

The Politics of Advice: Samuel Richardson's Use of Sexual Violence and "Counter Advice" in the Name of Didacticism

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ABSTRACT

This paper studies the narrative strategy underlying Samuel Richardson's great fictional work—*Clarissa*. Demonstrating how Richardson puts the rape event to profitable use in his great scheme of moral reform, I contend that Richardson deploys sexual violence and counter advice to extirpate eroticism and to subvert aristocratic libertinism and bourgeois conformism. In so doing, Richardson challenges a long eighteenth-century tradition of abiding by public opinion, which advocates the marriage of the victim to her rapist, so long as the rapist is rich.

The violent event of Clarissa's rape, long anticipated before the occurrence, reverberates throughout the remainder of the novel and serves as Richardson's praxis for the moralizing project of Christian reform. By having Clarissa reject over and over again the advice from her friends and relatives to marry Lovelace in order to superficially patch up an injured reputation post facto, Richardson overhauls predominant ideologies of aristocratic libertinism and bourgeois conformism with the help of sexual violence. The deployment of counter advice that Clarissa rejects repeatedly allows Richardson to establish new moral and behavioral guidelines with Clarissa, our paragon of virtue. Clarissa's refusal of Lovelace's marriage proposal categorically denigrates a long tradition of the marriage panacea frequently prescribed for violated virginity and proposes a closer match between moral theory and practice.

Though Richardson's representation of Clarissa's rape might seem to be at odds with his moral reform, the presence of sexual violence and repeated negation of counter advice work subtly to exclude eroticism, libertinism, and conformity from his didactic scheme.

KEY WORDS: *Clarissa*, rape, didacticism, reform, libertinism, conformism

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勸誡的策略： 山繆李查森利用性暴力與負面勸導 以教化人心之策略

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摘 要

本文旨在探索李查森小說巨作克蘿瑞莎背後的敘事策略，並說明李查森如何利用性暴力來達成道德改革的重大使命。本文主張李查森利用性暴力及負面勸導來顛覆十八世紀貴族的浪蕩主義以及中產階級的屈服主義，同時並挑戰了一個十八世紀長久以來把強暴受害者嫁給富有施暴者的傳統。

克蘿瑞莎的強暴事件在發生之前早已有預告，在發生後不僅回響於其餘的篇幅，還是李查森心中偉大基督教道德改革的主軸。藉由讓克蘿瑞莎一再拒絕親友要她嫁給拉夫理斯以粉飾名譽受損的勸導，李查森利用性暴力推翻了用事後結婚來掩飾強暴污名的世俗，並且成功地反駁了主流貴族浪蕩子哲學及中產階級的屈服主義。李查森運用克蘿瑞莎一再拒絕負面勸導的策略，得以重新建立以道德崇高的女主角為中心的道德行為準則。克蘿瑞莎拒絕拉夫理斯求婚的同時亦全面性地駁斥了長久以來以結婚作為撫平強暴傷害的萬靈藥，並提倡道德理論與實踐之間更緊密的契合。

雖然李查森對克蘿瑞莎強暴事件的鋪陳似乎與其道德改革的意圖互相抵觸，但其性暴力的呈現與重覆駁斥的負面勸導微妙地將色情愛慾、浪蕩主義及屈服主義給排除掉了。

關鍵詞：克蘿瑞莎、強暴、教誨主義、道德改革、浪蕩主義、屈服主義

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Clarissa (1747-8) is Samuel Richardson's (1689-1761) avowed grand project of moral reform, even though the novel itself is a very erotic book teeming with cunning advances Lovelace makes on Clarissa's person. However, this seeming contradiction between the declared moral lesson and the provocative, seductive narrative creates something of a paradox when we examine how Clarissa's rape—an excruciatingly brutal yet sadistically erotic event—movingly brings about the reformation Richardson had in mind. It seems counter-intuitively true that Richardson deploys sexual violence to purge the novel of eroticism and to advocate a moral reform across class lines. In the eighteenth-century the novel was often accused of being a bad influence for corrupting young female readers who put their honor at stake by the sheer act of reading novels, which seduced them with romantic love affairs, elopements, and male gallantry and caused a cognitive gap between fiction and reality. Moreover, it was common practice for rape victims to marry their violators to cover up the scandal, however artificial and devoid of any meaning attached to matrimony the cosmetic work might turn out to be.¹

By having Clarissa reject the advice of marrying Lovelace after the rape and discrediting such a superficially mended injury of honor, Richardson makes it explicit to the aristocracy, bourgeoisie, and lower-middle classes that marriage is no longer acceptable in cases of violated virginity. The counsel that Clarissa rejects—marriage or litigation—is morally ill-considered and hence termed “counter advice” in this study. It is through repeated resistance to this counter advice that Richardson validates Clarissa's moral decision. Clarissa's non-compliance puts to shame the rape and marriage remedy: her decision makes what has been tolerated so far now appear morally depraved by comparison. Clarissa's refusal of counter advice helps Richardson push for a categorical moral reform that seeks a more substantial match between precepts and practice and subversively challenges an eighteenth-century tradition of abiding by public opinion, which advocates the marriage of the victim to her rapist, so long as the rapist is rich. By valorizing Clarissa's virtue, Richardson seems to challenge patriarchy with her rebellion against paternal rule; but Clarissa is eventually to submit her moral superiority to an enlightened, sentimental patriarchy reformed by her edifying influence.

¹ Randolph Trumbach studies historical perceptions of sexual identities in western history and argues that in eighteenth-century northwestern Europe including England men's sexual violence was not only persistently existent but might appear “in courtship when marriage could be offered as a compensation for rape” (19). Lovelace clearly believes offering marriage to Clarissa after the rape could increase his chances of winning her consent.

Methodology

My methodology in this study, aside from my own approach of close reading, will be primarily sociological and feminist, drawing mainly from the theoretical arguments delineated in Peter Stallybrass and Allon White's *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*. Stallybrass and White contend that "Cultural categories of high and low . . . are never separable" (2). Culture's high and low orders are intimately connected for each to make sense of the other. Richardson's moral project is closely linked to eroticism, of which the rape is an egregious example. Richardson's moral reform to a certain extent relies on the rape to highlight its urgency. Stallybrass and White further postulate:

. . . the "top" attempt to reject and eliminate the "bottom" for reasons of prestige and status, only to discover, not only that it is in some way frequently dependent upon that low-Other (in the classic way that Hegel describes in the master-slave section of the *Phenomenology*), but also that the top *includes* that low symbolically, as a primary eroticized constituent of its own fantasy life. The result is . . . a psychological dependence upon precisely those Others which are being rigorously opposed and excluded at the social level. It is for this reason that what is *socially* peripheral is also frequently *symbolically* central (like long hair in the 1960s). The low-Other is despised and denied at the level of political organization and social being whilst it is instrumentally constitutive of the shared imaginary repertoires of the dominant culture. (5-6)

This high/low binary is helpful to understanding how, when novels give advice to women, counsel is presented in a dialectical manner with the abjection of unacceptable conduct on the negative side. When one asks for, gives or takes advice, socioeconomic, cultural, historical and sexual ideologies representing the different parties involved all interact, and what the narrator or author endorses explicitly or implicitly comprises the top in the high/low opposition. The high position is defined by the recognition of a boundary, and what is beyond is deployed to underscore the centrality of the intended moral of the story. What we have is a system of affirmation through negation, and what the author rejects (the low) not only serves as a parameter for moral decisions and

acts (the high) but also functions as a site of desire that the dominant power continues to resist. In the fictional economy of *Clarissa*, Richardson's portrayal of morals reveals profound objections to both the aristocracy and bourgeoisie, namely their libertinism and conformity. These moral failings are adamantly resisted by Clarissa, who gains the moral high ground in her repudiation of them.

This paper fine-tunes Terry Eagleton's contention that Clarissa symbolizes the middle class taking away moral prestige from the aristocracy as I scrutinize the differences between Clarissa and her fellow members of the bourgeoisie.² Clarissa's dismissal both of the condescension of Lovelace's aristocratic relatives and the conformity of her family and friends seems to provide a more exalted alternative to their suggestions and to promote a reform for both social groups. Clarissa's differentiation from members of her own class argues against Eagleton's claim that *Clarissa* is "an agent" of Richardson's by which the "English bourgeoisie" attempts to "wrest a degree of ideological hegemony from the aristocracy in the decades which follow the political settlement of 1688," since Clarissa's criticism of her own class seems equally if not more severe than that of the nobility (4). Zooming in on the disparity between Richardson's declared moral purpose and his explicitly erotic approach, this study inspects the narrative strategy, transmission, and efficacy underlying his great fictional work.³

"Clarissa lives!" a triumphant predatory Lovelace smugly writes to his libertine friend, Belford, after having successfully drugged and raped Clarissa Harlowe. Lovelace's announcement of rape instantly reduces Clarissa's commendable qualities as a virtuous, dutiful, diligent, well-educated daughter

² After William Warner and Terry Castle's deconstructionist interpretations of the rape of Clarissa, it might seem hard to read *Clarissa* since her heart, according to these two of the leading scholars in eighteenth-century studies, is unstable and her letters are subject to potential readerly distortion. However, Richardson's narrative strategy is not unstable, and a study of it such as this one helps shed light on the efficacy of narrative transmission. For discussions on Clarissa's dubious exemplarity, see Warner's *Reading Clarissa: The Struggles of Interpretation*, where he contends that "Clarissa creates the heart by making a boundary between outside and inside" and that her "construction of a self is carried on so as to conceal the fact of construction" (19, 26). See also Terry Castle's *Clarissa's Ciphers: Meaning and Disruption in Richardson's "Clarissa,"* where she argues that the "interpretive difficulty" in *Clarissa*'s epistolary form is open "to distortion by readers" and that "the physical remove of the letter writer" imposes "on the letter what might be called its fundamental hermeneutic instability" (44).

³ The epistolary form of *Clarissa*, though a comforting venue of communication and subversion for the eponymous heroine especially when ostracized by her family, falls short of being an effective means of fending off counter advice since it also contains her adversaries' letters which degrade her and undercut her moral strength. What the epistolary form achieves, though, is a kind of democratic 'heteroglossia' in Mikhail Bakhtin's sense (272-4).

of the country gentry—the Harlowes—to a mere victim, barely alive. The event of the rape, the sexual violence, though off-stage, shatters her psychologically just as it disintegrates her journal entries right after the violence and turns them into incoherent, truncated mumblings of her still hallucinatory mind.

This violent event, long anticipated before the occurrence, reverberates throughout the remainder of the novel and serves Richardson's great moralizing project of Christian reform. By having Clarissa reject over and over again the advice from her friends and relatives to marry Lovelace in order to patch up an injured reputation, Richardson seats the post-rape marriage cover-up as the moral low ground and successfully overhauls both aristocratic libertinism and bourgeois conformism with the help of sexual violence and counter advice. Clarissa's rejection of counter advice, whereby a new set of moral and behavioral ideals establish authority and require people's observance by denigrating the conventional mode of operation, seems to capture Richardson's strategy of narrative transmission as Clarissa's refusal of marriage denigrates a long tradition of the marriage panacea frequently prescribed for violated virginity.

Deploying Sexual Violence and Re-appropriating the Female Body to Serve a Didactic End

Richardson's intentional use of sexual violence to serve didactic purposes is manifest in his defense of the notoriously provocative fire scene in the novel by arguing that the explicit descriptions of Clarissa's pathetic condition at the hands of her attacker are "necessary to demonstrate as well the Danger, as the Resistance" ("Answer"133). This defense suggests a level of paradoxical interdependence between sexual violence and resistance in the fictional economy of *Clarissa*: Without the rape, the resistance may seem coy, and without the resistance, the crime of rape could become ameliorated. The rape incident legitimates and morally fortifies Clarissa's decision at the same time.

Clarissa's consent to marry Lovelace after he has violated her would make her no different from her father, brother, and sister, who are more than willing to sacrifice Clarissa's happiness for Mr. Solmes' fortune. To dissociate herself completely from the vulgar bourgeoisie, Clarissa gradually distances herself from her family and later even from her best friend, Anna Howe, whose repeated urgings for Clarissa to marry Lovelace after the rape prove

Anna not quite up to Clarissa's moral caliber. What Clarissa rejects comes around to buttress her impeccable virtue—her resistance to Lovelace and to others' advice of matrimony works to illustrate her exemplarity.

With Clarissa's abjection of the post-rape remedy of marriage, Richardson wrests the control over female chastity from the hands of her patriarchs and places it in her own custody. Chastity is at once a cherished prize and a source of contamination when defiled. Strategic marriages where women are pawns in the game of political alliance can advance wealth, status, and reputation. Indeed, chastity helps to ensure that women as precious assets do not depreciate in value, for any damage to their reputation threatens significant economic loss for their patriarchs. Claude Lévi-Strauss' concept of kinship—that women function as a means of exchange in primitive society for the consolidation of power alliances—also sheds light on how the protection of women's honor can further the prosperity of the bourgeoisie: women's intact fame guarantees their worth on the marriage market (62-3). Before Lovelace gets in the picture, Clarissa is a highly desirable marriage partner no matter whether one considers her background, dutifulness, or person.

However, once the female body becomes incomplete or defective as in Clarissa's case, it is regarded as polluted as is evident in her relatives' wishes either for Clarissa's litigation, exile, or death. As either prize or pollution, men have the power of decision and total control over the fate of the female body. Clarissa's rejection of marriage is symbolically a re-appropriation of the female body, now invested with moral superiority which degrades aristocratic libertinism and bourgeois superficiality and protection of self-interests.⁴ This re-possession of the female body seats the counter advice of marriage the moral low ground exactly because of Clarissa's rejection of Lovelace.

Richardson brings forth his moral reform through the exclusion of counter values in a process of affirmation through negation. Privileging Clarissa's resistance, Richardson seems to place moral authority in women rather than in men and to challenge patriarchal rule. However, her spirituality is eventually destined for a return to the sentimental and enlightened kind of patriarchy that Clarissa's deceased grandfather and the reformed Belford represent.

⁴ Clarissa's re-appropriation of her violated body is not dissimilar to Oroonoko's defense of his physical body in face of British colonizers' persecution in Aphra Behn's 1688 fictional work *Oroonoko*. His self-inflicted laceration signifies his total control of subjectivity in gruesome defiance of foreign conquest and eventually wins him respect from even his aggressors.

Bourgeois Vices in Richardson's View

In *Clarissa*, the middle class has thrived economically but has also become morally degenerate like the Harlowes except Clarissa.⁵ What Richardson targets is a reformation of the bourgeoisie through Clarissa's spiritual influence, purging it of avarice, selfishness, ambition, and malice, which the Harlowes embody. James Harlowe Sr. and brothers have amassed tremendous wealth through prudent marriage and trade in the Indies, and have long cherished "the darling view" of "*raising a family*," "a view . . . entertained by families which having great substance, cannot be satisfied without rank and title" (I: 53).⁶ When Clarissa gets her grandfather's bequest based on her merit, it obstructs the interest of the Harlowe males, having "lopped off one branch of my [Clarissa's] brother's expectation" (I: 54). The benevolent legacy antagonizes the whole family against Clarissa and galvanizes insoluble domestic strife. "Nobody indeed was pleased; for although everyone loved me [Clarissa] . . . ; and my father himself could not bear that I should be made sole . . . and independent" (I: 54). The grandfather's fondness for Clarissa seems "to the rest of the family insufficient reason for disregarding the interests and ambitions of the family unit" (Hill 317). Affective ties appear second to social climbing at best and are to be sacrificed for the security of the latter.

Clarissa's contempt for Solmes originates from his unkindness toward his family so as to increase his own fortune and denigrates the pursuit of self-interest that Richardson previously encouraged.⁷ Tempted by Clarissa's estate, Solmes makes seemingly generous offers to the Harlowes even at the

⁵ Eighteenth-century British authors held different views of the bourgeoisie. For instance, while Defoe worried that the bourgeoisie might pick up bad habits of the nobility such as indulgence and extravagance, Richardson was concerned about what one might call bourgeois vices, such as the complacency and self-righteousness that often follow material achievement, as can be seen in his portrayal of most middle-class characters in the novel.

⁶ All textual references are to this 1932 edition and will be parenthetically cited with volume followed by page numbers.

⁷ The approval that Richardson gives to the pursuit of self-interest in *The Apprentice's Vade Mecum* comes across not only as vulgar but as below humanity in *Clarissa*. The reason why I mention Richardson's address to apprentices and the middle class in the same breath is both because apprentices constituted the future bourgeoisie and because "Service as an apprentice was the normal route to a business career in London" (Earle 7). In *The Apprentice's Vade Mecum*, Richardson advises that a young man "should principally pursue your *own Interest*, and prefer your *self* in all *lawfull Cases*, to *every one* else, but yet that you should so pursue it, as should shew you were not sordidly attached to it, so as to be incapable of a generous Action, when it would be of little or no *Prejudice* to your self" (39-40). The sophistication about not appearing too straightforward in protecting self-interest merely applies to harmless situations and legitimates by implication relentless action toward safeguarding one's benefits when something larger than insignificant is at stake.

expense of his own sisters' security: "*Noble* is the word used to enforce the offers of a man who is mean enough avowedly to . . . *rob* of their just expectations, his own family . . . in order to settle all he is worth on me [Clarissa]" (I: 59). What Solmes does to his family mirrors what James Harlowe Sr. and Jr. do to Clarissa; they are all more than willing to relinquish family members' welfare for personal gain. Although Solmes' offer to Clarissa seems generous, his main motive is to expand his property and the condition on which Clarissa gets Solmes' estate—that the marriage produces no heirs and that he has none by any other marriage—is very remote. Richardson seems to see greed as the bourgeoisie's major motivation, which disregards human decency and indicates their degeneracy.⁸ Clarissa's disinterestedness and scorn of property distinguish her from her rapacious fellow members of the middle class, consolidating her moral authority.

Clarissa's Virtue as Differentiation from Fellow Bourgeoisie

Clarissa's exemplarity resides in the ways she rigorously dissociates herself from the other members of the bourgeoisie in the novel—not just the avaricious Harlowes, but also sympathetic characters such as Anna Howe, Colonel Morden, and Dr. Lewen, especially after the rape.⁹ By having Clarissa, the persona in whom he invests the highest moral significance, reject the guidance of people around her, Richardson counsels young women by pointing out what Clarissa does not do, in order to highlight Clarissa's virtue.¹⁰ What Clarissa rejects constitutes the low-Other in the high/low

⁸ That Richardson condemns the ugly acquisitiveness of the bourgeoisie in *Clarissa* may be a reaction of his to quell such sarcastic response as Fielding's to *Pamela*. Fielding's parody of *Pamela* in *Shamela* aims to make the eponymous heroine appear suspect and her probity conniving because of the material rewards that her author heaps upon her. Clarissa is "a dialectically strengthened version of female virtue" that responds to "the criticism of Pamela by Fielding and others" (Clery 99).

⁹ The fact that Richardson published *A COLLECTION of the Moral and Instructive SENTIMENTS, MAXIMS, CAUTIONS, and REFLEXIONS, Contained in the Histories of PAMELA, CLARISSA, and SIR CHARLES GRANDISON* (1755) would seem to eliminate the purpose of this essay, since Richardson plainly tells us what advice for women and everybody else there is to be gleaned from his novels. That the *Collection*, for lack of dramatization, does not show how the dynamics of advice work in the fiction, however, perhaps rescues my study from the accusation of redundancy. Richardson's worry that the *Collection* might be "a dry Performance – Dull Morality, and Sentences, some pertinent, some impertinent, divested of Story, and Amusement," along with the demand for *Clarissa* ("four editions in just over three years") argue that it is worth analyzing how counsel functions in the novel (qtd. in Eaves 420; Beasley 146).

¹⁰ While I focus on the advice not taken by Clarissa to illustrate her exemplarity, Sylvia Kasey Marks compares *Clarissa* with contemporaneous conduct manuals and extracts similarities between the two as "the warning to be obtained in *Clarissa* as a conduct book" (9).

cultural dichotomy, and it is via the identification and repeated repulsion of this low-Other that Richardson consolidates Clarissa's moral authority—the high. The advice not taken by Clarissa indicates behavior that Richardson does not endorse. Instruction in *Clarissa* works by accentuating the separation between Clarissa and her relations and friends.¹¹

Recognizing Clarissa's rape to be the watershed moment where Clarissa parts company even with her closest friend Anna, I show how Richardson distinguishes Clarissa from her family and Anna Howe by having Clarissa reject their guidance. I will also prove that Anna is basically not any different from the Harlowes despite her poignant disapproval of them. Moreover, I demonstrate how Clarissa establishes her exemplarity by carefully steering away from prevalent bourgeois vices—acquisitiveness, sycophantism, and vindictiveness—and by proposing a modification toward dignity and spirituality via her resistance to counter advice. Rather than rebelling against all bourgeois values, Clarissa acts as a model member of the middle class for Richardson, as her efficiently-managed Dairy house and her charity for the villagers show. What distinguishes Clarissa from her fellow bourgeoisie is her adamant rejection of bourgeois vices which to the Harlowes have become nothing more than standard practice.

The Implications of Counter Advice

Each time Clarissa rejects the marriage counsel, Richardson indirectly resuscitates the rape event in the reader's mind as Clarissa insistently explains why she cannot possibly be a good wife to her violator. The implications of this strategy of giving counsel negatively by presenting bad advice that the exemplary heroine repudiates are significant on a number of levels. Structurally, the illustration of negative advice allows Richardson to evade straightforward instruction in the forms of precepts whose appeal was dwindling in comparison with that of novels.¹² Philosophically, instruction by negative counsel allows

¹¹ Michael F. Suarez analyzes Clarissa's "nay-saying" and he argues that Clarissa's "incessant nay-saying is a response to the patterns of infantilization she encounters at almost every turn" and that her "No" is an attempt to assert her own autonomy, to secure her right to a will of her own" (69). While Suarez studies Clarissa's rejection as a psychological maturing process, I read it as proof of Clarissa's incorruptibility after Lovelace's violation.

¹² Henry Fielding, Richardson, and Samuel Johnson all reflected on the diminishing popularity of conduct manuals and precepts for their lack of examples. Fielding placed the novel above precept-laden conduct manuals and lauded novelists for extending "the Usefulness of their Examples a great way" (17). Richardson thought the pulpit, where priests pontificate with precepts, "has lost great

the reader to be an empiricist in making moral judgments because these are “not based on the articulation of absolute and universal principles” but rather on the individual interpretation of events (Bellamy 63). This is not to say that the arrangement of occurrences is free of ideological manipulation on Richardson’s part. In fact, exactly the opposite is true; but epistemologically the reader is relatively independent in terms of ethical assessment in that the reader finds out for him/herself the dire consequences of following counter advice instead of simply being told what to do.

Politically, instruction by counter advice involves the ideological rejection of certain values—libertinism and conformity—that Richardson does not endorse. On the one hand, counsel by negative advice exposes the arbitrary nature of positive and negative instruction—chastity and lasciviousness, altruism and selfishness for example—while Richardson hammers out the verdict on social practices. On the other hand, that Richardson relies on the negation of libertinism and conformity to establish Clarissa’s moral authority reveals fragility in her spirituality in that it does not adequately justify itself.¹³ Her exemplarity relies on discriminating what Richardson deems to be the morally marginal—marriage—to uphold its own standing.

This strategy of giving counsel negatively by presenting bad advice that the exemplary heroine repudiates also helps Richardson reap both rhetorical and emotional benefits. Clarissa’s rejection of advice underscores her difference not only from her family and friends but also from her violator—Lovelace. As the dramatization of evil’s defeat underlines the quality of goodness by contrast, Lovelace’s denigration strengthens Clarissa’s virtue. As Thomas Hobbes famously posits on the usefulness of contrast, “An able conductor of soldiers is of great price in time of war present or imminent, but in peace not so” (57). Clarissa’s insistent refusal of her friends’ counter advice that she marry Lovelace repeatedly strengthens Clarissa’s moral superiority. There are also considerable entertaining effects achieved in the depiction of Lovelace’s frustration at Clarissa’s hands, even when she is agonizingly suffering from damage he has inflicted. The rhetorical efficacy in deploying the negative to underscore the positive is not dissimilar to Jonathan Dollimore’s idea of “the

part of its weight” (*Clarissa* IV: 553). Johnson believed the “familiar histories [in the novel] may perhaps be made of greater use than the solemnities of professed morality, and convey the knowledge of vice and virtue with more efficacy than axioms and definitions (“New Realistic”176).

¹³ This concept is akin to Edward Said’s idea of orientalism in that the West justifies or aggrandizes itself through the demonization of the Orient as the Other.

proximate” in *Sexual Dissidence*, where he postulates that “identity—individual and cultural—involves a process of disavowal, exclusion, and negation” of “the culturally defined other” (244). Clarissa’s resistance of the counter advice of marriage exactly identifies its givers as the low-Other in Richardson’s cultural hierarchy. That the condemnation of Lovelace establishes Clarissa’s moral prestige also resonates with Alan Bray’s contention in *Homosexuality in Renaissance England*. Bray asserts that the officially launched raids at the molly houses “served the needs of the persecutor” because they helped the authorities inscribe illegitimacy on homosexuality so as to reinforce heterosexual domination (102). The assertion of moral authority then lies in the denunciation of the low-Other. Clarissa’s rejection of the marriage cover-up indicates a moral depravity in conformity. In this sense, Dollimore and Bray resonate with Stallybrass and White in that the “*socially* peripheral” is “also frequently *symbolically* central” (6).

Moreover, the portrayal of the Harlowes’ obstinacy and vulgarity, especially that of brother James and Arabella, flatters the readers psychologically by placing them above the Harlowes’ level, inducing them to side with Clarissa and contributing to Richardson’s moral purpose. Clarissa’s repudiation of counter advice signifies Clarissa’s moral supremacy over her family and friends and enhances the dramatic contrast between Clarissa and people around her. Richardson’s refusal to give *Clarissa* a happy ending is in part owing to the gratification that the reader obtains from poetical justice. Declining Lady Bradshaigh’s petition to let Clarissa marry Lovelace, Richardson explained that “I could not think of leaving my Heroine short of Heaven . . . Clarissa has the greatest of Triumphs even in this World. The greatest . . . even *in*, and *after* the Outrage, and *because* of the Outrage that ever Woman had” (*Selected Letters* 106, 108). Lovelace’s success would ameliorate the injury done to Clarissa and lessen her superiority, whereas Lovelace’s defeat secures Clarissa’s triumph and directs the reader’s sympathy toward the heroine.

Clarissa’s rejection of counter advice also suggests a connection between Clarissa’s rationale and Richardson’s semi-pornographic delineation of Lovelace’s treatment of Clarissa. Richardson himself defends the necessity of erotic scenes in that they justify Clarissa’s refusal of marriage. The fire scene that Lovelace stages at Sinclair’s is one prominent example and it reads not unlike some steamy spectacle from a provocative romance. Lovelace “clasped her [Clarissa] once more to my bosom,” but Clarissa slid through his

arms and fell on her knees:

. . . in the anguish of her soul, her streaming eyes lifted up to my face with supplicating softness, hands folded, dishevelled hair; for her night head-dress having fallen off in her struggling, her charming tresses fell down in naturally shining ringlets, as if officious to conceal the dazzling beauties of her neck and shoulders; her lovely bosom too heaving with sighs and broken sobs, as if to aid her quivering lips in pleading for her. (II: 503)

This scene allows the reader so much of a voyeur's pleasure that the reader could easily forget the author's proclaimed didactic purpose. Intimacy of this level caused the Donegal curate Philip Skelton (1707-87) to urge Richardson to "Keep everything you [Richardson] have but the Fire-Scene" (qtd. in *Published Commentary* 122). However, Richardson's reply brushes off Skelton's complaint by arguing that the explicit description of Clarissa in dishabille is "necessary to demonstrate as well the Danger, as the Resistance," and that "it was necessary to paint it in such strong Colours, as should convince the Reader, that it [Lovelace's scheme] was *too flagrant to be forgiven by a Clarissa*" (*Published Commentary* 133, 135-36). Richardson's rebuttal links Clarissa's rejection of counter advice to the seductive depiction. The sexual violence justifies the rejection while the latter plays back into the narrative's appealing eroticism. Although Richardson would only focus on the didactic aspect of his design, considerable temptation for the reader comes along with it as well. Richardson's language in *Clarissa* is "perilously close to the explicitness, the repetitiveness, and the teasing delays of pornography" (Harris I: lxxiii). Richardson makes sexual violence central to his moral reform of purging the novel of eroticism.

The rape of Clarissa, or "the hour of her trial" as Lovelace would have it, throws everything into focus, serving as a test not only for Lovelace to find out Clarissa's alleged virtue, but also for the reader to assess every other major character's moral stance (III: 190). The rape obviates Lovelace's doubt about Clarissa's invincible virtue, proving wrong his question "Whether, if *once subdued, she will not be always subdued?*" (III: 190). The rape also shows Clarissa that her hope of reforming Lovelace is entirely unrealistic and that she can never trust his professions of remorse or improvement.

Clarissa's violation decisively divides all the characters into two groups, with Clarissa on the one side against all the rest on the other, representing

respectively categorical rejection of and conformity to worldly practicality. The Harlowes are too vulgar and conceited to disdain shallow repairs of family reputation through litigation or exiling Clarissa to Pennsylvania. Even though Clarissa's mother and aunt Hervey pity Clarissa, they do not have any influence in the family and generally side with Harlowe senior and junior. Yet, the other sympathetic secondary characters such as Anna, Colonel Morden, Judith Norton, and Belford all suggest that Clarissa compromise by marrying or suing, paying more attention to how the world judges her than to how Clarissa's conduct coheres with her principles. To a certain extent, Anna, Morden, Mrs. Norton, and Belford hold the same libertine view of Lovelace: "what is that injury which a *church rite* will at any time repair?" (III: 281). The marriage counter advice alibis for aristocratic libertinism and countenances bourgeois conformity.

Conversely, when everyone around Clarissa wants her to acquiesce after the rape, Clarissa stands alone in resisting salvaging injured honor expediently with a marriage that could only have meaning in form. By not taking her friends' advice, Clarissa advances "beyond the conventional marriage-covers-all morality which makes Pamela so nauseating," treading a solitary path of "personal salvation in the sight of God only" (Hill 321). Pamela's ready acceptance of Squire B's proposal of marriage after his sexual advances appears suspicious because of the material gains that accompany the marriage. By contrast, Clarissa's repeated refusals of the marriage place Pamela's conformity on the diametrically moral low ground and establish Clarissa's distinguished interiority, which is also "the creation of an implicit sense of self through explicit rejections and denials, "No, not *that*, and not *that*" (Stallybrass and White 89). In Clarissa's negation of worldly prudence, Richardson attempts to propose a preferred alternative which seeks consistency between deeds and principles.¹⁴

¹⁴ Donnalee Frega also studies Clarissa's rejection of the world and focuses on how Clarissa does it through refusing food or through starvation. Frega argues that as Clarissa "becomes increasingly dissatisfied with her family, she learns to achieve control over herself by manipulating a system of consumptive transference . . . a pattern of accepting food in order to signal her acceptance of something else or of refusing food with an equally political intent" (88). Peter Sabor also talks about food in Richardson's novels and postulates that "Fasting might expedite her [Clarissa's] death, yet it also helps her achieve a saint-like communion with God" (155). From a different angle, Gerard A. Barker does not read Clarissa's exemplarity in her negation of the world, but rather in Clarissa's "unhesitant and consistent approval" of her own conduct, claiming that her "self-approval," in the vein of the "traditional Protestant belief in the validity of self-judgment," "constitutes for Richardson a necessary concomitant of virtue, confirming the validity of personal judgment" (503).

Clarissa's Break from Anna Howe

Anna's advice that Clarissa sue Lovelace after the rape suggests Anna's lack of imagination regarding Clarissa's miserable and destabilized condition. Anna urges Clarissa "to resolve upon taking legal vengeance of the infernal wretch" (III: 375). Not considering sufficiently the physical and psychological trauma that Clarissa suffers from, Anna proposes litigation, which, though justified, takes someone with stamina and composure to pursue and for which Clarissa is certainly not ready. Clarissa gently declines Anna's advice: "I will only say that I would sooner suffer every evil (the repetition of the capital one excepted) than appear publicly in a court to do myself justice" (III: 382). Clarissa will consent to sue, however, if Lovelace endangers her friend: "If I find that he sets on foot any machination against you, or against Mr. Hickman, I do assure you I will consent to prosecute him" (III: 385). Via her refusal to take legal action, Clarissa embodies sensibility in her moving consideration for Anna. Clarissa's capacity to show compassion for others' affliction while her own is extreme demonstrates "a fundamental meaning of 'sensibility,'" which Anna falls short of displaying (Barker-Benfield 224). Litigation, by Clarissa's standards, is counter advice and a foil to Clarissa's virtue. Through Clarissa's rejection of counter advice, Richardson commends her moral decisions.

Anna's indignation, visible in her zealous recommendation of a lawsuit, vanishes with a visit from Lovelace's illustrious relatives and turns into docile conformity. This sudden change signals Anna's moral frailty. Informing Clarissa about the visit, Anna writes: "I have been favoured with a visit from Miss Montague and her sister, in Lord M.'s chariot and six. . . . Noble settlements . . . they talked of . . . You *must* oblige them. Very few will know anything of his brutal baseness to you" (III: 414, 416). Deluded by Lovelace's aristocratic relatives' condescension, Anna seeks to impress Clarissa with their grandeur, worrying about "how Clarissa is to be seen to the world's eye" while ignoring how hypocritical it would be for Clarissa to concede to her violator's patronizing remedy (Izubuchi 85).¹⁵ Looking for a quick cover-up for Clarissa and relying on the forgetfulness of general opinion, Anna proves

¹⁵ While Keiko Izubuchi and I both analyze how Clarissa parts company with Anna over the issue of marrying Lovelace after the rape, our conclusions are essentially different. Izubuchi argues that Anna "represents the commonplace view of her time" and functions as a complementary opposite to Clarissa for whom "theory and practice" are "inseparable," whereas I read Clarissa's rejection of Anna's advice as a way for Richardson to solidify Clarissa's exemplarity via her rejection of imperfect social practices such as marrying to make up for lost honor (85).

herself lackluster in moral caliber. That Anna further advises Clarissa “to be more sparing in exposing what is past . . . since everyone will not know how much to your honour your very sufferings have been” signals Anna’s inclination to concealment and art, which are incompatible with Clarissa’s purity of mind (III: 415). Anna’s change from an indignant counselor to a spineless pleaser may seem out of character at first, but this becomes understandable when we recall how important Anna thinks it is for Clarissa to hold on to her grandfather’s legacy. Richardson’s characterization of Anna comes across as a cynical mixture of theoretical liberality and practical prudence.

Clarissa’s negation of Anna’s counsel of marrying Lovelace degrades Anna and elevates Clarissa in the moral hierarchy of the novel. Unable to comply with Anna’s suggestion, Clarissa explicitly tells Anna “my dear, I will *not* have that man. . . . Our *views* must now be different” (III: 479).¹⁶ Not only does Anna ignore Clarissa’s wish not to be influenced, Anna continues bombarding Clarissa with repeated persuasion until Clarissa finally gives an almost angry explanation:

My pride, then, my dearest friend, although a great deal mortified, is not *sufficiently* mortified, if it be necessary for me to submit to make that man my choice, whose actions are, and ought to be, my abhorrence! What! shall I, who have been treated with such premeditated and perfidious barbarity, as is painful to be thought of, and cannot with modesty be described, think of taking the violator to my heart? Can I vow duty to one so wicked, and hazard my salvation . . . ? Do you think your Clarissa Harlowe so lost, so *sunk*, at least, as that she could, for the sake of patching up, in the world’s eye, a broken reputation, meanly appear indebted to the generosity, or perhaps *compassion* of a man who has, by means so inhuman, robbed her of it? (III: 519-20)

The implication of Anna’s moral depravity resides in Clarissa’s hint that she is

¹⁶ Helen M. Ostovich reads Clarissa’s and Anna’s difference as arising from Clarissa’s “psychological and physical victimization” and “experience of confinement,” which “challenges traditional assumptions about the stability of an apparently well-integrated personality, like Clarissa, in an abusive situation,” and which eventually makes Clarissa withdraw “even from her closest friend” Anna, who “will resist accepting the evidence of damage caused by confinement” (153-4). While I think Ostovich’s argument persuasive, she falls short of accounting for the reconciliation which Clarissa finally brings about between Anna and herself and which argues against Ostovich’s claim of “Anna’s failure to comprehend Clarissa’s psychological changes” (165).

not yet “so *sunk*” as to accept Lovelace. By insisting on a strict coherence between form and essence, Clarissa serves as an instrument for Richardson to attack the hypocrisy of his time and to reform the bourgeoisie as represented by Anna. Clarissa’s ability to “consult, by turning inward, an intuitive faculty of judgment which is directly related to God” attests to her consistency between precepts and practice, and it highlights Anna’s deficient moral strength (Poovey 304). Clarissa’s emphasis on the association between a wife’s duty to her husband and her salvation through him suggests the mutual reinforcement of patriarchy and Christianity. In this scene, the reference to sexual violence—to the treatment of “such premeditated and perfidious barbarity, as . . . cannot with modesty be described”—effectively bolsters Clarissa’s justification and subtly excludes eroticism from the novel for Richardson (III: 519).

In having Clarissa relegate world opinion to a secondary position and revere her own observance of Christianity, Richardson finds fault with the prominent Augustan belief in generality promoted by people such as Samuel Johnson and David Hume. Richardson’s privileging of Clarissa’s unique decision against the general opinion of her society challenges Johnson’s view of a poet’s task that “The business of a poet . . . is to examine, not the individual, but the species; to remark general properties . . . and large appearances” (*Rasselas* 670). Clarissa’s distrust of world opinion also reverses Hume’s idea that “though the principles of taste be universal . . . yet few are qualified to give judgment on any work of art, or establish their own sentiment as the standard of beauty” (241). Clarissa certainly believes herself adequately equipped to serve as the measure of virtue. Allowing Clarissa and Lovelace to marry “would have been to deny all meaning to the novel’s basic struggle” (Keymer 204). Richardson’s disillusion with the degenerate world motivates his vilification of widespread secular pragmatism, which, rather than upholding the truth, seeks compromise for the sake of convenience and security.

Clarissa’s Break from Mrs. Norton

Mrs. Norton’s wish for Clarissa to consider marrying Lovelace provides another occasion for Richardson to illustrate Clarissa’s virtue through her rejection of prudent acquiescence. Here we again witness Richardson’s use of sexual violence and counter advice to consolidate Clarissa’s virtue. Mrs. Norton, being Clarissa’s nurse only, humbly suggests, “Methinks I am sorry that you refuse the wicked man . . . I cannot forbear . . . to ask you if you cannot get over

your just resentments?—But I dare say no more on this subject” (IV: 49). Richardson shows steadfast insistence on non-compliance in meticulously disassociating Clarissa from her fondest surrogate mother, Mrs. Norton. Because Richardson paints Mrs. Norton as a very sympathetic character, the distinction in principles between Mrs. Norton and Clarissa would probably escape the reader’s notice were it not for the heinous rape. Conceding that Clarissa’s reasons for rejecting Lovelace are nobler than her own wishes and that she dares not urge Clarissa any more, Mrs. Norton shows her reform and elevation to higher standards by acknowledging Clarissa’s supremacy. Meanwhile, Mrs. Norton’s change of attitude achieves for Richardson a moral reform of the lower-middle classes.

Clarissa’s Break from Family

Clarissa’s relatives, owing to the explosive antagonism between themselves and Lovelace, do not propose marriage but rather advise Clarissa to destroy either Lovelace through litigation or herself by exile in Pennsylvania, embodying unrelenting vindictiveness and spiritual obtuseness. Clarissa’s separation from her family on the issue of litigation degrades legal action as counter advice and elevates her decision morally. Suspicious whether Clarissa’s rape was indeed Lovelace’s premeditated crime, Arabella communicates the Harlowe family’s harsh counsel to Clarissa:

. . . could we but bring him to the gallows, what a meritorious revenge would that be to our whole injured family . . . But if you will not agree to this, I have another proposal to make to you . . . which is, that you will think of going to Pennsylvania to reside there for some few years till all is blown over; and, if it please God to spare you, and your unhappy parents, till they can be satisfied that you behave like a true and uniform penitent . . . (IV: 188)

The counter instruction of lawsuit and self-exile discloses the Harlowes’ selfishness and malice much more than it seeks to assist Clarissa in adversity. Not only do they firmly believe themselves victimized by Clarissa but they also betray a death wish for Clarissa in questioning the certainty of Clarissa’s survival in Pennsylvania.

By rejecting her family’s advice, Clarissa demonstrates that she is much

above their level of moral awareness. Once again, Clarissa's rejection of counter advice reminds the reader of the sexual violence and affirms her moral stance. Indeed, Clarissa disapproves of her family so much, especially Arabella's cruelty, that Clarissa does not even spell out what she really means in her refusal to comply, though the reader has the advantage of cross references to find out. To the choice of suing Lovelace, Clarissa refers Arabella to Dr. Lewen: "I could wish it were thought worthwhile to request a sight of my answer" (IV: 190). Given that Richardson might wish to avoid repeating Clarissa's reasoning within only a few days' correspondence by having Clarissa refer Arabella to a third party—Dr. Lewen—Clarissa's withholding information by not answering directly gives her some psychological advantage over her sister. To the other proposal of going to Pennsylvania, Clarissa seems to speak in riddles intentionally, even though the reader knows that Clarissa is referring to her imminent death: "If nothing happen within a month which may full as effectually rid my parents and friends of . . . scandals . . . and if I am *then* able to be carried on board of ship, I will cheerfully obey my father and mother, although I were sure to die in the passage" (IV: 190). Refusing to comply immediately and confident of her approaching decease, Clarissa articulates her family's death wish for her, insinuating that their asking her to go to Pennsylvania is tantamount to her death.¹⁷

Clarissa's Break from Middle Class Professionals

Clarissa's negative response to Dr. Lewen's instruction to litigate against Lovelace exemplifies humility and introspection, and her exclusion of negative advice contributes to the affirmation of her moral caliber.¹⁸ Unlike her fellow Harlowes, who are more eager to condemn others than to examine themselves, Clarissa does not think herself completely innocent in her decision to leave with Lovelace and thus refuses legal action.¹⁹ She scrutinizes her own

¹⁷ Jolene Zigarovich studies necrophilia and the eroticizing of death in Richardson's *Clarissa*. Zigarovich interestingly postulates that "images of death in the novel veil the underlying complexities of sexual impulse" and that Clarissa equates "death with sexuality" just as "for Lovelace sexuality is equated with death" (116, 119).

¹⁸ While I read Clarissa's exemplarity in her denial of worldly advice, Jayne Elizabeth Lewis locates Clarissa's and Richardson's moral authority in how Clarissa's story pains the reader and how cruelty contributes to "the construction of a community of authors and readers" (48).

¹⁹ For a discussion on the concept of "passive Christian heroism" in Clarissa's refusal to seek justice for herself, see Lois A. Chaber.

conduct thus:

. . . were there not room to apprehend that the end so much wished for by my friends (to wit, his [Lovelace's] condign punishment) would not have been obtained, when it came to be seen that I had consented to give him a clandestine meeting; and, in consequence of that, had been weakly tricked out of myself; and further still, had not been able to avoid living under one roof with him for several weeks; which I did (not only without complaint, but) without *cause* of complaint? (IV: 184)

In not taking Dr. Lewen's counsel, Clarissa dismisses the act of holding a mirror up to others by suing. Although Clarissa does judge Lovelace when she refuses to marry him, her final decision to take pity on and even to pray for him shows that she has overcome her indignation and turned her judgment to mercy. Moreover, via Clarissa's rejection of litigation, which consults public opinion, Richardson discards "the moral regulatory potential of public opinion and thus, by extension, dismisses the Enlightenment ideal of the public sphere" (Cook 110). Richardson's conviction of social depravity and distrust of general opinion impel him to place confidence in individual conscience. Clarissa's recognition of her own fault attests to her obedience of the Protestant virtue of penitence, and her future forgiveness and mercy for Lovelace demonstrate her Christian love and retribution for her mistake.

Colonel Morden's advice before and after the rape shows significant self-contradiction, moral wavering, and eagerness for cosmetic remedy of injured repute. As with Anna, Morden's principles yield to his apprehension of public censure, and his support for Clarissa turns into compromise in crisis. Before the rape, Morden reasonably counsels Clarissa not to marry Lovelace: "I should have thought there could not anywhere have been a more suitable match for you than with Mr. Lovelace, had he been a moral man. . . . Mr. Lovelace cannot possibly deserve you" (II: 257). The moral integrity that Morden emphasizes as an important quality in a husband is also what Clarissa seeks. The difference, however, lies in that Morden's requirement of virtue is predicated upon crisis-free circumstances when Clarissa's chastity is still intact, whereas Clarissa's is unconditional. After Morden learns about the rape, he instructs Clarissa: "I think, my dear cousin, that you cannot now do better than to give him [Lovelace] the honour of your hand" (IV: 249). Morden's

quick transition from disbelief in Lovelace's reform before the rape to trust afterwards reveals Morden's moral infirmity and opportunism when facing critical moral decisions.

That Clarissa declines to accept Morden's counsel heightens her moral stance over his, consolidating her moral statue for not compromising while everybody else does. Her reasons for rejection are the same as the ones she gives to Anna, meant to reiterate Richardson's intended lesson.²⁰ Clarissa's response once more illustrates how Richardson deploys sexual violence for didactic purpose: "I can indeed forgive him. But that is because I think his crimes have set me above him. Can I be above the man, sir, to whom I shall give my hand and my vows, and with them . . . a sanction which . . . would reward the violator?" (IV: 250). Dismissing the middle-class' readiness to compromise when the aristocracy condescends, Clarissa promotes a more dignified plane of behavior where practice matches principle, and endorses patriarchy by insisting on obedience to a spiritually superior husband who can guide her. While Clarissa rejects the advice of her fellow members of the middle class, she upholds bourgeois values such as industry, charity, and patriarchy. What Clarissa resists is the vices—acquisitiveness and avarice—that often accompany material prosperity as can be seen in the Harlowes and the readiness to compromise for security and convenience as portrayed in Anna, Mrs. Howe, Colonel Morden, and others. Without denigrating the bourgeoisie comprehensively, Clarissa aims to discard its worst drawbacks and reorient it in the direction of charity and dignity.

Clarissa's Break from the Aristocracy

Belford also believes that marriage is the only way to alleviate the damage done by the rape, and Clarissa's refusal to marry Lovelace has a reforming effect upon Belford in the direction of sensibility through her affliction and perseverance in hardship. Moreover, in having Clarissa successfully transform Belford from Lovelace's womanizing cohort to a sensible and sentimental man, Richardson seeks to modify aristocratic libertinism in the direction of Christian virtue. After the rape, Belford worries about how general opinion perceives Clarissa. But from the time that Clarissa's

²⁰ The reiteration of Clarissa's rationale for rejecting Lovelace in Anna's, Mrs. Howe's, and Morden's words reflects the tradition of conduct manuals in which seventeenth- and eighteenth-century readers relished "hearing familiar formulas and phrases" (Hunter 235).

rejection of Lovelace becomes final, her sufferings gradually sentimentalize Belford and initiate him to admire her virtue with his feelings. When Belford goes to release Clarissa from the debtor's prison, her pathetic condition makes him feel "convinced that a capacity of being moved by the distresses of our fellow-creatures is far from being disgraceful to a manly heart" (III: 446). Richardson is avidly participating in the mid-century sensibility movement in this scene, where pathos tugs even at the heartstrings of the often nonchalant, hard-hearted aristocrats like Belford.²¹ Intending to inculcate sensibility in noblemen without hurting their chauvinistic pride, Richardson makes clear that the cultivation of sensibility is "far from being disgraceful to a manly heart" (III: 336).²² Presumably, Richardson attempts to inculcate a "spiritual sensibility" whereby one's feelings lead one to transcendental improvement, as Belford experiences here (Hensley 178).²³

That Richardson finds Clarissa's moral authority on her not taking friends' and family's advice is also manifest in Lovelace's observation of the ladies in his family, who are "all of the opinion that she might, in her [Clarissa's] present desolate circumstances, be brought to forgive me" (III: 408). Lovelace's perception of the contrast between his relatives and Clarissa comes across as a left-handed compliment to Clarissa, crediting her steadfast principle in a characteristically rakish manner.²⁴ Lovelace actually relishes observing "the placability of these ladies of my own family, had they, any or either of them, met with a LOVELACE" (III: 408). The placability of most people is what distinguishes the world from Clarissa, who unwaveringly insists on her

²¹ For a discussion on how pathos in *Clarissa* works on the reading experience, see Scott Paul Gordon's, "Disinterested Selves: *Clarissa* and the Tactics of Sentiment," where he argues that *Clarissa* proves "sincerity," an "unprovable truth," "by deploying pathos" (477). And for an analysis on sensibility and fetishism, see Julie Park, "'I Shall Enter Her Heart': Fetishizing Feeling in *Clarissa*."

²² For a detailed cultural account of sensibility and effeminacy, see Barker-Benfield's *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, especially Chapter Three "The Question of Effeminacy."

²³ Nevertheless, Richardson's sensibility project is not without instability for having the potential of creating the opposite effect as well. Aside from giving way "to a softness" of which Belford "was never before so susceptible" at the sight of the pathetic Clarissa in prison, he is moved to violence too: "could I but first have avenged this charming creature, and cut the throat of her *destroyer*" (III: 447). Sensibility seems to draw out the impulsive side of people, as Jane Austen among others was well aware and she would later satirize expansive sentiments in *Sense and Sensibility*, especially in Marianne and Willoughby.

²⁴ Elaine McGirr reads *Clarissa* as Richardson's fight for cultural heritage in that "*Clarissa*'s crisis can be best expressed in terms of genre, as the mid-eighteenth-century found the Georgian novel struggling for legitimacy, demanding the cultural respect and ideological power the Restoration had accorded to the theater" (5).

righteousness and courageously embraces catastrophe.

Clarissa's non-compliance in rejecting marriage critiques prominent social practices as well as the frequent literary device of ending in marriage. That characters from the lower, middle, and upper classes, namely Mrs. Norton, Anna and Morden, and Belford respectively, all propose marriage as a solution to the rape illustrates Richardson's discontent with his society across class lines, prompting him to contrast Clarissa's absolutism (in not condescending) with her friends' relativism (of compromise in distress). Clarissa's refusal of Lovelace achieves for Richardson "a systematic refutation of the cynical and misogynist assumptions" of the present age that typifies Lovelace's conviction (Clery 108).²⁵

Richardson's Break from Literary Marriage Endings

Resisting concluding Clarissa's story in a happy-ever-after fashion, Richardson aims to outdo his fellow novelists and reinforce the Protestant reliance on God for redemption. To Lady Bradshaigh's repeated request "Whether Mr. Lovelace might not have been made a Penitent" and "Whether Clarissa might not have married him," Richardson responds by asking "what of extraordinary would there be in it? . . . What is in a Happiness so common . . . worth troubling the World about?" (*Selected Letters* 106). Tired of the hackneyed marriage dénouement, Richardson distinguishes himself from general opinion and invests his uncommon ending with religious profundity. Richardson continues to explain that "A Writer who follows Nature and pretends to keep the Christian System in his Eye, cannot make a Heaven in this World for his Favourites . . . Clarissa I once more averr could not be rewarded in this World" (*Selected Letters* 106). Richardson's moral intention in *Clarissa* surpasses the wish for earthly reward in *Pamela* and helps him fend off charges of Pamela's self-interested motivation. Clarissa's tragic story exemplifies that "To be perfect . . . is to follow Christ's example as far as it is humanly possible to attain a meritorious faith for salvation" (Dussinger 236). That Clarissa has a copy of Thomas à Kempis' *Imitation of Christ* and that she suggests that Arabella learn from it signal Richardson's

²⁵ M. John Cardwell discusses the political implications of *Clarissa* in its historical context and argues that "Lovelace repeatedly associates himself with the great military leaders of the past and present" and that "His contrivances to seduce Clarissa are envisaged as a meticulously planned and executed military campaign" (154).

emphasis on heavenly rather than worldly reward (I: 137).

Richardson's rejection of the marriage counter counsel enables him to challenge the widely-held view: "what is that injury which a *church rite* will at any time repair?" (III: 281). Richardson's program of moral reform seeks to validate Clarissa's set of standards over her friends' and family's "by an act of censorship and discursive transcendence," eliminating room for compromise and apotheosizing Clarissa for her extraordinary choice (Strallybrass and White 201). That Clarissa's exemplarity renders her society "a fallen England" is an effect achieved by affirmation through negation of counter advice (Clery 96).

Not only does Richardson's rejection of the marriage panacea introduce Clarissa's non-compliance as a preferred alternative to his readers, but it also refutes a long tradition which sees marriage as a shield for imperfect reputation. Restoration drama such as *The Country Wife* and *The Way of the World* often has female characters who care only about their name rather than actual innocence, relying on the public's attention to the appearances instead of the reality of their marriages. Margery Pinchwife, Lady Fidget, Lady Squeamish, and Mrs. Fainall all indulge in extramarital affairs while making sure to conceal their fornication. Defoe's *Moll Flanders* and Sir Robert Clayton also take marriage as the prestigious state for women to be in. Richardson's different approach to Clarissa's violation revolutionizes the literary convention by investing a tragic ending with spiritual victory.²⁶

The Politics of Advice

That *Clarissa* exalts one young lady in her symbolic defeat of her violator seems to place moral authority in women rather than in men; but the reason for her spiritual prestige seems to be that she is ultimately to hand it over to men, not just any man, but enlightened, godly men, such as Belford and Clarissa's grandfather. Michael F. Suarez's contention that Clarissa's "nay-saying" is "an attempt to assert her own autonomy, to secure her right to

²⁶ Despite Clarissa's saintly virtues such as spirituality, sensibility, and charity, her exemplarity is not without drawbacks. Clarissa's adherence to moral absolutes, as shown in her non-compliance, attests to her failure to perceive the world as less than perfect while the precepts she tries to put into practice may reflect her naiveté. That is, Clarissa's high moral standards make her a Quixote, rendering her incompatible with the sordid reality she finds in the world. This suggests that she "might be said to live in the imagination" (Doody 104). The discrepancy between principle and secular practice might again frustrate readers in their world, especially those whom Clarissa persuades of her virtue. For a discussion on the theme of virtue in distress, see *Virtue in Distress: Studies in the Novel of Sentiment from Richardson to Sade* (Brissenden 77).

a will of her own” seems to belie the importance that Clarissa places on having a father who can guide her (69). When Lovelace asks Clarissa about when to settle “the happy day” of marriage so as to request Lord M. “to be her father,” Clarissa reflects: “*Father* had a sweet and venerable sound with it . . . I should be glad to have a father who would own me!” (II: 310). Clarissa’s feeling unworthy of her father later turns into her father’s unworthiness of her, although her wish for her father’s guidance remains steadfast. As the postscript tells us, Clarissa’s parents “saw that it was entirely owing to the avarice, the ambition, the envy of her implacable brother and sister, and to the senseless confederacy entered into by the whole family” that Clarissa is compelled to leave her father’s house” (IV: 533). The physical separation between Clarissa and her family is merely part of the reason why Clarissa relies on God as her sole guide. That none of the patriarchs in Clarissa’s family—James Harlowe Sr., Uncle Harlowe, and Uncle Antony—can match Clarissa’s high moral caliber sufficiently to give her instruction is another perhaps more significant reason why Clarissa relies on God. Clarissa’s final wish to have “her remains . . . placed at the feet of my dear grandfather” symbolizes her ultimate alliance with patriarchy, the kind of sentimentalized patriarchy that appreciates her virtue rather than treating her as an asset the way her brother, father, and uncles do (IV: 301).

That Clarissa entrusts Belford with the task of editing her didactic history also subsumes her moral authority under Belford’s enlightened patriarchy. With Belford, Clarissa can expect “all I wish should be done” (IV: 62). On the other hand, Belford gets to set the final edifying tone to her story, functioning as “custodian of a newly rationalized order” of “probity, self-possession, [and] familial integrity” that shape “the heroine’s plot” (London 61). Clarissa’s figurative submission to Belford, however, is not without disturbance in that Belford’s emergence as a reformed rake contradicts his own instruction to the reader. Belford’s denigration of the maxim “*that a reformed rake makes the best husband*” as a “false and inconsiderate notion, raised and propagated, no doubt, by the author of all delusion” enables Richardson to satirize himself regarding the richly-rewarded heroine in *Pamela* (IV: 389). While urging that “it behoves persons of true honour of that sex to discountenance, by rejecting the address of every man whose character will not stand the test of that virtue” Belford inadvertently reminds us that he himself used to have the kind of character that deserved to be rejected but is now trustworthy to Clarissa (IV:

389). Given Belford's commendable sensibility, his reforming influence on Lovelace, Mowbray, and Tourville, and his appointment of executorship by Clarissa, it probably would not be surprising if the reader should suspect that Belford will make a good husband if he marries. Clarissa's text seems to repudiate and believe in the possibility of a rake's reformation at the same time.

Clarissa's advice for Anna to marry Hickman also illustrates Clarissa's alliance with patriarchy, strengthening the ideal of sentimentalized patriarchal guidance. Clarissa's severance from her family demonstrates her rebellion against her un-Christian father and uncles, not her disapproval of patriarchy, because when she sees patriarchy enlightened by sensibility and spirituality she encourages it. Hickman's gentle concern for Clarissa and his grief upon seeing her bespeaks his probity in Clarissa's terms, differentiating him from the money-minded Harlowe males and misogynistic Lovelace. Visiting Clarissa at the Smiths' and seeing how ill she is, Hickman turns away "his face with visible grief in it," probably to conceal his tears (IV: 11). Hickman's sentimentality in this scene ranks him together with Belford, who is "convinced that a capacity of being moved by the distresses of our fellow-creatures is far from being disgraceful to a manly heart" (III: 446). Richardson combines "advocacy of a more feminine male with the reassurance" that it is "manly" to be sentimental (Barker-Benfield 341).

The tremendous difficulties created for Clarissa seem to protest more against the injury done to women under degenerate patriarchy than against women's bad treatment in general. Clarissa's sufferings at the hands of her family and Lovelace are symptomatic of greed and perversity at the core of degenerate patriarchy. It is Clarissa's refusal to acquiesce to the values of corrupt patriarchy that makes her a non-conformist when most people around her are ready to descend to lower moral standards. Rejecting both, Clarissa perseveres in adversity with dignity, hoping that the corrupt patriarchs will comprehend her virtue and reform somewhere along the way: "when my story is known I shall be entitled to more compassion than blame" (III: 337). Clarissa's approval of Hickman and Belford, together with her wish to return to her grandfather's side, suggests that a virtuous woman like Clarissa could have enjoyed happiness under enlightened patriarchs such as these. Richardson's placement of moral superiority in Clarissa elevates women to finally subject them to the moral authority of reformed men like Belford. To a certain extent, *Clarissa* in the end repeats *Pamela* though far more subtly, and

Clarissa's man is of course God the Father.

Clarissa embodies virtue via advice not taken. Refusing to acquiesce to her friends' and family's counter advice of marriage or litigation, Clarissa consolidates her moral authority and exemplifies stringent consistency between precepts and practice. Clarissa's separation from her friends and family does not suggest her rebellion against patriarchy so much as it does her resistance to immorality and opportunism. The dramatization of Clarissa's rejection of ill-considered counsel allows Richardson to reap much entertainment value from depictions of the villainous Lovelace encroaching upon her as the novelist capitalizes on this seductive appeal that most maxim-cataloguing conduct manuals popular at the time did not have. Aiming to reform with *Clarissa*, Richardson seeks to inculcate spirituality in the money-grubbing middle class and conquest-craving aristocracy, bringing about a modification of both social classes toward genuine Christianity.

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