THE PROSE STYLE OF CLARISSA AND OF LOVELACE

AN EXAMINATION
OF THE
PROSE STYLE OF
CLARISSA AND OF LOVELACE

By

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation gives a close analysis of the letters of Clarissa and Lovelace written after five crucial incidents in the novel. Based on structuralist assumption that language constructs and shapes our world, this thesis examines the writing style of the two main characters of Clarissa. The manner of linguistic expression of these characters is considered: i.e., diction; choice of words, tone, sentence structure and syntax, the types of figurative language; imagery, and rhetorical devices. In the process, we discover that Richardson uses style to reveal character and the unconscious. How a writer says whatever he says is as important as what he says.

In the last few years, much critical attention has been paid to Lovelace. His attractiveness as a dashing young rake cannot be denied. However, some of Richardson's main aims in writing Clarissa are to "warn the inconsiderate and thoughtless of the one sex against the base arts and designs of specious contrivers of the other," and to warn young people against the notion that "a reformed rake makes the best husband." Lovelace claims to be reformed, but his style, unaltered from beginning to end, shows that he is not. This paper shifts the attention away from Lovelace to the true heroine of the novel, Clarissa. She is in fact Richardson's idea of "christianity...thrown into

action." His portrayal of her makes him truly worthy of the title "master in the delineation of the female heart."

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Je weiter sich das Wissen ausbreitet, desto mehr Probleme kommen zum Vorschein.

--Johann Wolfgang Goethe

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INTRODUCTION

> You and I always admired the noble simplicity and natural ease and dignity of style, which are the distinguishing characteristics of these books, whenever any passages from them, by way of quotation in the works of other authors, popped upon us. And once I remember you, even you, observed that those passages always appeared to you like a rich vein of golden ore, which runs through baser metals; embellishing the work they were brought to authenticate.
> -- Mr. Belford to Robert Lovelace, Esq.[1]

In Samuel Richardson's Clarissa, or, The History of a Young Lady, almost every character who writes, from the most important to the most insignificant, is acutely conscious of style. In the passage just quoted, Belford is praising the simple, natural and dignified style of the books of the Bible, specifically that of the Book of Job, the book most frequently used by Clarissa. Belford's description of "these books" is not unlike Samuel Johnson's somewhat facetious description of the requirements for the epistolary style: "Ease and simplicity, an even flow of unlaboured diction, and an artless arrangement of obvious sentiments," said Johnson. Anthony Kearney points out that in the novel it is Clarissa who comes closest to writing in this way.[2] The other characters, including the articulate and charming Lovelace, fall somewhat short of this standard.

Lovelace, the dashing young hero modelled after the rake figure in Restoration drama,[3] is the correspondent who writes with the most artificial style. His letters are full of flourishes and unnatural expressions, utterly unlike the

simplicity of Clarissa's. Richardson himself is very aware of the importance of style. In a letter to Sophia Westcomb he writes, "styles differ....as much as faces, and are indicative, generally beyond the power of disguise, of the mind of the writer!" [4] In Clarissa, he uses style not only to reveal the personalities of the characters to us, but to the characters themselves. Because they are all "writing to the moment," the characters, as well as the readers, are in a continual process of discovery.

Despite the unusual length of the novel, there are scenes which readers of Clarissa never forget. [5] These scenes, marking turning-points in the relationship of Clarissa and Lovelace, are recorded vividly by these two "scribblers" themselves. Their letters written during or shortly after these incidents are particularly important and revealing. What they say and how they say things show who and what they really are, and how Richardson wants his readers to view them.

In Clarissa Richardson for the first time takes full advantage of the epistolary form of the novel. Through the use of multiple points of view, he is able to create interesting, engaging characters. Lovelace and Clarissa, each aware of the other's skill and talent with words, are the focus of our attention because Richardson has endowed them with his own creative imagination and writing skill. The more they write and develop their own styles and voices, the more attractive and fascinating they become.

As one reads, one discovers that what Belford said about "those passages" is applicable to Richardson's own work. Richardson's special use of words is "like a rich vein of golden ore, which runs through baser metals; embellishing the work they were brought to authenticate." Analyzing the prose style of his two principal characters becomes a "key" by which the reader can unlock some of the rooms in Richardson's complex mansion.

NOTES

[1]Samuel Richardson, Clarissa, or, The History of a Young Lady (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., Everyman's Library, 1932), IV, p. 6. All further references will be to this four volume edition and will appear in parentheses in the text.

[2]Anthony Kearney, "Clarissa and the Epistolary Form", Essays in Criticism, XVI (1966), 44-56.

[3]Various critics have written on the similarities between Lovelace and Restoration rakes. See Samuel Johnson's Life of Rowe, Alan Dugald McKillop's Samuel Richardson, Printer and Novelist (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936), Ira Konigsberg's Samuel Richardson and the Dramatic Novel (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1968), Margaret Ann Doody's A Natural Passion: A Study of the Novels of Samuel Richardson (London: Oxford University Press, 1974).

[4]John Carrol, ed., Selected Letters of Samuel Richardson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 64.

[5]Percy Lubbock, The Craft of Fiction (Northampton: John Dickens & Co. Ltd., 1926), pp. 4-5. Percy Lubbock places Richardson with Tolstoy and Flaubert, praising them for their "command of life, their grasp of character, their knowledge of human affections and manners." He says of the heroines, "after living for a time with people like Clarissa Harlowe or Anna Karenina or Emma Bovary we have had a lasting experience ... These women, with some of the scenes and episodes of their history, remain with us as vividly as though we had known them in life.

Chapter I

THE FIRST LETTERS

Despite Richardson's insistence upon his "No-Plan" for Clarissa to Aaron Hill and to Johannes Stinstra, it is an extremely well-designed novel. [1] Frederick Hilles has shown how Richardson "mapped" the plot according to the calendar and according to the division by volumes. [2] Richardson's careful planning can be seen from the start. At the beginning of the novel through Anna Howe's letter, he introduces the main characters Clarissa and Lovelace, and the relationship of their families to each other. This opening letter is in the guise of an inquiry, but it is more like an expository letter, as Richardson has Anna touch on all the main concerns of the novel.

In "Letter I" we find out that Clarissa is Anna's "dearest friend," we learn about the "disturbances" in the Harlowe family and about Clarissa's "distinguished merits." The duel, James' "fierce and uncontrollable temper," and "generous" Mr. Lovelace are mentioned (I, 1-2). The reactions of Anna's "mother," Clarissa's "uncles," and her "younger sister" are described (I, 2). And in the postscripts, Anna asks for the "preamble to the clauses" in Clarissa's grandfather's will which was the cause of the whole problem.[3]

After such an introduction comes Clarissa's first letter. We have been prepared by Anna for one who is "so steady, so uniform in conduct" and one who excels all her sex (I, 2). Clarissa's opening paragraph is a good example of her personality as shown by her writing style. She writes:

> How you oppress me, my dearest friend; with your politeness! I cannot doubt your sincerity; but you should take care that you give me not reason from your kind partiality to call in question your judgement. You do not distinguish that I take many admirable hints from you, and have the art to pass them upon you for my own. For in all you do, in all you say, nay, in your very looks (so animated!) you give lessons, to one who loves you and observes you as I love and observe you, without knowing that you do -- so pray, my dear, be more sparing of your praise for the future, lest after this confession we should suspect that you secretly intend to praise yourself, while you would be thought only to commend another. (I, 3)

There are three sentences in this noticeably long paragraph. Clarissa, like Richardson, is very conscious of what she writes. She wants to make sure that her readers understand her correctly. Thus, she often makes a statement, qualifies the meaning and then adds to it. For example, she writes, "For in all you do, in all you say, nay, in your very looks... you give lessons (I, 3).

Clarissa is scrupulous in her use of language. Her sentences are usually long and convoluted because she is concerned with exactness. If one word or phrase is inadequate to express what she really feels, she uses many to make sure that her whole idea is there. For example, she says Anna gives her lessons not only in what she does, but in what she says, and in what she looks like. Clarissa not only loves

Anna, but observes her actions. It is inadequate to say that she loves Anna only, because it would imply a blind kind of adoration. To say that she "loves and observes" her gives the full import of studying her with good or kind intentions. As Mark Kinkead-Weekes says:

> Hers is primarily an analytic mode in which words are taken seriously, weighed against one another, assayed by repeated examination. The structure of her sentences has a constant tendency to balance and antithesis, moving words into meaningful collocation or distinction...there is a large conceptual vocabulary, aiming at precision.[4]

Hence the need for these long sentences.

Although Clarissa is supposed to be writing about her own affairs--Anna has asked, "write... the whole of your story," -- this first paragraph has more second person than first person pronouns. Clarissa begins her story not with herself, as most autobiographers do, but with concerns about her "dearest friend." She says, "How you oppress me,... with your politeness," "You do not distinguish," and "For in all you do..." (I, 3). Richardson shows Clarissa's generous and unselfish nature. In the author's preface, she is "proposed as an examplar to her sex" (I, xiv). From the start, we are to see Clarissa as "this truly admirable creature," as Lovelace later says (I, 145).

In contrast to Lovelace's, Clarissa's writing is full of words relating to virtue and goodness. She does not doubt Anna's "sincerity," but chides her for her "politeness," "kind partiality" and "judgement." Clarissa takes many

"admirable hints" from Anna (I, 3). At once we are made aware of Clarissa's inherent goodness, her gentle manners and her fine moral character. Her first paragraph reveals her partiality to fairness and honesty. Unlike Lovelace's, her vocabulary, like her character, is full of goodness and sincerity.

Another example of Clarissa's long sentence comes shortly after:

> For whether it be owing to a faulty impatience having been too indulgently treated to be inured to blame, or to the regret I have to hear those censured on my account whom it is my duty to vindicate; I have sometimes wished that it had pleased God to have taken me in my last fever, when I had everybody's love and good opinion; but oftener that I had never been distinguished by my grandfather as I was: since that distinction has estranged from me my brother's and sister's affections; at least, has raised a jealousy with regard to the apprehended favour of my two uncles, that now and then overshadows their love. (I, 4)

This sentence is so long it takes up a whole paragraph. Richardson shows how thoroughly and carefully Clarissa thinks something out before saying it. She says, "For whether it be owing to a faulty impatience or to the regret I have to hear those censured on my account..." and makes sure she has not neglected any possibilities. Unlike Lovelace who feels that he has a right to be vain about "self-taught, self-acquired" attributes such as "the gracefulness of dress,...debonair, and ... assurance" (I, 146), Clarissa regrets that she is praised and distinguished as her merits have only caused jealousy and unhappiness.

At this early stage Richardson foreshadows the conclusion of the novel. He gives us a hint of Clarissa's extraordinarily calm attitude towards death. She wishes sometimes "that it had pleased God" to have taken her in her last illness. Her sense of God's mercy and benevolence is so strong that she has absolutely no fear of death. She has no close friend other than Anna. The ties of affection binding her to this world are few. Clarissa is aware that this world is not really her home, so when she writes later of "my father's house" (IV, 157), she literally means it. The death wish at the end of the novel becomes probable and believable when we see how Richardson has prepared us for it from the start.

In telling the "little history," Clarissa is aware that her version of the story may be biased (I, 4). She promises to "recite facts only," leaving her readers to "judge the truth of the report raised that the younger sister has robbed the elder" (I, 4). Her sense of reporting the truth can be contrasted with Mr. Elias Brand, the extremist of biased opinions and of the perversion of truth. Brand has no qualms about bringing preconceived notions and prejudices into his narration. He relies on other's accounts, never bothering to verify the story.

On the other hand, Clarissa promises to "be as particular as you desire," to "give...minute descriptions," and not to "pass by the air and manner in which things are spoken" (I, 4,5).[5] She tells Bella's story not from other

people's accounts, but from what Bella herself has told her, emphasizing the fact that she was absent at her "Dairy-house" (I, 4) when it all happened. She reports the Lovelace-Bella courtship verbatim, as Bella has told her.

Despite her care, there is a certain amount of spirit in Clarissa's transcription of her sister's story. Her use of italics in Bella's speech aids in creating a self-satisfied, and later comical, picture of Bella. Clarissa reports what Bella says, with comments of her own: "So handsome a man! -- O her beloved Clary! (for then she was ready to love me dearly from the overflowings of her good humour on his account!) He was but too handsome a man for her!" (I, 5). Clarissa's changing of Bella's address to her in the third person makes the phrase of endearment sound false, as it must have sounded to her. She sees through her sister's fits of affection: unlike Anna, Bella loves Clarissa only when her own prospects are assured.

In general she is a careful reporter. What she does not know, she does not claim to know. She is hesitant about her narrative, using phrases like "it seems," or she tells us: "How they managed it in their next conversation I know not" (I, 7). Her own opinions are set off either by brackets or an apologetic comment. She quotes Bella: "It was bash-fulness in Mr. Lovelace, my dear)!" (I, 6). Or she says, "Then my poor sister is not naturally good-humoured. This is

too well known a truth for me to endeavor to conceal it, especially from you" (I, 7). Clarissa does colour her narrative with her own opinions, but with justifiable reasons. Unlike Lovelace who deliberately perverts or twists perspectives until one does not know whether he is lying to himself or not, Clarissa's narrative remains throughout the novel as the most reliable source of truth for the reader, despite Samuel Johnson's observation that "there is always something which she prefers to truth."

Clarissa's reliability as a narrator is shown by Richardson's arrangement of the letters. Her narrative dominates the first section of the novel. [6] Her accounts of what happens at Harlowe Place are not contradicted by anyone else, unlike the highly dubious versions told by Lovelace of what later happens which have to be qualified by Clarissa's account. Richardson lets Clarissa be the sole teller of the tale at this stage. Her version of the story is the version he wants us to have.

Unlike Lovelace or Lord M. who have to resort to clichéd sayings and proverbs for a means of expression, Clarissa does not use quotations to back up her arguments very much. Instead, her strength lies in her original, clear and well-thought-out way of stating her ideas. One of the few places where she does cite a quotation occurs at the end of Letter II. Clarissa is having a bit of fun with Bella's "encouraging denial" at this point (I, 8). She quotes

Miss Biddulph's "answer to a copy of verses from a gentleman, reproaching our sex as acting in disguise" (I, 8). Although written and used in jest, the verse emphasizes the need to "put off disguise, and be sincere" (I, 8). It denounces "false hearts" and "dissembling parts" (I, 8). It is interesting to note that later Lovelace's first quotation expresses the very opposite sentiments. Lovelace praises one who "does but act a part" and says that he "must practise for this art" in order to succeed with Clarissa (I, 145). Clearly, Richardson wants us to see from the start how his two main characters are poles apart and unsuitable for each other. We can see why the author adamantly refused Lady Bradshaigh's pleas to "be merciful" and to give the novel a happy ending. [7]

Letter II closes with "Here I am obliged to lay down my pen. I will soon resume it" (I, 8). This phrase, of not much consequence at this point, becomes increasingly more important as the story progresses. Clarissa here is "obliged" to lay down her pen probably for a trifling reason: perhaps she is called down to tea or to supper. But as the problem of her marriage and suitor become more serious, Clarissa is "obliged" to lay down her pen, forced to give up one of her greatest delights, not only by authorities like her parents, her "friends" and relatives, but even by Lovelace and the servants. She will no longer be able to "resume" writing or use scribbling as the "innocent" employment between friends (I, 8, 50). As Lovelace's shadow invades Clarissa's happy

world, the act of writing becomes a dark and desperate attempt to preserve order. A letter from Anna becomes Clarissa's only hope, her only means of communication with the sane and moral world which she has known all her life.

Clarissa's way of telling how Lovelace transfers his attention from Bella to her is in keeping with her character. She starts: "It was immediately observed that his attention was fixed on me" (I, 9). Although she herself is the focus of this story, she does not start with the first person point of view, but rather with an impersonal observation. She goes on to give the reactions of her "haughty" sister, her "pleased" Aunt Hervey, her hesitant mother, her delighted uncles and her dubious father before she writes about her own reactions (I, 9-10). In contrast to Anna Howe who is spontaneous and outspoken, and who, placed in Clarissa's circumstances, would have started the narrative with her own exaggerated reactions, Clarissa leaves her opinion for the last. She answers prudently that she "did not like him at all; he seemed to have too good an opinion both of his person and parts to have any great regard to his wife" (I, 10).

Another example of her prudence and sagacity can be seen in her exceptionally perceptive comments. Clarissa is only a young girl of eighteen, but she seems to understand life and human nature very well. Talking about Lovelace's indulgent parents and lax upbringing, she says: "A case too common in considerable families where there is an only son,

and his mother never had any child" (I, 11). Checking herself lest her attitude is too disrespectful, she says later: "It is not for a child to seek to clear her own character, or to justify her actions, at the expense of the most revered ones" (I, 20). Realizing the unreliability of people's praises, she says: "Our flatterers will tell us anything sooner than our faults, or what they know we do not like to hear: (I, 23). About giving in to men she says, "Our sex perhaps must expect to bear a little--uncourtliness shall I call it? -- from the husband whom as the lover they let know the preference their hearts gave him to all other men" (I, 23). These statements are just a few examples of her prudence and wisdom. Her letters can be read, as Richardson intended, "not... only to divert and amuse," but as a guide for young ladies (I, xv).

In this first letter Clarissa explains why she writes. She derives a real pleasure from writing, using it as an instructive and healthy pastime. She says: "Still the less perhaps as I love writing; and those who do, are fond, you know, of occasions to use the pen" (I, 12). While Lovelace writes to show off his ability, Clarissa writes for herself, to create order within and somehow to find consolation and comfort. She says: "So that when I could not change the subject, I used to retire either to my music or to my closet" (I, 15). Clarissa's attitude to solitude, her turning inward for help are signs of her maturity and self-reliance.

The form of writing which is the epitome of solitude is the journal. Two of the best diary-keepers of all times are Samuel Pepys and James Boswell, of the seventeenth and the eighteenth century. As well as manifesting a need to record and to keep track of a busy life, journal writing shows a desire to explore and examine the conscience. One can tell a diary what one could not tell others. Laurence Stone says of writing in the eighteenth century:

> Literacy is probably a necessary pre-condition for the growth of introspection...writing and reading, unlike the telling of tales by the fireside, are inherently lonely occupations. Unless he is reading aloud, which often happened in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the individual is carrying on an interview between himself and the writing on the page, and this inanimate object, this page of paper covered with lines in ink, provided the essential means of communication for the new sensibility. The growth of literacy...created a literature of self-exploration, from the novel to the love letter. [8]

The narrators of many of the literature of this century are thus often solitary, detached observers. The fact that they read and write sets them apart from others. In poetry, there are such pieces as Edward Young's "Night Thoughts" and Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard." In prose fiction, there are such books as John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe, Moll Flanders, A Journal of the Plague Year and Roxana, and Laurence Sterne's Tristram Shandy. The protagonists of these works are all outside society, either through exile or by choice. They stand apart from the norm and from conventional society, and

are all concerned with recording, writing about themselves and their "history." Richardson's Pamela and Clarissa, although set in a very social world like the rest of these books, show the peculiarly eighteenth century tendency towards self-analysis and introspection.

Clarissa's love of writing links her to the man who, according to Bella, "had a tolerable knack of writing and describing" (I, 12). Although Richardson introduces Lovelace at the very beginning of the novel, his first letter does not appear until thirty letters (Richardson's count) have passed between Clarissa and Anna. Richardson builds up his reader's curiosity about Lovelace before he allows Lovelace himself to enter the novel with his own narrative. Various people have warned us earlier of Lovelace's "spirit" (I, 2), his great "birth, his fortune in possession" (I, 5), his "bad character" (I, 6), his "vivacity and courage" (I, 14) and his "libertine" tendencies (I, 63). His first letter, full of his trademarks, lives up to all the expectations we have of him.

Lovelace starts his letter by writing: "In vain dost thou and thy compeers press me to go to town, while I am in such an uncertainty as I am at present with this proud beauty" (I, 144). Richardson accounts for Lovelace's use of "thee" and "thou" in a footnote saying: "These gentlemen affected what they called the Roman style" (I, 144). This second-person familiar pronoun is used by the Quakers to show

familiarity and simplicity. In the case of Lovelace and his "compeers", simplicity is not the object; rather, their use of "thee" and "thou" is deliberately affected, reminding us of poetry, of Shakespeare and of Restoration theatre. Lovelace and his friends not only behave like Restoration rakes, they speak like them.

In this first sentence he calls Clarissa his "proud beauty." Lovelace has a way of projecting himself into others. He often accuses others of faults of which he himself is guilty. Up until this point Clarissa's treatment of Lovelace has not really been "proud." She has consented to write to him despite the objections of her family. It is Lovelace whose pride is hurt because for once he has met someone who is not an easy conquest. His calling her "proud beauty" shows his tendency to see his own faults in others.

At the same time, "proud beauty" is a conventional phrase used by poets and rejected suitors. In this long first letter, Lovelace never refers to Clarissa by her simple name. He never perceives her for what she really is, even at her deathbed. Rather, his conception of her is his own creation from the start, an imaginative and fanciful one. She is "the lady," "my charmer," "an adored beauty," "this truly admirable creature," "this angel of a woman," "the divinity," "a goddess," "the divine Clarissa Harlowe," "this charming frost-piece," "an angel", "the beloved of my soul," "fair one", "most exalted of female minds," and "loveliest of persons" (I, 144-149).

These appellations show not only his creative and fertile mind, but his familiarity with the conventions of Renaissance courtly poetry and Restoration drama.

For Lovelace, Clarissa is the ideal woman, the perfect subject for his poetic energy. He is the romantic courtier who honours women in sonnets. Inspired by "those confounded poets, with their serenely-celestial descriptions" as much as by the lady, he tells Belford about his "desire to become a goddess-maker" (I, 145). He says:

> I must needs try my new-fledged pinions in sonnet, elegy, and madrigal. I must have a Cynthia, a Stella, a Sacharissa... darts, and flames, and the devil knows what, must I give to my Cupid. I must create beauty, and place it where nobody else would find it: and many times have I been at a loss for a subject, when my new-created goddess has been kinder than it was proper for my plaintive sonnet that she should be. (I, 145-146)

As long as Clarissa remains exalted and out of reach, she provides him with all the inspiration he needs to write. To him, she is the ultimately perfect, as well as the ultimately unreal woman.

In the same passage, one can see Lovelace's obsession with possession. He must not only "create beauty" but must "place it where nobody else [can] find it." The tendency to possess shown here anticipates his abduction of Clarissa to the London brothel where "nobody else would find" her. Not contented with having a subject for his poems, he wants an attentive subject who will worship him and watch his every move. Like an actor, he needs an audience to which he can play his best parts.

If Lovelace were on stage, he would be full of exaggerated gestures and dramatic poses. On paper, this extravagance comes out in his frequent use of the superlative. Lovelace says that Clarissa's suitor Mr. Solmes is the "most unpromising in his person and qualities, the most formidable in his offers" (I, 144). Clarissa's father is "a father the most gloomy and positive." Her brother is "the most arrogant and selfish" (I, 144). Lovelace sees Clarissa as the ultimate goal or conquest; her family then becomes the ultimate enemy or obstacle to the prize. His verbal pictures of them are exaggerated, fantastic and unreal. In his mind, he recreates their characters, conceptualizing them in highly distorted, theatrical terms.

Unlike Clarissa's serious and sober style, Lovelace's is jocular, spontaneous and lively. He writes as fast as he thinks, or so it seems, as his sentences overflow with his own questions and comments: "Why, I'll tell thee what, as near as I can remember; for it was a great while ago: it was --egad, Jack, I can hardly tell what it was -- but a vehement aspiration after a novelty, I think" (I, 145). While Clarissa's sentences are long because she is concerned with exactness, Lovelace's are long because he digresses and indulges in "dashes, rhetorical questions and dramatic asides" [9] used to attract and sustain audience's attention. His art of conversation -- the direct address to the listener, the comic exaggeration, the seemingly confiding tone -- is all part of his charm and sophistication. His ability to make fun of himself and his past follies adds to his attractiveness.

Lovelace compares himself to a "hero in romance" (I, 149). His writing is full of imaginative metaphors and fantastic comparisons. Often, his images are derived from the animal kingdom. In this first letter, he writes, "to be proud of what a man is answerable for the abuse of, and has no merit in the right use of, is to strut, like the jay, in a borrowed plumage" (I, 146). Another example of bird imagery is found when he talks about his first "fair jilt." He says, "And when the bird was flown, I set more value upon it, than when I had it safe in my cage, and could visit it when I pleased" (I, 146). He compares men and women not to higher beings such as angels, but to beast or fowl, or even to inanimate objects. This tendency to look down from his level of creation for examples and metaphors reminds us of Milton's Satan who also looks down. Satan takes the shape of a cormorant or a toad, and his final downfall gives us a hint of what will happen to Lovelace.

Using metaphors is a way of distancing, objectifying, and even recreating an experience. Lovelace uses metaphors as a way of control, diminishing other people's importance and exaggerating his own power in his images. He makes Joseph Leman a "double-faced agent" which enables him to "dance his employer upon [his] own wires" (I, 147). He tells Belford that "By this engine, whose springs I am continually oiling, I play them all off" (I, 147). Kinkead-Weekes points out that Lovelace is "Imperial...His Imperialism expresses itself in tone of address (Thee and Thou), in metaphors of power, warfare and

conquest, and in his attitudes to language itself." [10] Lovelace sees himself as a powerful, Tamburlaine-like king: "Then shall I have all the rascals and rascalesses of the family come creeping to me: I prescribing to them; and bringing that sordidly-imperious brother to kneel at the footstool of my throne" (I, 148). This fantasy, like many of the fantasies he later has of Clarissa and of Anna, is really on the brink of madness. One of Lovelace's greatest talents may be his imaginative ability, but it is this same ability which leads to his and to Clarissa's destruction. His belief that he can create and control his own world makes him unable to face up to reality until it is too late.

Like a guilty person caught at his own game, Lovelace denies charges laid against him too vehemently and rather suspiciously. He says that he is proud but denies being a hypocrite:

> I have no notion of playing the hypocrite so egregiously, as to pretend to be blind to qualifications which every one sees and acknowledges. Such praise-begging hypocrisy! Such affectedly disclaimed attributes! Such contemptible praise-traps! But yet, shall my vanity extend only to <u>personals.</u> (I, 146)

One notices the great number of words relating to precisely the fault that he denies having. He uses words like "playing," "hypocrite," "hypocrisy," "affectedly" and "contemptible praise-traps." For a person who does not practise the art of hypocrisy, he certainly knows a lot about it. Richardson is aware of the fact that what one writes or what one says is often what one is preoccupied with at that moment. Although Lovelace

thinks he is no hypocrite, his frequent references to hypocrisy suggest how deeply it is imbedded in him.

Whereas Clarissa's language is full of meditation and moderation, Lovelace's is full of passion and extremes. He finds "the workings of the passion of [his] stormy soul" best expressed by Dryden:

> But raging flames tempestuous souls invade!
> A fire, which ev'ry windy passion blows;
> With Pride it mounts, and with Revenge it glows.
> (I, 147)

Fire is an apt image for what Lovelace feels. His love, like fire, burns at a high temperature and destroys the things around it. It flares up quickly and consumes itself. As Kinkead-Weekes says, "The main tradition behind [Lovelace] is that of Restoration tragedy, and he himself is aware of this discrimination between the stormy rageful lover (which he prefers) and the softer kind, between Dryden and Otway." [11] Ironically enough, "raging flames" do "invade" "tempestuous souls" literally later on in the story. As Lovelace gains control of Clarissa and her world, his poetic metaphors become literal. Part of Lovelace's fantasy becomes reality in the fire scene when he succeeds in rousing the half-clothed Clarissa from her sleep into his arms.

Lovelace emphasizes the phrase, "with Revenge it <u>shall</u> glow!" (I, 147). The word "glow" is used earlier on in the novel by Anna Howe when she asks Clarissa if she "glows" as she reads about Lovelace. She alarms Clarissa by insinuating that Clarissa's breast goes "throb, throb, throb" with regard to Lovelace (I, 46). The use of the same word by Anna and Lovelace

suggests a link between the two characters. They are both more worldly and more sophisticated than Clarissa. As Anna says to Clarissa, "I am fitter for this world than you; you for the next than me"(I, 43). Like Lovelace, Anna is a woman of the world. In both their writing, they use words like "love," "throb," and "glow." Their daring and passionate spirits enable them to express sentiments which Clarissa does not even know or dare acknowledge that she possesses.

Lovelace's power and mainpulative skill show not only through his use of metaphors, but in his sentence structure. He is the puppeteer who controls the wires, in actions as well as in language. In his first letter, he exhibits his skill as a rhetorician. He boasts: "This, therefore, if I take my measures right, and my familiar fail me not, will secure her mine in spite of them all, in spite of her own inflexible heart: mine, without reformation promises, without the necessity of a siege of years" (I, 148). Lovelace uses the anaphoric repetition of the phrases "in spite of" and "without..." to impress and give a semblance of might and power. He, as well as his readers, becomes convinced of his ability to "secure" Clarissa "in spite of them all."

He uses anaphora again when he writes: "Else could I bear the perpetual revilings of her implacable family? Else could I basely creep about -- not her proud father's house -- but his paddock and garden walls? Else should I think myself repaid, amply repaid, if the fourth, fifth, or sixth midnight

stroll, through unfrequented paths, and over briery enclosures, affords one a few cold lines" (I, 149). In this case, the sentences beginning with "else" create the rhythm and cadence which Lovelace wants. He would like Belford to believe that he is doing "all for love." The deliberate use of such a rhetorical device is characteristic of Lovelace: he is full of art while Clarissa writes with naturalness, with "ease and simplicity."

When Lovelace describes Clarissa to Belford, he becomes the plaintive sonneteer. He resorts to art as a means of expression, copying the poets and playwrights. He writes of his "charming frost-piece": "such a constant glow upon her lovely features: eyes so sparkling: limbs so divinely turned: health so florid: youth so blooming: air so animated-- to have an heart so impenetrable" (I, 148). His description of her is like a literary blazon, and sounds more like a Renaissance picture of an ideal woman rather than a healthy young girl of nineteen. It is vague enough to fit any beautiful woman as it has no specifications as to such things as colour of hair or eyes. Lovelace does not desire to have Clarissa so much for her individuality or for her personality as for her appropriateness as a subject for his poetic fancy. She represents the "most exalted of female minds, and loveliest of persons" (I, 149).

As well as a sonneteer, Lovelace imagines himself the hero of a romance or a tragedy. He does not detach himself from what he sees in the theatres; rather, he feels that he is

the hero himself. In this letter, he quotes Shakespeare saying: "Perdition catch my soul, but I do love her" and "Full many a lady / I've eye'd with best regard;...But She! O She!/ So perfect and so peerless is created, / Of ev'ry creature's best" (I, 149, 150). Othello and The Tempest are both plays which are full of the exotic and the romantic. Lovelace sees himself embarking on a similar wildly romantic venture. Like Othello, he tries to win the affections of a daughter against the wishes of her father. Both Othello and Lovelace woo their women initially with words, with stories. But unlike Othello, Lovelace does what Brabantio fears: he enchants Clarissa "with foul charms, / Abus'd her delicate youth with drugs or minerals / That weakens motion." [12]

Like Ferdinand, Lovelace has to work before he can have his lady. He does not have to "remove/ Some thousands of these logs," [13] but he does have to use his ingenuity to thwart Clarissa's family. Both Desdemona and Miranda, like Clarissa, are precious jewels, protected maidens "never bold; / Of spirit so still and quiet that her motion / Blush'd at herself." [14] Lovelace sees Clarissa as such a protected innocent "fair one," saying that she has "mere cradle prejudices" against him (I, 149, 148). Unfortunately, like Othello, Lovelace eventually kills the "beloved of [his] soul" (I, 149).

At this point, the whole courtship is but a game of skill to Lovelace. He says, "Thou art curious to know, if I have not started a new game" (I, 150). He uses military terms,

telling Belford that the affair holds "such a field for stratagem and contrivance" and "the rewarding end of all...what a triumph" (I, 150). He wants to "contrive a method," and has to be careful of the "confederacy" against him (I, 151). He plays a game of sexual politics and his triumph over Clarissa is a "triumph over the whole sex!" He says: "And then such a revenge to gratify; which is only at present politically reined-in" (I, 150). These words show how flippant, irresponsible, and vengeful he is. Ruining a girl is just a sport, a way of entertainment, a piece of "glorious mischief" (I, 151).

Lovelace's irresponsible and flippant attitude towards life lets him take great liberties with language. He tells Belford that "the uncles and the nephew are <u>now</u> to be <u>double</u>-servanted (<u>single</u>-servanted they were before); and those servants are to be <u>double</u>-armed when they attend their masters abroad" (I, 151). He later invents phrases, using such terms as "out-Norrissed" and "all Belforded over" (IV, 134). Anthony Kearney says of him:

> His verbal energy and misdirected originality far outshine anyone else's in the novel and stem from his deepest impulse to create his own world. [15]

Lovelace does succeed in creating his own world to a certain extent. He snatches Clarissa from her real home and places her in the fake world of the Sinclairs, complete with fake fires, fake aunts, fake letters, fake mediators and fake servants.

The only other characters who invent words in a similar manner are people who resemble Lovelace in spirit. Anna says that she thinks her good mama is "Antony'd" into chiding her for writing to Clarissa (II, 3). Clarissa's brother says that

she has "out-grandfathered" Bella and him, and will "out-uncle" them (I, 58). Richardson links these three seemingly different characters together by their inventive handling of language and their misuse of words. Like Lovelace, Anna and James have strong, independent wills and this spirit is shown in their not conforming to the rules of the language. All three are temperamental, impetuous, outspoken and rash in their speech and writing.

Lovelace closes his letter with an imperial order: "I command thee to be pleased: if not for the writer's, or written's sake, for thy word's sake" (I, 152). He claims "in the royal style" to be Belford's "king" and "emperor" in the "great affair," an appropriately kingly exit from his first appearance (I, 152). He later uses this same metaphor frequently in his other letters, maintaining his status.

Lovelace's first letter, as we have seen, is full of wit, ingenuity and humour, qualities found in almost all his letters. While Clarissa's letter writing subsequently goes through important stages, Lovelace's remains jocular and sparklingly amusing throughout. Clarissa's style and her thinking change and develop in the course of the novel, whereas all of Lovelace's stylistic trademarks, his attitudes and habits have already been dexterously captured in this brilliant first letter.

NOTES

[1] John Carroll, ed., Selected Letters of Samuel Richardson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 71, 235.

[2] Frederick W. Hilles, "The Plan of Clarissa", Philological Quarterly, XLV (1966), 236-48.

[3] See Christopher Hill, "Clarissa Harlowe and Her Times", Essays in Criticism, V (1955), 315-40. Christopher Hill's article studies the effect of property marriage on individuals. Clarissa's grandfather "passed over his sons and elder grandchildren in favour of Clarissa, " causing James to be jealous and to be afraid of her and what Lovelace's proposals to her may do to the rest of the family.

[4] Mark Kinkead-Weekes, Samuel Richardson: Dramatic Novelist (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973), pp. 435-36.

[5] I disagree with Nancy Fawcett, "Beyond Words: The Language of 'Clarissa'" (Hamilton: McMaster University Master's Thesis, 1981) who believes that Clarissa displays an "ironic sense of humour" and that Clarissa "launches into a highly subjective account of her sister's behaviour" (p. 7). Clarissa's account is subjective only as far as anyone who has ever tried to tell a story about himself is subjective.

[6] Donald Ball, Samuel Richardson's Theory of Fiction (The Hague: Mouton & Co., N.V. Publishers, 1971), pp. 140 - 146. Donald Ball gives the mathematical proportions of the correspondents out of 537 letters or 3092 pages in the VIII volume edition.

[7] T.C. Duncan Eaves and Ben D. Kimpel, Samuel Richardson: A Biography (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 221-222.

[8] Lawrence Stone, The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800, Abridged Edition (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1977), p. 154.

[9] Nancy Fawcett, "Beyond Words," p. 41.

[10] Kinkead-Weekes, Richardson, p. 437.

[11] Ibid., p. 439.

[12] William Shakespeare, The Tragedy of Othello (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., The Riverside Shakespeare, 1974), I, ii, 73-75.

[13] Shakespeare, The Tempest (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., The Riverside Shakespeare, 1974), II, ii, 9-10.

[14] Shakespeare, Othello, I, iii, 94-95.

[15] Anthony Kearney, Samuel Richardson: Clarissa (London: Edward Arnold Publishers, 1975), p. 57.

Chapter II

FORTH FROM THE GARDEN

The Abduction of Clarissa

People who read Clarissa hastily or people who try to give a synopsis of the novel often misread and misunderstand the garden scene. Take, for example, Laurence Stone's brief plot summary:

> The heroine of the novel, who comes from an aspiring gentry family, after much moral heart-searching finally refuses a purely mercenary match with the disagreeable Mr. Solmes, which had been arranged for her by her parents. She elopes instead with a dissolute squire, who rapes her when under the influence of drugs. She then dies, consumed with guilt, but as morally pure as when the story began. [1]

Stone, of course, is interested mainly in the sociological-historical aspects of the novel. But his use of the word "elope" shows his misunderstanding of what actually happens to Clarissa during her first meeting alone with Lovelace. Although she is reluctant to admit it, Clarissa, like Pamela, has been "vilely tricked" and "carried off" by Lovelace. [2] She later repents of disobeying her parents, of corresponding with Lovelace, and of "meeting him" (II, 28), but she does not "elope" with him.

Interestingly enough, the meeting with Lovelace which results in Clarissa's "fall" is set in the garden. The garden is the only place where such an incident could have taken place.

Although the garden is outdoors and natural, it is landscaped and controlled, containing a "poultry-yard," the "ivy summer-house," a "high yew hedge...which divides the yard from the garden," paths and walls (I, 266, 474). It is very much part of the Harlowe estate, yet the only place in which Clarissa is free to move apart from in her own room.

Richardson uses the setting of the garden, conscious of all the ideas associated with it.[3] Maynard Mack says: "The memory of the first garden was never far away from the minds of those who worked in gardens, or wrote about them, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries."[4] Writers such as Marvell and Milton have used the garden as metaphors in their work.[5]

The Harlowe's garden is full of "man-made" things: fences, summer houses, paths, etc. Margaret Anne Doody points out how Clarissa likes "improvements": with her work, "The Grove" becomes the "Dairy House," a move in "anti-romantic, anti-pastoral direction."[6] Richardson realizes the full possibilities of human action. God-given nature can be used wisely and productively, as well as foolishly. The garden can be a place of comfort and delight, or a place of unease and unhappiness. Clarissa has so far managed to make good use of her gifts, her natural talents, but when Lovelace enters, she falters and makes a wrong decision.

Although very much part of the supervised Harlowe estate, for Clarissa, as for Eve, the garden is a place of freedom and

choice. Clarissa chooses to disobey her parents and to correspond with Lovelace through the loose bricks in the garden wall. Her one mistake leads her into deeper entanglements, just as Eve's mistake in listening to Satan's sweet words leads her into the "rash" action of plucking the fruit and eating it. [7]

Clarissa's account of the garden scene is written at St. Alban's, after she has been tricked into leaving by Lovelace. Her narrative is factual and detailed. She records what happens from her point of view. In contrast to Lovelace's account of the same incident which is full of triumph and glee, Clarissa's is full of self-reproaches and regrets. She is, however, still very much in control of herself. Her writing is objective and thoughtful, and shows her good sense and her excellent reasoning power.

She tells Anna that she "argued" with herself thus that day:

> Wednesday cannot possibly be the day they intend, although to intimidate me they may wish me to think it is: for the settlements are unsigned: nor have they been offered me to sign. I can choose whether I will or will not put my hand to them; hard as it will be to refuse if my father tender them to me -- besides, did not my father and mother propose, if I made compulsion necessary, to go to my uncle's themselves, in order to be out of the way of my appeals? Whereas they intend to be present on Wednesday. (I, 474)

This extract shows several important things about Clarissa's character. It reveals her logical and objective way of reasoning. She does not jump to conclusions nor think only of one aspect of the question, but she examines and analyzes things.

Like the opening paragraph of her first letter, this paragraph shows her careful and serious personality. She weighs all matters and takes everything into consideration. Her argument with herself shows that she did not have any intention of going away or "eloping" with Lovelace that day. It takes all of Lovelace's cunning and ingenious planning to frighten her into his coach.

Clarissa shows her intelligence and her ability to handle situations. She realizes that she can choose not to "put" her "hand" to the settlements (I, 474). Her parents cannot physically force her to marry Solmes. Like Lovelace, she anticipates things, knowing that it will be "hard...to refuse" if her father tenders the papers to her (I, 474). Up to now, she is able to decide and judge what is best for her and to act accordingly. But when she becomes involved with Lovelace, who is also a master in anticipating and planning, she meets her match. Unfortunately for her, he has already decided what she will do at this point.

Although Clarissa is telling Anna the exciting news of going "off with a man", she does not exaggerate to create a sensation in her letter as Anna would have (I, 471). She tells events as they happen, wondering if she has fallen into "a wicked snare" laid by her brother and sister (I, 475). She is full of worldly wisdom, saying such things as, "In what a point of time may one's worldly happiness depend!" and "O my dear! an obliging temper is a very dangerous temper.

By endeavouring to gratify others it is evermore disobliging itself;" (I, 475, 476). She realizes her mistake in wanting to "personally acquaint" Lovelace with the reason for her change of mind (I, 475). It has led her to her troubles.

Clarissa's immediate reaction to Lovelace's person shows her attraction to him, and, at the same time, her fear of him. She says, "A panic next to fainting seized me when I saw him. My heart seemed convulsed; and I trembled so, that I should hardly have kept my feet had he not supported me" (I, 476). Her reactions are genuine and hardly surprising for a girl of eighteen. Most of her contacts with men have so far been in the safety of the drawing room. The garden is isolated and lonely in comparison.

On the other hand, Lovelace's lines and gestures are rehearsed and artificial. He says, "Fear nothing, dearest creature...Let us hasten away -- the chariot is at hand..." (I, 476). Throughout the garden scene, he acts the part of the seducer, fully in control of the situation and of Clarissa's feelings.

As in his first letter, Lovelace makes use of appellations. He calls Clarissa "my dearest creature," "my dear life," "my charmer," "my angel," "my dearest life," always acting the part of the persistent lover (I, 476-478). He is too insistent about his honour and intentions, swearing often. He says: "by all that's good you must go. Surely you cannot doubt my honour, nor give me cause to question your own" and

later, "By all that's sacred I will not leave you" (I, 477). His oaths and insistence verge on melodrama and have the ring of insincerity, as Clarissa's detailed transcription of their conversation shows. Her natural, genuine, reactions and feelings during this meeting are in contrast with his stagey artificial speeches and gestures.

Lovelace uses his guile and ingenuity to keep Clarissa at the garden gate until he can carry out his plan. When warnings and threats do not work, he resorts to being gentle and penitent. Clarissa describes him having a "dejected but passionate air" at one point (I, 477). He argues with her, enumerates the "harsh treatment" she has met with, tells her how powerless she is, and urges her to "trust [her] persecuted adorer" (I, 478). Lovelace and his offers must have seemed an attractive temptation to Clarissa. One has to remember that she has been locked up and isolated from her family and friends for about two months by now. The only one she is allowed to see and to talk to is Betty Barnes, Arabella's saucy servant. At this meeting comes Lovelace, offering her love, adoration, protection and freedom from persecution. One can see how Clarissa is not to be blamed for listening and "marvelling" at the Satanic Lovelace's "fraudulent temptation." [8]

Among the many similes that Milton uses in Book Four of Paradise Lost to describe Satan in the garden is the comparison of him to a thief! Satan "overleaped all bound /

Of hill or high-est wall..." as a "prowling wolf...Or as a thief, bent to unhoard the cash / Of some rich burgher."[9] Similarly, Lovelace says to Clarissa: "I have long enough skulked like a thief about these lonely walls" (I, 481). Richardson's use of this same comparison shows that he must have had the story of the first garden in mind. Lovelace is a Satanic figure in Richardson's eyes and the author was surprised when young ladies shed tears for him. In a letter to Lady Bradshaigh, he says: "for fear such a Wretch should induce Pity, I threw into his character some deeper Shades. And as he now stands, I verily think that had I made him a worse Man, he must have been a Deveil." [10] As it turns out, Lovelace does become a "thief." He steals a precious daughter away from the Harlowes.

Another analogy to the story of the garden is in the character of Clarissa. Lovelace persists in seeing Clarissa as a paragon of her sex. As well as "divine" and "excellent" creature, he repeatedly calls Clarissa the "paragon of virtue" (II, 40, 36). He tells Belford: "I have concluded against the whole sex upon it... Is not then the whole sex concerned that this trial should be made?" (II, 40). Like Eve's, Clarissa's actions are taken to represent her whole sex by Lovelace. She is not just any woman, but the woman. When she falls, it is not only she who suffers and is injured, but all women.

In this scene, Clarissa is still in her own home, her garden and pseudo-paradise. She is not yet in Lovelace's power. Lovelace, the "vile encroacher," is the one who has to supplicate and kneel to her (I, 486). He does kneel, several times and very theatrically. Clarissa complains that he is the "ready kneeler" (I, 483). Lovelace's skill as a performer is shown in this scene and later in the fire incident. Clarissa tells us:

> He threw himself upon his knees at my feet. Who can bear, said he (with an ardour that could not be feigned, his own eyes glistening), who can bear to behold such sweet emotion? O charmer of my heart (and, respectfully still kneeling, he took my hand with both his, pressing it to his lips), command me with you, command me from you; in every way I am all implicit obedience. (I, 481)

Lovelace's pleading reminds one of an actor or lover pleading on stage. He uses one of the techniques of the dramatist, i.e. repetition: "Who can bear...who can bear..." and "command me... command me..." (I, 481). His "glistening" eyes convince Clarissa that his "ardour... could not be feigned" (I, 481). We later see how well Lovelace can act. In the fire incident, this scene is re-enacted, with tragic role reversals. Once Clarissa leaves her garden, the paradise and security of her father's house, the world seems to be turned upside down.

Clarissa's account of what it was that made her take flight and run into Lovelace's waiting coach is placed before Lovelace's letter to Joseph Leman explaining to the readers what he contrived to have happen at the garden gate. The sequence of these letters is an example of what Fred Kaplan

calls Richardson's use of "chronological discontinuity" and "delayed details." [11] By giving us Clarissa's point of view of the incident first, Richardson makes us share in her fear and terror, her anxiety and uncertainty of what actually happened.

Clarissa hears a mysterious voice behind the door crying: "Are you there? Come up this moment! -- this moment!" (I, 484) She panics as Lovelace tells her to "Fly, fly, my charmer; this moment is all you have for it" (I, 484). She writes:

> Now behind me, now before me, now on this side, now on that, turned I my affrighted face in the same moment; expecting a furious brother here, armed servants there, an enraged sister screaming, and a father armed with terror in his countenance more dreadful than even the drawn sword which I saw, or those I apprehended. I ran as fast as he; yet knew not that I ran! my fears adding wings to my feet, at the same time that they took all power of thinking from me. (I, 484)

Clarissa is tricked into running. She does not deliberately pack up and run away from home, as the word "elope" implies. Later, she becomes ashamed to narrate this incident as it happened because she feels that she is partly at fault: she chooses to meet Lovelace. Her family and friends do not know until a long time later that she did not "run away" from them on purpose.

About her "interview" with Lovelace, she says: "my indiscretion stares me in the face; and my shame and my grief give me a compunction that is more poignant methinks than

if I had a dagger in my heart" (I, 485). Richardson uses the image of the "dagger" in the heart several times in the novel in different ways. Here the "dagger" is just a metaphor that Clarissa uses, Earlier, she dreams of Lovelace who "stabbed" her "to the heart" and then "tumbled [her] into a deep grave ready dug" (I, 433). Much later, Lovelace dreams of himself "with a sword in [his] hand, offering either to put it up in the scabbard, or to thrust it into [his] heart, as she should command the one or the other" (IV, 136). He often says that he has to "steel" his "heart," that he may "cut through a rock of ice to hers" (II, 316). These daggers or swords are all imaginary, but they link together various scenes. The use of the same image is one way of unifying the long novel, as a leitmotif does in opera.

Daggers and sword also foreshadow events: Clarissa threatens Lovelace with a dimunitive form of a dagger in the penknife scene (III, 288-289), while Lovelace finally dies under Col. Morden's sword. Clarissa's use of the "dagger" image here is a clue to the importance of this scene. Along with the other memorable scenes, this fatal "interview" which gives her the painful "compunction" is a turning point in her life. Once the incident has passed, there is no going back. The garden gate is closed. Clarissa realizes her "rashness" afterwards. She says: "now that it is too late I plainly see how I ought to have conducted myself." (I, 486).

Lovelace's account of the same incident does not come

until much later and is vastly different in tone from Clarissa's. While her account ends with mortification: "oh, that I were again in my father's house" (I, 487), his ends with jubilation: "I shall be in all I write, of connection, accuracy, or of anything but of my own imperial will and pleasure" (I, 516). His letter is plainly triumphant, as he now has her where he wants her.

Lovelace still sees Clarissa as an unreal embodiment of perfection. He writes of his "goddess": "Indeed, I never had a more illustrious subject to exercise my pen upon " (I, 510). The first thing he delights in is not her company, but her appropriateness as a subject for his poetry. His letter to Belford about the garden scene dwells not on events but on the appearance of his "charmer" (I, 511).

It is true that Richardson has deliberately planned the novel so that not too much repetition occurs. Lovelace's and Clarissa's accounts of the same incident are never exactly the same. What is important is Richardson's choice of character to tell the story. The characters often colour the narrative with their own biases. In this case, Clarissa's account tells us what went on in the garden as far as she knows, while Lovelace' letter reveals more of his extraordinary personality than of what actually happened.

In this scene, Lovelace thinks of Clarissa as an angel. He tells Belford that "with the presence of my charmer, flashing upon me all at once in a flood of brightness, sweetly

dressed, though all unprepared for a journey, I trod air, and hardly thought myself a mortal" (I, 511). He does not just see Clarissa as the "flashing" angel, but he includes his own person in the fantasy. He "trod air," he says, and hardly feels like a mortal. One reason why Lovelace is such a "fascinating" character [12] is because of his capacity to invent and to act as if he himself believes in his fantasy. He does not distance himself from his daydreams, but writes of them as if they were real. In this way, intentionally or unintentionally, he confuses his readers, and perhaps, even himself. One never knows if Lovelace actually feels or believes what he says he goes through.

Lovelace gives Belford what he says is a "faint sketch of her admirable person with her dress" (I, 511). The sketch of Clarissa is not "faint" at all, but a very elaborate, detailed one. For example, he says of her:

> Her wax-like flesh (for, after all, flesh and blood I think she is), by its delicacy and firmness, answers for the soundness of her health. Thou hast often heard me launch out in praise of her complexion. I 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? But this lady is all glowing, all charming flesh and blood, yet so clear that every meandering vein is to be seen in all the lovely parts of her which custom permits to be visible. (I, 511)

This description of Clarissa is at once fanciful and humourous. Lovelace tries to describe her in terms of traditional meta-

phors: "wax-like flesh," the "lily and the driven snow," but finds that the comparisons are either inadequate or inappropriate (I, 511). His parenthetical comments, "flesh and blood I think she is," show his awareness of words, of the language he is using (I, 511). He is conscious of the literal meaning of the phrase, "wax-like flesh." His tone is ironic, as he mocks the poets who compare women to the "lily" or to "snow." Clarissa is no "whited wall" but a real "glowing," "charming flesh and blood" (I, 511).

Lovelace praises Clarissa for her "delicacy and firmness" and for her sound health (I, 511). He later says, "by a temperance truly exemplary, she is allowed to have given high health and vigour to an originally tender constitution" (I, 511-512). Clarissa is not only mentally capable, but she is physically strong and hardy for a young girl. It is all the more tragic then that, by the end of the novel, we see her withering away into precisely what Lovelace says she is not, a "white lily snapped short off and just falling from the stalk" (IV, 257).

Lovelace's description of Clarissa's clothes show his powers of observation and his eye for detail:

> Her head-dress was a Brussels lace mob, peculiarly adapted to the charming air and turn of her features. A sky-blue ribbon illustrated that. But although the weather was somewhat sharp, she had not on either hat or hood...
>
> Her morning gown was a pale primrose-coloured paduasoy: the cuffs and robings curiously embroidered by the fingers of this ever-charming Arachne, in a running pattern of violets and their leaves; the light in the flowers silver; gold in the leaves. A pair of diamond snaps in her ears.

> Her ruffles were the same as her mob. Her apron a flowered lawn. Her coat white satin, quilted: blue satin her shoes, braided with the same colour, without lace, for what need has the prettiest foot in the world or ornament? Neat buckles in them: and on her charming arms a pair of black velvet glove-like muffs of her own invention; for she makes and gives fashions as she pleases. (I, 511-512)

If one believes Lovelace's word, he manages to take note of all these details in just a matter of a few minutes, as Clarissa unbolts the door and comes out to meet him. He seizes her up from head to toe not missing anything. His knowledge of lace, ribbons and materials shows that he is a man of the world, familiar with women and their dressing habits.

He notices that Clarissa's "cuffs and robings" are "curiously embroidered by the fingers of this ever-charming Arachne" (I, 512). One remembers that in Ovid's Metamorphoses, Arachne, like Clarissa, is extremely talented. She is a maker, a doer and has no equal as a weaver. Unfortunately, her skill and pride bring her early tragedy: Pallas, out of jealousy, turns her into a spider. [13] Arachne's sad story, although not exactly the same as Clarissa's, foreshadows the present-day needle-worker's tragic end.

Lovelace says of Clarissa's feet: "blue satin shoes, braided with the same colour, without lace, for what need has the prettiest foot in the world of ornament" (I, 512). Lovelace's praise of Clarissa reveals something about himself. In contrast to her simplicity, he is the epitome of frivolity as his name, Love-lace, suggests. Margaret Anne Doody says that Lovelace "likes frills, the accessory decorations, that

furnish out the plain garb, that give subtle status, identity and difference to simple condition." [14] He recognizes the beauty of simplicity in Clarissa, but does not practise it himself.

Another quality that Lovelace admires in Clarissa is her invention and independence. He tells Belford, "she makes and gives fashions as she pleases" (I, 512). Clarissa does not have to follow the latest style to look good. Her creativity in dressing and her natural beauty make her more than attractive. Her dressing habit, like her writing style, shows her individuality and simplicity. By contrast, Lovelace is always conscious of the latest fashions and trends in London. His writing reflects his style of living.

Lovelace's letter reveals his base intentions towards Clarissa. He talks of her sexuality more than once. He says: "A white handkerchief...concealed -- O Belford! what still more inimitable beauties did it not conceal! And I saw, all the way we rode, the bounding heart (by its throbbing motions I saw it!) dancing beneath the charming umbrage" and "How near, how sweetly near, the throbbing partners!" (I, 512). Typical of his style, Lovelace uses many poetic and romantic phrases to describe Clarissa's heaving bosom. His transports and delights at holding her in his arms are reminiscent of the kind of feelings poets and dramatists claim to have. Later, in the fire scene, the same kind of feelings are experienced by Lovelace when he contrives to have a more frightened and

less fully clothed Clarissa in his arms.

Lovelace calls Clarissa names that are more appropriate for himself than for her. He says, "O Jack! that such a sweet girl should be a rogue" (I, 512), calls her "false little rogue" and "faithless charmer" (I, 514), and complains of "her perverseness" (I, 513). In contrast to Clarissa, who describes other people fairly, sometimes over-generously, Lovelace is quick to see faults in others. When one does not do exactly what he wants, one is perverse. Perverse is a word that is also used by the Harlowe family when they do not get their way. Clarissa's mother calls her "perverse" (I, 98), her father addresses her as "perverse girl" in a letter (I, 120), and Uncle Antony talks about her "perverseness" (I, 160). The use of the same word by Lovelace and his enemies suggests that they are really similar in character. They are all selfish and want only to get their own way.

As in his first letter, Lovelace uses imperial language. He boasts: "I drew her after me so swiftly that my feet, winged by love, could hardly keep pace with her feet, agitated by fear. And so I became her emperor" (I, 513). He warns, "Take care that thou provokest not new ones that may be still more worthy of thee. If once thy emperor decrees thy fall, thou shalt greatly fall" (I, 513). He says that he writes only of his "imperial will and pleasure" (I, 516). Lovelace is spoilt, used to having his own way at home, where he is the youngest child, and with his circle of rakes, where

he is the leader. Now that he has Clarissa in his power, he thinks that he can command her and use her as he pleases. His belief that he is now her "emperor" is another manifestation of his imaginative mind. Like a child or an actor on stage, he lives in a make-believe world of kings and emperors.

Another metaphor Lovelace uses to describe his relationship with Clarissa is that of warfare. He writes to Belford: "Thou knowest the whole progress of our warfare: for a warfare it has truly been; and far, very far, from an amorous warfare too. Doubts, mistrusts, upbraidings on her part: humiliations the most abject on mine" (I, 514). He says that Clarissa's "garrison" consists of "General Prudence at the head, and Governor Watchfulness bringing up the rear" (I, 513). He talks frequently of "power" (I, 514, 515) and says: "I will give the combatants fair play" (I, 515). Lovelace's conception of the affair as a battle of power is a way of detachment. In a war, one side has to lose for the other to win. Through language and metaphor, he is able to distance his feelings. He changes a serious, emotional, personal situation into a game of wits, a light-hearted kind of battle.

As in his first letter, Lovelace is more concerned with pride and revenge than with love for Clarissa. He says:

> How it swells my pride to have been able to outwit such a vigilant charmer! I am taller by half a yard in my imagination than I was. I look down upon everybody now. Last night I was still more extravagant.

> I took off my hat as I walked, to see if the lace were not scorched, supposing it had brushed down a star; and before I put it on again, in mere wantonness, and heart's cease, I was for buffeting the moon.
>
> In short, my whole soul is joy. When I go to bed I laugh myself asleep: and I awake either laughing or singing.
>
> (I, 515)

Lovelace seems to live metaphors literally. Instead of merely saying that he swells with pride, he feels himself grow taller. He is able to "look down upon everybody now" (I, 515). Having Clarissa in his possession is like having a new toy or a dream come true. He is in a kind of heaven where his "whole soul is joy" (I, 515). He feels that he can take on the moon. Again, one sees that Lovelace lives in a kind of unreal world of imagined extravagance. He either rises to an ecstatic height of happiness or plunges into deep despondency.

Lovelace is not one to forget the wrongs that he has suffered. He is concerned with revenge and says that the Harlowe family's "sins are upon [Clarissa's] head" (I, 515). He tells Belford that he "kept an account of both... her family's faults" and the "infinite trouble" Clarissa has given him (I, 515). His insincere feelings can be seen when he tells Belford how easily he can change them. He says that when his heart is "soft, and all her own," he can but "turn to [his] memoranda and harden [himself] at once" (I, 515).

In the hands of such a devil, Clarissa is certain to suffer wrong, if not "fall." Unlike Eve's garden, hers was

never a perfect paradise. But when Lovelace snatches her away, she does lose the innocent and carefree state which was so much part of her childhood. As the garden door shuts, Clarissa unknowingly takes a final leave of her Eden. She does not encounter any other garden in the novel. Instead, she is forced into a city, a different kind of world where people, places and even words can be deceiving.

NOTES

[1] Laurence Stone, The Family, Sex and Marriage In England 1500-1800, Abridged Edition (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979), p. 188.

[2] Samuel Richardson, Pamela or Virtue Rewarded (New York: W.W. Norton & Co. Inc., 1958), p. 97.

[3] Maynard Mack, The Garden and the City (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), p. 24.

[4] Ibid., pp. 3-40.

[5] Ibid., p. 23.

[6] Margaret Anne Doody, "The Man-Made World of Clarissa Harlowe and Robert Lovelace". (Unpublished paper given at the North-Eastern American Society for Eighteenth Century Studies, Boston: October, 1981).

[7] John Milton, Paradise Lost in Paradise Lost and Selected Poetry and Prose, Introduction by Northrop Frye. (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1951), IX, l. 780.

[8] Ibid., IX, ll. 551, 531.

[9] Ibid., IX, ll. 181-182, 183, 188-189.

[10] John Carroll, ed., Selected Letters of Samuel Richardson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), p. 113.

[11] Fred Kaplan, "'Our Short Story': The Narrative Devices of Clarissa", Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900, XI (1971), 549.

[12] Anthony M. Kearney, Samuel Richardson (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), p. 46.

[13] Ovid, Metamorphoses, Mary M. Innes, trans. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1955), pp. 134-138.

[14] Margaret Anne Doody, "Man-Made World", 19.

Chapter III

FIRE!

Lovelace's Version of Restoration Drama

One of the most stagey scenes in Clarissa is the famous or infamous fire incident. This scene is noisy and wild, full of action and excitement, performed in candlelight and semi-darkness, and is one of the most passionate and emotional encounters between the lovers. Lovelace is its principal actor, director, writer and producer. His company, consisting of Dorcas and "the women," set the stage for the only unwilling performer, Clarissa (II, 498). Clarissa is forced to become an actress in this scene, forced to go on her knees and resort to a typically Lovelacean device of saying something she does not mean in order to save herself from further shame.

Unlike the structure of the garden scene, Lovelace's account of the fire episode comes before Clarissa's. Although it is he who sets up the stage and directs the action, he does not tell Belford or his readers outright that he is responsible for everything that happens. It is only because we are slowly getting to know Lovelace and his strategies that we suspect him. Richardson has arranged it so that Clarissa and the readers are left in doubt at this point, wondering if, as Lovelace says, "the fire was real" (II, 505).

Lovelace prepares us for the contrivance. He writes to Belford at eleven o'clock that night: "So near to execution my plot; so near springing my mine; all agreed upon between the women and me" (II, 498), yet he does not tell us what his "little plot" is (II, 498). We only know that he is nervous. He says he speaks to his heart: "What -- what -- what now! -- bounding villain! wouldst thou choke me" (II, 498). He wonders why he has "these convulsions:" "Limbs, why thus convulsed! Knees, till now so firmly knit, why thus relaxed? Why beat ye thus together! Will not these trembling fingers, which twice have refused to direct the pen, fail me in the arduous moment?" (II, 499). As his audience, we are being prepared for something exciting, something that makes even Lovelace apprehensive. He says, "But the consequences must be greater than I had thought of till this moment. My beloved's destiny or my own may depend upon the issue of the two next hours" (II, 499), and shows his tendency to see things exaggeratedly and dramatically.

Like Romeo approaching Juliet's window at night, Lovelace says, "Soft, O virgin saint, and safe as soft, be thy slumbers!" (II, 499). His use of the word "soft" reminds us of the young Montague who says, "But, soft! What light through yonder window breaks?" [1] Both Romeo and Lovelace use the words "saint" and "angel" to describe their beloved. Romeo calls Juliet, "bright angel" and "dear saint" [2] while Lovelace calls Clarissa "virgin saint" and "an angel" (II, 499). Richardson may not

necessarily have this Shakespearean play in mind, but the similarities in the words used show that he was very much aware of the dramatic tradition and its language. Lovelace is a character who models himself after the tragic heroes of these plays.

Lovelace's way of narrating the events leading up to the fire is highly suspicious and makes one wonder if anything he ever says is true. He says:

> At a little after two,...I was alarmed by a trampling noise overhead, and a confused buzz of mixed voices, some louder than others, like scolding, and little short of screaming. While I was wondering what could be the matter, downstairs ran Dorcas and at my door...she cried out: Fire! Fire! And this the more alarmed me, as she seemed to endeavour to cry out louder, but could not. (II, 500)

What Lovelace describes here did happen, but the strange thing is that he does not tell Belford or the readers his part in the incident. He never openly admits that the fire was contrived. To his supposedly best friend he lies and says, "I was wondering what could be the matter..." and "this the more alarmed me" (II, 510). Knowing what he did, there is no way that he could have been "alarmed." He knew that the fire would be under control. One can only guess at Lovelace's intentions behind this half-truthful narration. He either wanted no written evidence of his guilt--Clarissa does manage to persuade Belford to let her see his letters afterwards (IV, 74-75) -- or, he wanted to believe that the fire was real so much that he half-convinced himself that it was.

To Lovelace words can have double meanings. When he tells Clarissa here that "the fire was real" (II, 505), he means it: "(And so it was, Jack!)", he tells Belford (II, 505). He is not unwilling to take advantage of the discrepancies of words and language to serve his purposes. The fire was "real" because it happened, but it was not a "real" fire because it did not start accidentally. Unlike Clarissa who does not believe in these kinds of compromises or half-truths, Lovelace makes the best use of them, even swearing by them.

When he says that Dorcas "out of tender regard for her lady (I shall for ever love the wench for it), ran to her door, and rapping loudly at it, in a recovered voice cried out, with a shrillness equal to her love: Fire" (II, 500), he is being ironic. He shall "for ever love the wench" for rousing Clarissa, so that he could see her "disrobed body" (II, 501), but one could mis-read his sentence and believe that he was genuinely concerned for her. Similarly, when he says, "Thou mayest believe that I was greatly affected" (II, 501), he wants his readers to think he was greatly concerned, but he could also be "affected" because he did not know if his enterprise would succeed. This way of writing prevents anyone from accusing him of outright lying. He tells perverted versions of truths and succeeds in convincing even himself.

Lovelace likes seeing Clarissa as a helpless creature. His description of her sounds like Lothario's description of the helpless and fond Calista in Rowe's The Fair Penitent. Lovelace says:

> there I beheld the most charming creature in the world, supporting herself on the arm of the gasping Dorcas, sighing, trembling, and ready to faint, with nothing on but an under-petticoat, her lovely bosom half open, and her feet just slipped into her shoes. As soon as she saw me she panted, and struggled to speak; but could only say, O Mr. Lovelace! and down was ready to sink. (II, 501)

Lothario says of Calista: "I found the fond, believing love-sick maid / Loose, unattired, warm, tender, full of wishes; / Fierceness and pride, the guardians of her honor, / Were charmed to rest, and love alone was waking.../ I snatched the glorious, golden opportunity,/ And with prevailing, youthful ardor pressed her,/ Till with short sighs and murmuring reluctance / The yielding fair one gave me perfect happiness."[3] Lovelace, like Lothario, thinks that sighing and trembling are encouraging signs of love or, at least, submission. Like Lothario, he would like to snatch the "glorious, golden opportunity" of finding his maiden "unattired." He thinks that he can make Clarissa yield and give him "perfect happiness" just as easily as Lothario did with Calista.

This scene also reveals Lovelace's concern with power. Margaret Anne Doody, in discussing the relation between Lovelace and Restoration heroic tragedy, says that the central characters are "wrapped in a dream of power" and that "sexual lust is known

in terms of power." [4] Lovelace is like the heroes who attempt to threaten a woman against her will. Like the tragic tyrant-heroes, he welcomes "resistance on the part of the woman." [5] Clarissa's "passionate exclamations" from the "terrors that arose from finding herself in [Lovelace's] arms" (II, 501) make her even more attractive to him. He is delighted with "her sweet bosom" which "heaved and panted" and "her dear heart" which "fluttered against his" (II, 501).

Lovelace's account of the incident is told solely from his point of view and concentrates on his sufferings. He is not generous enough to put himself in the place of other people. He tells Belford to "reflect upon [his] love, and upon [his] sufferings for her," and talks of Clarissa's "frozen virtue and over-niceness" (II, 501). According to him, she is "ungrateful," while he acted always with the "utmost tenderness" (II, 501). He says: "in my own account, I was both decent and generous" (II, 502). Lovelace forgets that had it not been for him, his vanity, and his contrivance, there would have been none of these problems. His judgements of himself and of situations are always biased in his favour.

The language Lovelace uses to describe their passionate encounter tends towards the "operatic mode." [6] Mark Kinkead-Weekes says that "Clarissa resists Lovelace in the pathetic language of contemporary 'she-tragedy.'" [7] Yet one is not bothered by her theatricality because of the plight that she is in. Kinkead-Weekes goes on to say of Clarissa:

> Whether she uses words with analytic precision or rhetorical amplification, she does not play with words or feelings, she does not 'act.' There can be excess and indulgence, failures to be wholly accurate or honest, but these exist within and are controlled by a linguistic medium that strives always for truth of word and emotion.[8]

Lovelace says that Clarissa "appealed to Heaven" against his "treachery" and "conjured" him in the "most solemn and affecting manner, by turns threatening and soothing, to quit her apartment and permit her to hide herself from light, and from every human eye" (II, 501). Now that she is in Lovelace's power, she has to resort to exaggerated and grandiose appeals. Reasoning and ordinary persuasion do not work with Lovelace. She has to use "exclamations the most vehement" in order to survive "a treatment so disgraceful and villainous" (II, 502).

In the midst of all this commotion and excitement, Lovelace remains cool and unaffected. He is able to describe Clarissa's "sweet discomposure" in detail (II, 502). He tells us:

> Her bared shoulders and arms, so inimitably fair and lovely: her spread hands crossed over her charming neck; yet not half concealing its glossy beauties: the scanty coat, as she rose from me, giving the whole of her admirable shape, and fine-turned limbs: her eyes running over, yet seeming to threaten future vengeance: and at last her lips uttering what every indignant look and glowing feature pretended. (II, 502)

This description of Clarissa is similar in tone and style to the one given by Lovelace in his first letter and to the one written after the garden scene. Lovelace, though poetic and inventive in his use of words, is not very original in his

descriptions of Clarissa. To him, she is just another one of those fair beauties. The words he uses are standard, conventional ones used by Renaissance and Restoration poets. William J. Farrel calls it "courtly rhetoric." [9] Lovelace is all praises, but his adjectives are imprecise and vague. They do not give us real details of the woman. He uses such conventional words and phrases as "inimitably fair and lovely," "charming," "admirable," "fine-turned" and "glowing" (II, 502)--words that one could use for any fair lady. One wonders if Lovelace looks at Clarissa as much as he claims he does.

Because Lovelace continues to kiss Clarissa's "inimitable neck, her lips, her cheeks, her forehead, and her streaming eyes...with a passion indeed," Clarissa falls "upon her knees... in the anguish of her soul" (II, 503). Kinkead-Weekes says that Clarissa is the "weeping victim" and the fire scene becomes the "sardonic parody of courtship." [10] Their conversation is full of melodrama. Clarissa pleads for Lovelace's "compassion" and "honour," her "lovely bosom...heaving with sighs and sobs" (II, 503). Lovelace's half-jocular account shows that he is enjoying every moment of the incident. This highly emotional scene where as the hero he is in control of the victim is what he is used to seeing on stage. [11] Lovelace, who was the one who pleaded in the garden scene, now becomes "emperor-like," as Clarissa begs for mercy on her knees.

In turn, Clarissa uses words which show the change that has already taken place in her. In contrast to her first letters which show her as a pert, sprightly young girl, this scene shows that she thinks of herself as a poor, abandoned child. She says to Lovelace: "On my knees I beg you to consider me, as a poor creature who has no protector but you; who has no defence but your honour" (II, 503), and "See at your feet a poor creature, imploring your pity, who for your sake, is abandoned of all the world" (II, 504). Farrel points out that Richardson's use of words like "poor," "pity," and "abandoned...creates sad little vignettes of the victim, either as she is or as she imagines herself." [12] In Lovelace's world, she becomes the tragic heroine, forced to utter passionate speeches and use dramatic and exaggerated gestures and stances.

In this scene the dagger motif is repeated. Clarissa, out of desperation, "espied a pair of sharp-pointed scissors on a chair by the bedside, and endeavoured to catch them up" (II, 502). Like a heroine in a tragedy, she says, "Kill me! kill me! if I am odious enough in your eyes to deserve this treatment...Too long, much too long, has my life been a burden to me!" (II, 504). This kind of melodrama and exaggeration is not typical of Clarissa. It is only because she is "so much in his power" and because she is so desperate that she has to resort to his methods and tactics (II, 503).

At the end of the scene Clarissa is forced to compromise. She promises to forgive Lovelace "heartily" and

look upon him the next day "as if nothing had passed" (II, 505). She knows that she can not fulfill this pardon, extorted out of her in her desperation, but she does promise. At this point she is helpless and is unable to be all that she was before. In the hands of the "worst of villains" (II, 503), she is obliged to recite only the lines written for her by Lovelace. He becomes the playwright and director, while she is merely an actor.

Clarissa's short account of the fire incident is written during her temporary escape from Lovelace. She is at Mrs. Moore's at Hampstead. Because she has recovered from the incident and has regained her composure, her letter sounds very different from the Clarissa in Lovelace's narrative. She is her thoughtful and controlled self once again.

Clarissa begins her letter with her reactions to the fire incident: "O my dearest friend, the man has at last proved himself to be a villain" (III, 16). Philip Mahone Griffith points out that one of the "implications that remain from a close reading of this scene" is the fact that Clarissa "for the first time recognizes the plot against her." [13] She is still not sure, but she has "too much reason to believe" that Lovelace "formed a plot to fire the house, to frighten [her] almost naked, into his arms" (III, 16). At this point, she thinks that what happened during the fire incident is the worst that could ever happen to her in connection with Lovelace. She believes that the "temporary part" of her

"father's malediction" is "already in a manner fulfilled" (III, 16).

In contrast to Lovelace who considers the incident only as a trial and who writes about it as he would after seeing an amusing play, Clarissa treats the fire incident as a climax of her relationship with Lovelace. She thinks that she should now"go beyond sea...in some one of our American colonies -- never to be heard of more by [her] relations" (III, 16). She shows that she is level-headed and mature as she tells Anna not to "impute...this scheme -- either to dejection on one hand, or to that romantic turn on the other" (III, 16). She has considered other alternatives, but knows that Lovelace will "hunt [her] from place to place and search after [her] as a 'stray" (III, 17). She realizes that her "estate, the envied estate...has been the original cause of all [her] misfortunes" and that "it shall never be [hers] upon litigated terms" (III, 17). We see how realistic and practical she now is. She is no longer the youthful, lively girl she was at the beginning, nor is she the heroine of Restoration drama which Lovelace believes her to be.

In the midst of her troubles -- she has just escaped from the "vilest dishonour" (III, 16), -- she thinks of doing good to others. She plans to propose to her father to "pay two annuities" out of her estate, one to her "dear Mrs. Norton" and the other for the "use of [her] poor" (III, 17). We see that she is not a romantic or tragic heroine as Lovelace

thinks, but a truly Christian one. Her unselfish and charitable nature does not depend on her mood or circumstances as it does with someone like Lovelace or Arabella Harlowe.

Clarissa compares Lovelace to the devil. She says: "Oh, why was the great fiend of all unchained, and permitted to assume so specious a form, and yet allowed to conceal his feet and talons, till with the one he was ready to trample upon my honour, and to strike the other into my heart!" (III, 18). This comparison shows us that Clarissa sees Lovelace as the villain he is, even though she was attracted to him. The phrase "strike...into my heart" repeats the "dagger in the heart" motif. Richardson foreshadows Clarissa's death through these repeated metaphors. By the end of the novel, Lovelace does "strike" into Clarissa's "heart" in a way that she does not expect.

Richardson prepares us for the holy death by showing us Clarissa's unconcern with her "worldly prospects," and her faith and belief in the divine ruler. She writes to Anna: "nothing but my worldly prospects, and my pride, my ambition, and my vanity have suffered in this wreck of my hopefuller fortunes. And is it not in my own power still, by the divine favour, to secure the great stake of all?"(III, 18). The experience with Lovelace has made her aware of her "pride," "ambition" and "vanity." Instead of becoming angry or revengeful she wonders if "this very path...strewed as it is with briers and thorns which tear in pieces [her] gaudier trappings,

may not be the right path to lead [her] into the great road to [her] future happiness" (III, 18). She shows her optimism and acceptance of the situation as she says: "I will then endeavour to make the best of my present lot" (III, 18).

Her actual account of the fire consists only of one paragraph and adds very little information to what we already know from Lovelace's letter. Unlike the garden scene where Clarissa is given the narrative voice, in the fire scene, we "hear" Lovelace's version of the story. It is appropriate as it is he who engineers the whole thing. Clarissa can only tell us her suspicions: "the vile Dorcas went away as soon as she saw the wretch throw his arms about me." She hears "women's voices in the next room" and concludes: "An evident contrivance of them all" (III, 19). To avoid repetition, Richardson does not have Clarissa tell Anna about the fire scene in detail. But Clarissa's brief summary of such a frightening and dramatic situation also shows her realistic and sensible nature. Unlike Lovelace, she does not capitalize on the exciting events by turning them into passionate or romantic scenes. She is more concerned with her immediate problems and thankful for her escape.

Clarissa ends her letter with regrets: "How hard, how next to impossible, my dear, to avoid many <u>lesser</u> deviations, when we are betrayed into a <u>capital</u> one!" (III, 20). The "capital" deviation is leaving her father's house, an event that Clarissa feels is significant that she later

selects that date for the lid of her coffin (IV, 257). The "lesser" deviations that Clarissa cannot avoid include some deception on her part. She has to break her promise to Lovelace, pretend to the women that she believes the fire was "real" and sneak out of the house to escape. Clarissa never puts on a staged performance as Lovelace does, but she has to do a little bit of acting to survive.

The dialogue, the action, and the staging of the fire scene show Richardson's familiarity with theatrical conventions. He could have written a novel of sentimental drama, full of exaggerated passion and high tragedy. But his refusal to follow these conventions shows his disapproval of the contemporary stage. John A. Dussinger says that Richardson "attacked these dramatists' conception of love, their characterizations of the female passions, and their impious use of suicides in tragedy and of fifth-act reformations in comedy as solutions to the complications of their plots." [14] Instead, he gives the stereotypical heroine an "enlarged dimension" and finds a Christian solution to her tragic dilemna. [15]

NOTES

[1] William Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet, The Riverside Shakespeare (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974), II, ii, 2.

[2] Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet, II, ii, 28, 55.

[3] Nicholas Rowe, The Fair Penitent, Malcolm Goldstein, ed. (Lincoln: Regents Restoration Drama Series, University of Nebraska Press, 1969), I, i, 149-152, 156-159.

[4] Margaret Anne Doody, A Natural Passion: A Study of the Novels of Samuel Richardson (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 108.

[5] Ibid., p. 111.

[6] Mark Kinkead-Weekes, Samuel Richardson: Dramatic Novelist (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1975), p. 434.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid., p. 435.

[9] William J. Farrell, "The Style and the Action in Clarissa" in John Carrol, ed., Samuel Richardson: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1969), 95.

[10] Kinkead Weekes, Richardson, p. 452.

[11] Lovelace quotes often from Dryden and Shakespeare (I, 147, 149, 150) and takes Clarissa to see Otway's Venice Preserved (II, 339).

[12] Farrell, "Style and Action," 99.

[13] Philip M. Griffith, "Fire-Scenes in Richardson's Clarissa and Smollet's Humphrey Clinker: A Study of a Literary Relationship in the Structure of the Novel", Tulane Studies in English, XI (1961), 42.

[14] John A. Dussinger, "Richardson's Tragic Muse", Philological Quarterly, XLVL (1967), 18-33.

[15] Ibid.

Chapter IV

FATE WORSE THAN DEATH

The Rape

The shortest and the most dramatic letter in all Clarissa is the brief letter in which Lovelace announces the long-awaited rape: "Tuesday Morn, June 13. And now, Belford, I can go no farther. The affair is over. Clarissa lives. And I am Your humble servant, R. Lovelace" (III, 196). T.C. Duncan Eaves and Ben D. Kimpel cite the letter as an example of "conscious artistry" on Richardson's part. [1] They say that the letter is "rather theatrical, perhaps, but effectively theatrical," and that it shows that throughout Clarissa "Richardson knew exactly what he was doing." [2]

This brief letter is the culmination of a series of over twenty-five letters written by Lovelace telling Belford about the particulars of his further "arts, inventions and intrepidity" (III, 527). These letters are lengthy and detailed, sometimes tedious, as they seem to go over the same issues. Lovelace's relationship with Clarissa is at its breaking point: both parties refuse to compromise and Lovelace's plots, impersonations, and deceptions could be discovered at any moment. The hero-villain seems to have tried and repeated all the parleying and strategies he can

think of. He, and his readers, are ready for the climax or an explosion.

The great event does occur, at an appropriate moment, too. The only drawback for the avid reader is that Richardson withholds the details that one wants, and creates a suspense akin to agony for the reader. Lovelace's letter seems to conceal the very information it gives. Its brevity is like a bombshell, fired in front of its audience. Lovelace, who loves his own voice and his own words, is for once uncommunicative and uncharacteristically brief. Clarissa, on the other hand, does not tell her version of the story until almost four weeks and over one hundred and fifty pages later.

Lovelace's letter, short as it is, does reveal a lot to the careful reader about the writer. The tone of the letter seems almost apologetic--Lovelace calls himself a "humble servant" for the first time -- but with a closer examination, one can see that it is still typical of Lovelace. The brevity is indeed unusual for Lovelace, but far from being genuinely affected at this point, he is being theatrical, creating a frightening and terrifying sensation with his most sensational piece of news. His withholding of the information about his "little innocent trick" (III, 202) makes him look better in Belford's eyes. It makes his readers believe that he has finally managed to conquer Clarissa's resistance and spirit.

Like the master of ceremonies in a show, he begins his letter by saying: "And now..." He claims that he can go no farther and, for the first time in his life, seems to be out of words. But he does go further. Two days later, he is able to be his old self, to write a long, triumphant and almost jocular letter to Belford rationalizing and making light of his guilty deed. The very fact that he is able to write, sign and send off a letter, no matter how short, the morning after such an atrocious crime shows his heartlessness. Clarissa is so affected by the experience that she is unable to write anything coherent for weeks after the rape.

When Lovelace writes that "the affair is over" (III, 196), he does not know how true his words are. The affair is indeed over, as Clarissa feels that she has lost her "best self" and will never be the same again. To Lovelace, the affair is over only as far as the first part of the trial goes. He says in his next letter: "But now are we come to the test, whether she cannot be brought to make the best of an irreparable evil" (IV, 200). He thinks that after the "affair" of conquering is over, he can do what he wants with Clarissa. After all, one of the libertine maxims is: "If once subdued, be always subdued" (II, 41).

Lovelace assures us that Clarissa "lives" (III, 196). As Belford says, "these words" show that Lovelace himself hardly expected that "she would have survived the outrage"

(III, 197). Physically Clarissa lives, but her spirit and her will to survive are dead. Lovelace's use of such a neutral, non-descriptive word for Clarissa at this time shows the state that she is in. Lovelace has put her in such a miserable condition that she is unable to do anything; she barely lives.

Lovelace's letter following this short one shows how villainous he really is. Living up to his name, he is indeed a "love-less"person, incapable of loving or of being moved by anyone. He chides Belford for his scolding: "And to what purposes, when the mischief is done? When, of consequence, the affair is irretrievable?" (III, 199). The objective use of "the mischief" and "the affair" distances him from the whole thing, as if he were not responsible for the rape. The passive construction of the phrases "is done" and "is irretrievable" shifts the focus away from the doer of the action to the object. Through this clever jiggling of words, Lovelace lessens his part in the "affair," making the rape sound like something that would have happened even if he were not there.

Another way he lessens his guilt is by comparing Clarissa to other girls. He says: "When all's done, Miss Clarissa Harlowe has but run the fate of a thousand others of her sex" (III, 199). His tone is detached. He says "all is done" as as if he had nothing to do with it. He realizes that he has "done wrong, great wrong, to this admirable creature" (III, 199),

but rationalizes his crime by comparing her with "twenty and twenty of the sex" (III, 199). The little remorse that he feels is overcome by his reasoning: "Can it be helped? And must I not now try to make the best of it?" (III, 202).

His detachment from the affair is shown by the fact that the style of his letters has not altered at all. After the rape, he is still witty and articulate, quoting jokingly from "Matt Prior" (III, 200). He says that he "will do her grateful justice by marriage," but as Prior says "--Let that be done, which Matt doth say./ Yea, quoth the Earl--But NOT TO-DAY" (III, 200).

He worries and wonders why Clarissa is so stupefied: "For, after all, what is there in her case that should stupefy such a glowing, such a blooming charmer," but quickly says, "But I will leave this subject, lest it should make me too grave" (III, 200, 201). He should be grave, but he cannot. His tone is flippant: "Well, but, after all (how many after all's have I?)" (III, 201). His maintenance of his usual rakish style reveals his attitude towards Clarissa. All the while calling her "admirable creature," he treats her as he would "any of them" (III, 199).

His metaphors are as imaginative as ever. As in his previous letters, he compares men and women to lower beings, to beasts and insects:

> For, if I stir, the venomous spider of this habitation will want to set upon the charming fly, whose silken wings are already so entangled in my enormous web, that she cannot move hand or foot. (III, 201)

His comparison of Mrs. Sinclair to a "venomous spider" is appropriate, but he unconsciously links himself to her by talking about his own "enormous web" (III, 201). Like Mrs. Sinclair, he, too, is venomous. This comparison reveals Lovelace's obsession with power, prey and helpless creatures. Clarissa, with her silken wings, is the struggling helpless victim, while he is the dextrous spider, spinning his plots and webs to trap her.

This letter, written shortly after the rape, can be considered a typically Lovelacian letter. Its completeness and perfection show how unscathed the experience has left its writer. One cannot be too affected with anything if one can function normally and write with one's usual wit and eloquence.

In contrast to this detachment is Clarissa's affecting response. While Lovelace makes a quick recovery, it takes Clarissa weeks to regain her health and her composure. She is profoundly affected by the experience and her first written reaction to the rape shows her anguish and agony. Unlike Lovelace, she is unable to put together a quick, short letter summing up what has happened. Instead, she starts to write, is forced to break off, and attempts to resume writing again. Her fragmented letters are torn or scratched which are illustrations of how discomposed she is.

Alan Dugald Mckillop says that Clarissa's tale after her rape is "a masterly piece of narrative, surcharged with almost intolerable apprehension of agony." [3] Instead of letters,

Clarissa writes incomplete papers. Paper I, which is "torn in two pieces" (III, 205), is like Clarissa's self, torn in two. She is no longer the "self" that she was, but she cannot put in words what she is. She writes: "Yes, but I am; for I am still, and I ever will be, Your true--" (III, 205) and is unable to finish or sign her name.

Her style is completely changed. The Clarissa who wrote from Harlowe Place to Anna Howe was articulate and self-assured. Now she writes: "O what dreadful, dreadful things have I to tell you! But yet I cannot tell you neither. But say, are you really ill, as a vile, vile creature informs me you are?" (III, 205). Mark Kinkead-Weekes says: "She cannot focus on what has happened...partly because she cannot bear to think of them, and partly because she doesn't yet fully understand." [4] He points out that because of Clarissa's "intellectual stature" and her "analytic mind," we tend to forget her age. [5] She has not had the emotional experience needed to cope with such a crisis. Kinkead-Weekes says:

> The educated, highly developed mind, the self-sufficiency, the analytic intelligence, suddenly drop away. What we see is a lost and bewildered teenage girl, confused and grief-stricken, all assurance and sophistication gone; seeking desperately for reassurance and love in the only direction she can, and failing to find any.[6]

Instead of her usual clear and concise style, we find many repetitions: e.g. "dreadful, dreadful things" and "vile, vile creature" (III, 205). Her confused thoughts are revealed by her incomplete sentences and many dashes: "I sat down to say

a great deal--my heart was full--I did not know what to say first--and thought, and grief, and confusion, and (O my poor head!)..."(III, 205). This discursive style is used frequently by Lovelace for dramatic effect, but is not normally part of Clarissa's style. Lovelace has destroyed her so much that she is reduced to an incoherent and inarticulate utterance.

Again we see her generosity and concern for others. In her first few sentences, instead of dwelling on her troubles, she asks Anna about her health. She is never too ill herself to think of others. At a moment when she needs comfort and assurance, she is generous enough to say: "You may well be tired of me! And if you are, I can forgive you" (III, 205). Though her ability to write clearly is impaired, her deep-seated feelings for her friend are not.

Her second Paper is "scratched through, and thrown under the table" (III, 205), which shows the hopelessness of its plea. In this paper Clarissa writes to her "dear honoured papa" and is on the verge of asking him to lift his "heavy curse" (III, 205, 206), but does not quite manage to make a sentence out of her wish. The whole paper is characterized by a hesitant tone. Clarissa leaves off and stops writing when she comes to something she has not yet come to terms with or understood. She writes: "And can you, my dear honoured papa, resolve for ever to reprobate your poor child? But I am sure you would not, if you knew what she has suffered since her unhappy--" (III, 205). Similarly, she writes: "My name

is -- I don't know what my name is!" and "for you are my own dear papa, whether you will or not -- and though I am an unworthy child -- yet I am your child --" (III, 206). The blanks and gaps stand for events or things for which she has no name. Kinkead-Weekes says: "The rape has damaged her sense of her own identity, her sense of herself as a continuous personality, and with that, the relationships nearest her heart."[7]

Paper III is the first coherent piece Clarissa writes after the rape. It is written in the form of a fable and compares Lovelace to "a young lion, or a bear" (III, 206). Lovelace's act of violence to her is so brutal and degrading that she is forced to use comparisons from the animal kingdom to tell her story. Using bestial metaphors is a Lovelacean device; he has been comparing men and women to animals throughout the novel. Clarissa's use of the same device shows Lovelace's influence on her. He has managed so to penetrate her being, both physically and mentally, that even the way she expresses herself is changed.

Paper IV is again written in a style not usually Clarissa's. It is full of "thee" and "thou." But unlike the "thee" and "thou" used by Lovelace and his compeers for dramatic and theatrical effect, Clarissa's are used as a way of self-correction. She writes: "How art thou now humbled in the dust, thou proud Clarissa Harlowe! Thou that never steppedst out of thy father's house but to be admired!"(III, 206).

Kinkead-Weekes says that the paper "is couched in the language of puritan introspection." [8] The rape has made Clarissa look inside herself objectively, perhaps a bit too strictly. She finds, upon inspection and introspection, that her "penetrating sister," though jealous, was right: she is full of pride and vanity (III, 206). Cynthia Griffin-Wolff points out that "Richardson's most important literary antecedent...in the manner of depicting character is Puritan devotional literature."[9] After the rape, Clarissa's letters slowly change in tone and style. She becomes increasingly more solemn and religious as she prepares for her holy death. [10] These papers, written shortly after the rape, are the first examples of the rigorous self-examination which Clarissa later subjects herself to.

Paper V is written in verse, in the rhythm and style of the bible. Clarissa writes:

> Rejoice not now, my Bella, my sister, my friend; but pity the humbled creature, whose foolish heart you used to say you beheld through the thin veil of humility which covered it.
>
> I must have been so! My fall had not else been permitted.
>
> You penetrated my proud heart with the jealousy of an elder sister's searching eye.
>
> You knew me better than I knew myself. (III, 206-207).

Although Clarissa's verses never quite reach the cadence or the beauty of the Books of Job or the Psalms, her imitation of these books is close enough to remind us of them. Eaves and Kimpel say that Clarissa "learns to see herself as a

result of her suffering." [11] Using the style of Job to talk about Clarissa's sufferings, Richardson elevates his heroine. Clarissa wonders: "And what now is the end of all"(III, 207), just as Job wondered why the good has to suffer. In the end, like Job's, Clarissa's suffering strengthens her character and enriches her personality.

Paper VI is a good example of how Richardson uses writing letters as a way of revealing the unconscious. The moment of truth happens for Clarissa as she sets her rambling thoughts down on paper. Because of the rape, Clarissa believes that marriage and the "prospects of a happy life" are now beyond her (III, 207). She thinks:

> Who now shall assist in the solemn preparations? Who now shall provide the nuptial ornaments, which soften and divert the apprehensions of the fearful virgin? No court now to be paid to my smiles! No encouraging compliments...No elevation now for conscious merits, and applauded purity, to look down from on a prostrate adorer, and an admiring world, and up to pleased and rejoicing parents and relations! (III, 207)

This paper is one of the first examples of what we now call "interior monologue." As Clarissa bids farewell to marriage, she unconsciously reveals her pride and the worldly expectations she had for that occasion. More effective than a self-confession is this technique Richardson uses to reveal character. Clarissa has hopes and dreams typical of girls her age. The experience of the rape strips her of her veneer and makes her reveal to herself and to us her secret and innermost wishes and desires. Richardson, like Shakespeare in Lear, uses

temporary derangement to reveal the unconscious.

Like Paper III, Paper VII is full of animal imagery. Clarissa chooses the most odious insects and vermins she can think of to describe Lovelace. The paper is the only one in which she actually addresses Lovelace. Clarissa calls him: "Thou pernicious caterpillar," "Thou fretting moth," "Thou eating canker-worm" and "Thou fell blight" (III, 207). The use of the "thou" here is similar to Lovelace's use of "thee" and "thou" in his correspondence. It is an unnatural and artificial address and reminds one of poetry or drama. Clarissa uses it to distance the whole experience of the rape from herself. Her emotions and reactions to it are so strong that she cannot yet cope with the enormity of what has happened.

Mark Kinkead-Weekes emphasizes the fact that the images in this paper are all on the "destruction of potential fertility, growth, warmth and colour": the caterpillar spoils the leaf, the fell Blight is the wind that destroys "the early promises of the shining year," the moth corrupts the "fairest garment," and the worm eats the rose bud (III, 207). [12] Lovelace turns what should be "growth, fertility, harvest, warmth, richness" into something "poisonous, corrupt and disease." [13] These images are variations of the theme of the "white lily snapped short off, and just falling from the stalk" (IV, 257) which Clarissa later uses on her coffin lid. Lovelace's crime is not just robbing Clarissa of what she already has,

but destroying everything that she could ever become.

In Paper VIII, Clarissa is finally able to articulate the experience in her usual coherent style. She acknowledges her mistake in believing that she was capable of reforming Lovelace. She admits that she has been deceived: "You seemed frank as well as generous: frankness and generosity ever attracted me: whoever kept up those appearances, I judged of their hearts by my own; and whatever qualities I wished to find in them, I was ready to find; and, when found, I believed them to be natives of the soil" (III, 208). She tells Lovelace: "You have barbarously and basely conspired against that honour, which you ought to have protected," and calls him "vice itself" (III, 208). The recovery of Clarissa's health is matched by a recovery of her writing skill. The degeneration of style at a time of personal trouble in Papers I through VII emphasizes the way Richardson links writing style to moral character. Clarissa's ability to regain her style shows her ability to cope with the tragedy that has occurred. The path goes uphill from then on.

Paper IX is a reiteration of the paper before it. Clarissa forms a supposition to emphasize the difference between Lovelace's and her character: "Had the happiness of any of the poorest outcast in the world...lain as much in my power as my happiness did in yours, my benevolent heart would have made me fly to the succour of such a poor distressed -- with what pleasure would I have raised the dejected head, and

comforted the desponding heart!"(III, 208). While Lovelace merely professes to be a Christian, Clarissa practises Christian charity. She would do unto others what she would have them do to her.

The last of the papers is full of what Lovelace calls "poetical flights" (III, 210). Kinkead-Weekes says that it is "scrawled over with quotations from the poets; from Otway, Cowley, Garth, Dryden, Lee and Shakespeare. He comments: "Having searched herself for the meaning of what has happened, she finally uses the poetry of others as an emotional catalyst and relief." [14] After coming to terms with the experience in her own words, she uses the language and the experience of others to put her sufferings into perspective. Like her, others have had tales that "would harrow up your soul" (III, 209). She is not the first person to say "farewell" to "Youth" or to consider death as a "friend" (III, 209). Like the imitation to the style of Job, Richardson uses these quotations to elevate the stature of his heroine. Clarissa's experience is no less tragic than the most moving and distressing poem or story we know.

The difference between Lovelace's short announcement of the rape and the series of papers in which Clarissa struggles to grope for the words to describe her ordeal shows the great difference between his and her character. From this point on, there is no possibility of a reconciliation between these two dissimilar natures. As Clarissa tells him: "I never will

be Lovelace -- let my uncle take it as he pleases" (III, 211). The rape has left Lovelace basically unchanged while the event has shattered Clarissa. She has been plunged into a nightmarish hell where she is forced to look at and suffer and learn from her most vulnerable spots. Lovelace's heart remains as cold and unmovable as steel while Clarissa's tender soul is opened and revealed to us through her ten papers. Richardson's skill in the portrayal of the human heart and the exploration of the inner consciousness has never before been so obvious as here in these pages written by his two principal characters after the rape.

NOTES

[1] T.C. Duncan Eaves and Ben D. Kimpel, Samuel Richardson: A Biography (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 244.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Alan Dugald Mckillop, "Epistolary Technique in Richardson's Novels", Rice Institute Pamphlet, XXXVIII (1951), 36-54.

[4] Mark Kinkead-Weekes, Samuel Richardson: Dramatic Novelist (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973), p. 233.

[5] Ibid., p. 233.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid., p. 234.

[8] Ibid., p. 235.

[9] Cynthia Griffin-Wolff, Samuel Richardson and the Eighteenth-Century Puritan Character (Hamden: Archon Books, 1972), p. 4.

[10] Margaret Anne Doody, A Natural Passion: A Study of the Novels of Samuel Richardson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974). Doody has an excellent chapter on "Holy and Unholy Dying: The Deathbed theme in Clarissa," pp. 151-187 where she discusses Clarissa's preparations for dying in the light of Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century devotional literature.

[11] Eaves and Kimpel, Richardson, p. 280.

[12] Kinkead-Weekes, Richardson, p. 237.

[13] Ibid., p. 238.

[14] Ibid., p. 239.

Chapter V

THE LAST LETTERS

Clarissa's and Lovelace's last letters are interesting when read in comparison with each other. One sounds serene and happy while the other seems perturbed and uneasy. Both characters write without realizing how close to death they are. Their thoughts and feelings at this time are important, as Richardson is anxious to show the difference between one whose life has prepared him to meet God and one who has led a sinful and wicked life. [1]

Not surprisingly, Lovelace's last letter is written to his best friend Belford. Clarissa's letter, however, is not directed to Anna Howe, as one might expect, but to Mrs. Norton. By the time Anna's letter gets to Clarissa, she is too weak to write, and has Mrs. Lovick write a short note for her in reply. Anna Howe's importance as a correspondent and friend has declined in the course of the novel. Her rallying and wit were a constant source of amusement and diversion for Clarissa in the beginning. But, by the end, the experience with Lovelace has so changed Clarissa that she needs more than what the impetuous Anna can give. She has to learn to cope with the tragedy in her own ways. As Anna had said to Clarissa: "I am fitter for <u>this</u> world than you, you for the <u>next</u> than me -- that's the difference" (I, 43). Clarissa must now fit

herself for the "next" world and does so not through correspondence with a high-spirited young woman but through meditations and prayers.

Clarissa's letter to Mrs. Norton shows that her meditations and prayers have succeeded. She is no longer interested in the affairs or the ties of this world. In response to the affecting letter of Mrs. Norton which describes in detail her visit to the hard-hearted Harlowe family, Clarissa only says: "I cannot help being afflicted for <u>them</u>" (IV, 300). Fully recovered now from the temporary confusion of her senses resulting from the rape, she is her usual thoughtful self. She thinks of all the options that Mrs. Norton has suggested for her future, but believes that she is "entering upon a better tour than to France or Italy either! or even than to settle at [her] once beloved Dairy-house!" (IV, 301). She says: "All these prospects and pleasures, which used to be so agreeable to me in health, how poor seem they to me now" (IV, 301). She is very unlike the young girl concerned with suitors and future prospects who began the novel.

The experience with Lovelace has humbled Clarissa so her writing style is changed. She no longer writes in her witty, playful or slightly condescending way. She has become solemn, serious and unassuming. She writes to Mrs. Norton: "The granting of one request only now remains as a desirable one from them...It is that they will be pleased to permit my

remains to be laid with those of my ancestors...This however as they please. For, after all, this vile body ought not so much to engage my cares. It is a weakness" (IV, 301). Her concerns with this world are now minimal, as she looks forward to the next world: "I shall be happy! I know I shall! I have charming forebodings of happiness already!" (IV, 301). She wants Mrs. Norton to reassure her friends: "Who would not bear the punishments I have borne, to have the prospects and assurances I rejoice in!" (IV, 301). Clarissa's happiness results from her contemplation of the after life and not from any worldly "wishes...granted" (IV, 301).

Margaret Anne Doody points out that "Clarissa's repentance is complete; she takes responsibility for her own actions, and accepts the consequences. She has to a superlative degree the virtue of patience." [2] Clarissa does not accuse or blame anyone for what has happened. She refers to her fall as "my rashness" and regrets that it has made her family and friends suffer (IV, 300). She is no longer impatiently longing for a reconciliation. She tells Mrs. Norton that she has had "great struggles to get above" her wishes (IV, 301).

Not willing to bother anyone further, she tells Mrs. Norton: "I have not left undone anything that ought to be done, either respecting mind or person; no, not to the minutest preparation: so that nothing is left for you to do for me. Every one has her direction as to the last offices...

All is ready! And all will be as decent as it should be" (IV, 301-302). Her elaborate preparations show the serenity in which she accepts her fate. Unlike Lovelace who refuses to think about his death, she orders her own coffin and has the "solemn repository...under her window not far from her bedside" (IV, 256).

The last image we have of Clarissa is with her last "house." She uses the coffin as a desk and writes to Mrs. Norton on it. This extraordinarily striking picture of Clarissa symbolizes both her tragedy and her triumph. In less than a year, Clarissa changes from being the daughter, niece, and granddaughter of an aspiring gentry family to a homeless refugee, from a girl with her own estate to one who owns only her final enclosure, her coffin. All the while promising her freedom, Lovelace succeeds in limiting her space until she is reduced to a corner of a room in a stranger's house. Writing, which used to give her delight and pleasure, has now become her only means of communication, the only way she can assert herself and her rights as a human being.

On the other hand, this same image shows Clarissa's triumph over the world. Using the coffin as her desk is a sign of Clarissa's fortitude and acceptance of her fate. She is strong enough to welcome death, rejecting the world because she believes that God "will have no rivals in the hearts of those He sanctifies" (IV, 302). The change then becomes one

of spiritual growth and maturity. From an average teenage girl, Clarissa changes and becomes the supreme example of Christian piety.

Similar to the papers written after the rape, in this letter, Clarissa is "forced to leave off" and use a great many dashes. Unlike the pure and eloquent style of her first letters, her writing is now often choppy and unclear. Because of her weak condition she cannot complete some of her sentences: "Mamma, I would have wrote -- is the word distinct? My eyes are so misty! If, when I apply to you, I break off in half-words, do you supply them -- the kindest are your due. Be sure take the kindest to fill up the chasms with, if any chasms there be -- " (IV, 302). The experience with Lovelace has made her unable to be the self that she was before. But instead of despairing at her physical deterioration, at her inability to write, she praises God and says: "I bless God, I have not of late wanted" (IV, 302). To Clarissa, there is always something to be thankful for no matter what happens. Her trust in God's "various methods" enable her to conquer her most arduous trials (IV, 302).

In the letter where she believes she is writing with her "last pen," she does not fill the pages merely with her own concerns and troubles. She is still generous and considerate, caring about the future of Anna Howe: "Let my dearest Miss Howe purchase her wedding garments -- and may all temporal blessings attend the charming preparation!" (IV, 302). She

does not let her own prospects cloud other people's happiness but does her best to encourage Mr. Hickman by praising Miss Howe for her "great sense, fine judgement, and exalted generosity" (IV, 303).

Although Clarissa's style and her attitude to life have changed, she is not a completely new person. She has changed in so far as she now recognizes her pride, she rejects the world and her worldly prospects, and she is now more pious and devout. But the qualities which made her the outstanding person that she was still remain. Her goodness, her optimism, her fairness and her sensible nature, revealed to us so clearly in her first letter, are still very much part of her character. In this last letter, she writes of Miss Howe:

> the little cloudinesses that Mr. Hickman encounters with now and then...are but prognostics of a future golden day to him: for her heart is good, and her head not wrong. But great merit is coy, and that coyness has not always its foundation in pride: but, if it should <u>seem</u> to be pride, take off the skin-deep covering, and, in her, it is noble diffidence, and a love that wants but to be assured! (IV, 302)

This paragraph does not at all sound like it is written by someone about to die. It has no traces of despair or fear, but is full of hope and good wishes for a close friend. There are a number of words which relate to goodness: "good," "not wrong," "great merit," "noble diffidence" and "love" (IV, 302). Clarissa's vocabulary shows her optimistic and positive state of mind. Though Lovelace has destroyed a great part of Clarissa, he has not managed to touch her innermost being. Her inherent

goodness remains uncorrupt even after the rape.

As we have seen, Clarissa, unlike Lovelace, rarely uses metaphors. When she does use them, they are significant and appropriate. She writes: "As for me, never bride was so ready as I am. My wedding garments are brought...the happiest suit, that ever bridal maiden wore, for they are such as carry with them a security against all those anxieties, pains and perturbations which sometimes succeed to the most promising outsettings" (IV, 303). Ever since the beginning of the novel, Clarissa's family and friends have been pressing her to marry. Clarissa finally becomes a "bride," not to any mortal man, but to the heavenly bridegroom. Margaret Anne Doody says:

> The soul must be fitly dressed for its union with the heavenly Bridgegroom (to whom Lovelace, pursuing Clarissa dressed in his gay 'wedding-suit,' is a kind of Satanic anti-type) and for the marriage supper of heaven. The word 'preparation' in its theological sense. 3

Clarissa's "marriage" takes place shortly after this letter.

Appropriately, her last letter ends with a prayer:

> Oh, hasten, good God, if it be Thy blessed will, the happy moment that I am to be decked out in this all-quieting garb! And sustain, comfort, bless, and protect with the all-shadowing wing of Thy mercy, my dear parents, my ever dear and ever kind Miss Howe, my good Mrs. Norton, and every deserving person to whom they wish well! is the ardent prayer, first and last, of every beginning hour, as the clock tells it me (hours now are days, nay years) of Your now not sorrowing or afflicted, but happy Clarissa Harlowe. (IV, 303)

Clarissa's prayer is a plea from her heart. Like the papers written after the rape, it shows Clarissa devoid of her usual intellectual and analytical mind. Near the moment of her death,

Clarissa utters her deepest wishes: simply her longing to die, and blessings for her family and closest friend. Like a child praying, she names all her friends, forgetting about their faults and their unforgiving natures. Significantly, she does not mention Belford, Mrs. Lovick or Mrs. Smith who now surround her and take care of her, nor does she mention Lovelace. They are not really important people to her at this moment. They do not occupy her innermost thoughts as her family and friends do. They represent only a short period of her nineteen years of life.

Her closing sentence shows that her last moments were "not sorrowing or afflicted, but happy" (IV, 303). John A. Dussinger says that Richardson expresses the "theme of Christian perfection" where human suffering is "transcended by the joy of divine grace." [4] Unlike Lovelace's, Clarissa's last moments are serene. She dies pronouncing the words: "O come -- blessed Lord-Jesus!" (IV, 347) and, as Belford says, with "a smile, such a charming serenity overspreading her sweet face at the instant, as seemed to manifest her eternal happiness already begun" (IV, 347).

In contrast to this peaceful scene is Lovelace's horrible death. His end is abrupt, unlike Clarissa's death which seems to span the last hundred pages of the novel. Lovelace's last letters are written just before the duel which takes his life. Although he writes to Belford: "To-morrow is to be the day that will, in all probability, send either

one or two ghosts to attend the manes of my Clarissa" (IV, 526), his letter shows no signs of any somber thoughts on death. He is confident that he will win: "I am as sure of victory as I am that I now live, let him be ever so skilful a swordsman; since, besides that I am no unfleshed novice, this is a sport that, when provoked to it, I love as well as my food" (IV, 525). The confident tone shown here is like the self-assurance and vanity he showed in his first letter. Unlike Clarissa, Lovelace does not change at all in the course of the novel. The qualities he showed at the beginning are still there.

Although Lovelace pretends to regret his "cursed devices" (IV, 523) and claims that he is now "the most miserable of beings" (IV, 522), we never know how serious his repentance is. He is aware of his "vile ingratitude to so superior an excellence" (IV, 522) and calls himself a "villain -- and a wanton, a conceited, a proud fool, as well as a villain" (IV, 524), but then says in the next paragraph: "These reflections...accompany me in whatever I do, and wherever I go; and mingle with all my diversions and amusements. And yet I go into gay and splendid company. I have made new acquaintance in the different courts I have visited..."(IV, 524). The fact that he is now able to divert and amuse himself shows how quickly he can forget. Unlike Clarissa who is physically and emotionally unable to do many things she did

before, Lovelace continues to lead his gay, rakish way of life.

His style is similarly unchanged. He still swears often, exaggerates and uses witty, colloquial expressions. For example, he says: "If I find myself thus miserable abroad, I will soon return to England, and follow your example, I think -- turn hermit, or some plaguy thing or other" and "There is no living at this rate -- d-n me if there be!" (IV, 525). He describes Colonel Morden as "plaguy gloomy" and says, "my devil must deceive me if he take not his life or his death at my hands" (IV, 526, 527).

As he did in his first letter, Lovelace still uses conventional courtly expressions to describe his feelings for Clarissa. He says: "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!" He shows his regard for Clarissa. As he said in his first letter, he must have a "Cynthia, a Stella, a Sacharissa" in order to write poetry (I, 145). Clarissa, whether alive or dead, serves only as his muse, an ideal woman to dream about.

Whereas Clarissa makes elaborate and active preparations for her death because she so desires and welcomes it, Lovelace does not want to let the idea of death enter into his thoughts. He says that he "cheerfully" goes to "meet the colonel" and doubts not "to be able to write again" (IV, 525, 528). He refuses to think of the consequences of either his own death

or the colonel's. When confronted with the idea that he might kill the Colonel, he only says: "I'll think of that hereafter" (IV, 525). Like Belton and Mrs. Sinclair, Lovelace maintains an irresponsible attitude towards God, towards his sins, and towards death until it is too late. His end, when it does occur, becomes a painful and frightful experience.

Both Clarissa's and Lovelace's last words are not in their last letters. After her death, Belton finds the will and the "posthumous" letters written by Clarissa to her family. Before Lovelace dies, he utters his famous and mysterious last words "Let this expiate!" (IV, 530) which is recorded in De La Tour's letter. But their last pieces of writing are important, as they show their states of mind and their preoccupations before their deaths. Richardson believed in the importance of letter-writing and has Lovelace say at one point: "I loved familiar letter-writing...above all the species of writing: it was writing from the heart (without the fetters prescribed by method or study), as the very word correspondence implied. Not the heart only; the soul was in it" (II, 431).[5] Richardson has Clarissa and Lovelace reveal to us their "hearts" and their "souls" in these letters. It is up to us to make the best use of their experience and to enrich our own souls with the lessons they provide.

NOTES

[1] Margaret Anne Doody, A Natural Passion: A Study of the Novels of Samuel Richardson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974). In the chapter "Holy and Unholy Dying: The Deathbed Theme in Clarissa," Doody points out that "Clarissa's death is set between those of Belton and Mrs. Sinclair, just as in traditional religious literature the end of the wicked and that of the righteous are set side by side." Lovelace's impatience at his death reminds us of Belton and Mrs. Sinclair, all of whom die with no time to repent.

[2] Ibid., p. 170.

[3] Ibid., p. 174.

[4] John A. Dussinger, "Richardson's Christian Vocation", Papers on Language and Literature, III (1967), 3-19.

[5] This belief of Richardson has often been countered by Dr. Johnson's statement in his Life of Pope that "There is indeed no transaction which offers stronger temptation to fallacy and sophistication than epistolary intercourse." However, Richardson's own correspondence showed that he firmly believed in the sincerity and emotional intimacy afforded by letter-writing.

CONCLUSION

The few letters chosen from Clarissa's and Lovelace's volumes of correspondence take us from their initial meeting, through her abduction, his fiery contrivance, the rape, and finally to their deaths. As we have seen, these incidents mark important stages in the development of the novel. The difference between the "hero's" and the heroine's reactions to them show the essential differences in their otherwise similarly fascinating characters. Richardson uses style as a means of heightening and emphasizing what he shows through words and action. When language is used not to mean what it is supposed to mean, the subtleties of tone and style are ways by which we can delve into the real intentions and feelings of the characters.

From the beginning to his last moment, Lovelace is a steaming, loquacious, witty and voluble rake figure. Clarissa, on the other hand, begins as a sprightly, much-admired, precocious young girl, is humbled and confused to the point that she is not sure of who she is and, finally, rises to become the figure of Christian piety and perfection. The story of their tempestuous relationship remains powerful and moving, not only because of its unusual epistolary form, but because of its penetrating exploration of man's consciousness, his innermost being. Richardson's creation of an extraordinarily intelligent, sensitive and beautiful character such as Clarissa

makes Clarissa what it is. Among her less noble and less scrupulous companions, Clarissa stands out as the heroine mainly because of her unique use of her writing ability. What she says of women in general can be best applied to her:

> Who sees not...that those women who take delight in writing, excel the men in all the graces of the familiar style? The gentleness of their minds, the delicacy of their sentiments (improved by the manner of their education), and the liveliness of their imaginations, qualify them to a high degree of preference for this employment: while men of learning, as they are called (that is to say, of mere learning), aiming to get above that natural ease and freedom which distinguish this (and indeed every other) kind of writing, when they think they have best succeeded, are got above, or rather beneath, all natural beauty. (IV, 495)

Among all the other scribblers in the novel, Clarissa's writing is the only one which possesses this "natural beauty." Her style has the "noble simplicity and natural ease and dignity" which Belford so admired of the Bible (IV, 6).

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