Mary's situation and sympathize with her plight, represents the perfect friend and companion for her. Furthermore, the author surrounds her male character with a certain amount of mystery when she withholds his past from us. As in the case of La Roche's Lord Rich, there was another woman in Henry's life who either had a claim on him or hurt him so badly that he is perhaps cautious in revealing his feelings for Mary. Unlike the men in Richardson's Clarissa, both Rich and Henry are willing to sacrifice their own wishes in order to allow for the happiness of the woman they love: Rich decides to suppress his own desires and court Sophia for his somewhat weak and selfish brother, while Henry appears to be reserved toward Mary because he fears the devastating effect his progressive physical deterioration and death may have on her. Although both women writers fail to develop all the potential which they have placed in their male characters, they are able to take their female protagonists in new directions. In contrast to Richardson's Clarissa and Bernardin's Virginie, Mary and Sophia display a new attitude toward their bodies. No longer heeding the advice and the instructions which society and its moralistic spokesmen may have imparted to them, the two women follow their intuitions and convictions with respect to their corporeal selves. Instead of being interested in advancing their own causes or bringing, like Clarissa, their lives to perfection, Sophia and Mary are concerned with the well-being of those around them. The shaping of one's life into works of art is a notion which appears to be of little consequence to

them. Unlike Richardson and Bernardin, La Roche and Wollstonecraft display neither the inclination of leading their female protagonists to sainthood nor the need of ennobling them through death. On the contrary, both women writers seem to incorporate, in their own work, a scepticism about and a rejection of the Richardsonian notion of desirable womanhood.

#### Further Research

In the preceding chapters I explored the contradictions and ambiguities in characterization which we find in Richardson's Clarissa. I presented them in a detailed analysis of the novel, examined their origins in various contemporary and older discourses, fictional and non-fictional, and showed instances of their adaptation in subsequent novels. My own research, and the study which developed out of it, have, of course, not exhausted the subject. Owing to the limited space of my thesis, it was necessary for me to concentrate on a few themes and relegate others, perhaps equally interesting, to the background. Some of the points of interest which remain to be examined are the following:

1. The origins of Richardson's representation of female subjectivity are still largely unclear. An exploration of various religious techniques of confession and self-examination as well as an investigation of early discourses in which the self is under scrutiny, such as diaries, letters, autobiographies, early periodicals, epistolary novels,

and fictional autobiographies, would perhaps reveal if and to what extent Richardson writes within a specific tradition or is innovative. The results of this research may also provide us with a better understanding of Clarissa's "femaleness," that is, identify Richardson's female protagonist as either a stereotypical construction of the feminine by a male author or a genuine representation of a contemporary woman.

2. A study of contemporary legal discourses and historical cases similar to Clarissa's may furnish us with information on the actual degree of power a woman of her social status would have held in her family and the society of her time and on her options and forms of resistance. Given that, according to Stone and Trumbach, attitudes toward marriage had substantially changed by the early eighteenth century, Richardson's choice of an utterly repressive family and Clarissa's lack of any outside assistance requires further explanation. Moreover, an investigation of forms and procedures of contemporary rape cases and wills written by women may throw more light on Clarissa's legal position. Again, if Clarissa could have received justice by law, then Richardson's decision to subject his female protagonist to a slow death needs to be explained.

3. As a reading of novels by Richardson, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, La Roche, and Wollstonecraft has revealed, male writers appear to pursue, in the characterization of their female protagonists, the dichotomization of women into either good or evil, virtuous or immoral, while women writers largely avoid this topic through a reevaluation of the female body. Since Richardson's representation of the feminine greatly influenced successive writers and was continued well into the Victorian age, an

investigation of women's reactions to his projection of gender roles may be of interest. Some of the questions we might ask include the following: Did women writers openly work against Richardson's image of woman or try to undermine it? Did they perhaps develop further the character of the forward and rebellious Anna Howe? What happened to Richardson's male paragon?

4. It may further be worthwhile to investigate the way in which Richardson's treatment of the themes which I have isolated for this study is reflected in other media. Contemporary illustrations of English and Continental editions of Richardson's Clarissa may contribute to and enhance, in interesting ways, the many, different interpretations of the novel. An examination of subsequent illustrations, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, may denote changing attitudes toward Clarissa. Also, a study of the novel's adaptation into an opera, a few years ago, and, recently, into a production for television may point to new ways of "reading" Richardson's work.

As the proliferation of critical studies on Clarissa during the last twenty years indicates, Richardson's novel, occasionally considered long and tedious, holds an important place in the literature of the eighteenth century. It seems that, during the last few years, virtually all contemporary approaches to literature have been exercised on and applied to Clarissa. Feminists have investigated, with the help of this novel, the position of women in eighteenth-century patriarchal society. Concentrating on aspects of class, marxists have examined Clarissa as a work of art which reflects the struggle

between bourgeoisie and aristocracy. Deconstructionists, interested in an exploration of rhetorical devices and various forms of verbal manipulation, have used the novel's epistolary style as a starting-point for their text-oriented readings.<sup>9</sup> Yet, despite the recent increase of scholarly works on Richardson's novel, the interpretative approaches to it have not yet been exhausted and new ways of looking at this work are still possible. Clarissa is indeed a seminal work in the history of the novel and an important product of its time. Resting firmly, like a pillar, in the middle of the eighteenth century, it allows us not only a glimpse of the time and the society in which it was written, but also furnishes a vantage-point from which we can look back at, and explore, the literature of preceding centuries as well as look ahead to what was still to come in the field of novel-writing.

1. See Lawrence W. Lynch's article, "Richardson's Influence on the Concept of the Novel in Eighteenth-Century France," Comparative Literary Studies 14 (1977): 233-43 and L.M. Price's study, Die Aufnahme englischer Literatur in Deutschland 1500-1960, Munich, 1961.
2. See Gerard Barker's Grandison's Heirs: The Paragon's Progress in the Late Eighteenth-Century English Novel. Newark: Univ. of Delaware Press, 1985.
3. As Barbara Becker-Cantarino, in her afterword to her edition of Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1983), argues, La Roche had most likely read Richardson's novels in the original and had been influenced by the psychological aspects of his work and by his representation of the feminine (403). Mary Wollstonecraft clearly knew Richardson's work, since she explicitly writes against her predecessor: "This woman [her Mary] is neither a Clarissa, a Lady G -, nor a Sophie" (preface, unpaginated), Wollstonecraft introduces her novel and thus indicates that she wishes to propose a new and different female protagonist.
4. Among recent critics, Monika Nenon, in Autorschaft und Frauenbildung : Das Beispiel Sophie von La Roche (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1988), mentions Sophia's coldness (89). Sally Winkle, in her article "Innovation and Convention in Sophie von La Roche's The Story of Miss von Sternheim and Rosalia's Letters," in Writing the Female Voice: Essays in Epistolary Literature, ed. by Elizabeth Goldsmith (Boston: Northeastern Univ. Press, 1989), pp. 77-94, shares Nenon's view, while Christa Baguss Britt, in the introduction to her recent English translation of Sophie von La Roche's Lady Sophia von Sternheim (Albany, New York: State Univ. of New York Press, 1991), pp. 3-40, speaks of the rape and the violation of the female protagonist (20).
5. For further information on literature and sensibility, see R. F. Brissenden's Virtue in Distress: Studies in the Novel of Sentiment from Richardson to Sade (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1974) and Jean H. Hagstrum's Sex and Sensibility: Ideal and Erotic Love from Milton to Mozart (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1980).
6. Deriving from the Greek συμπαρίσσειν (verb) and συμπάθεια (noun), the word has, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, the following meaning (among others): "To suffer with or like another; to be affected in consequence of the affection of some one or something else; to be similarly or correspondingly affected" (s.v. "sympathize").
7. The word leiden means "to suffer" in German.
8. The translator of La Roche's Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim failed to render adequately the passage quoted above. It was therefore necessary for me to provide my own translation.

9. The most important critical studies which represent these approaches are Terry Castle's Clarissa's Ciphers: Meaning and Disruption in Richardson's "Clarissa" (Ithaca, New York: Cornell Univ. Press, 1982), Terry Eagleton's The Rape of Clarissa: Writing, Sexuality, and Class Struggle in Samuel Richardson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), and William Beatty Warner's Reading "Clarissa": The Struggles of Interpretation (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1979).

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