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TRANSCENDING THE MATERIAL SELF: READING GHOSTS IN SAMUEL  
RICHARDSON'S *CLARISSA*

by

Jeffrey G. Howard

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

English

Approved:

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UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY  
Logan, Utah

2013

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## ABSTRACT

Transcending the Material Self:  
Reading Ghosts in Samuel Richardson's Realist Novel *Clarissa*

by

Jeffrey G. Howard, Master of Arts  
Utah State University, 2013

Major Professor: Dr. Jeffrey Smitten  
Department: English

This thesis presents an analysis of the ghosts in Samuel Richardson's 1747-48 novel *Clarissa*, and synthesizes traditional literary criticism on that novel with British folklore and ghost traditions. It examines the novel historically and demonstrates that Richardson's novelistic approach changed between 1740 when he wrote *Pamela* and 1747 when he began writing *Clarissa* in that he relies on the ghost image to discuss the complexities of individual identity. In *Clarissa*, Richardson outdoes his previous attempt at depicting reality in *Pamela* because his use of the ghost motif allows the audience to see beyond the physical reality of the plot into the spiritual depths of the human heart. *Clarissa* involves the journey of a young woman attempting to establish a sense of identity and selfhood, and the ghosts of the novel supply a lens for interpreting her course toward a sense of self that transcends the material world, its wants, its objectives, its myriad institutions, and the identity she has constructed by association with those entities.

(115 pages)

## PUBLIC ABSTRACT

**Transcending the Material Self: Reading Ghosts  
in Samuel Richardson's Novel *Clarissa***

Jeffrey G. Howard

For thousands of years, many people have retained a belief in the existence of those supernatural entities known as ghosts, and the question of their existence has been vital to the political, religious, and personal ideologies of many interested parties. This thesis will not join that discussion because the question of the ghostly existence cannot be answered in a manner satisfactory to all sides. It merely acknowledges that such a debate continues and that the conflict between belief and empiricist logic can expect no real resolution any time soon. The issue at the heart of this project, however, actually involves what ghosts can tell us about individual identity and development. An all-encompassing response to that issue would require an enormous survey of canonical and non-canonical literature from diverse periods of writing and philosophy, so my project focuses primarily on a single novel, Samuel Richardson's 1747-48 *Clarissa*, and the way in which Richardson employs literal and figurative references to ghosts in order to discover and interpret the formation and true essence of human identity.

The first chapter of this project, after the introduction, presents a historical context of ghosts in periodicals and poetry around the time Richardson wrote *Clarissa*, as he was surely aware of their existence—he, being a master printer, even published works from Edward Young and James Hervey that dealt with the subject of ghosts—and they seem to have influenced his writing. The second and third chapters delve into the text of *Clarissa* itself, as they explore the symbolism, folklore, even the theoretical implications of Richardson's ghostly imagery and metaphors. The ghosts in these scenes provide a glance into the constructed sense of self that Clarissa possesses because of her affiliation with certain institutions, namely religion and family, and the vulnerable nature of that constructed identity because it exists externally to the individual rather than within it.

The fourth chapter deals with Richardson's literary allusions to other texts that have ghosts as a central and "telling" figure and how those texts influence our understanding of *Clarissa*. The allusions examined in this chapter appear in a paper called "Paper X" that Clarissa writes after Lovelace rapes her and steals the final shard of Clarissa's constructed identity. The ghost image becomes a method of understanding this traumatic period as an intermediary state for Clarissa in which she must gather herself and construct herself anew. The final chapter of this project examines the way in which Clarissa goes from a woman without a sense of who she is as an individual to a more transcendent and permanent personality. Her post-mortem appearance visit to the rakish Lovelace on his deathbed becomes a symbol of a spiritual reality beyond the constructed material essence that has been subject to persecution and violation; Clarissa has achieved a state of selfhood beyond the reach of both individual and institution to destroy, and she lives on as a spirit or "ghost" permanently as a triumphant example of the human will.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to my immediate family: Mom, Dad, Pamela, Celeste, Bryant, Julia, and Maren. They have always supported me in my education and always nodded good-naturedly when I tried to explain the content of my work and its significance, even though most of them never fully understood it.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to thank Dr. Jeffrey Smitten in particular for making himself available frequently to discuss the project and finding new ways to reinforce and clarify my ideas. He almost never sent me away from his office without something new to read or research, and the success of this project is very much the product of his assistance. I must also thank my thesis committee members, Dr. Brian McCuskey and Dr. Jeannie Thomas, for their invaluable advice and effort. Without their assistance, this thesis project never would have come to fruition.

Jeffrey G. Howard

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In his seminal 1957 work on the inception of the English novel (*The Rise of the Novel*), Ian Watt draws attention to the chief characteristics and pioneering founders of that literary genre (authors such as Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, and Henry Fielding) as catalysts of a new kind of writing designed to portray realistically some of the public and private aspects of British life and its micro- and macrocosms of unique relationships. Of Richardson's work in this endeavor (most especially his 1747-48 tragic novel *Clarissa*), Watt is most complimentary, explaining that Richardson's depiction of time and descriptions of middle-class minutiae "added a new dimension to the representation of reality" in literature (25). No one can contest that Richardson's aesthetic objective included realistically represented characters, scenes, and background, in addition to his more didactic objective of propagating religion and morality among his younger readership; as he himself declares in a 1741 letter to his friend Aaron Hill regarding the novel *Pamela; or Virtue Rewarded*,

I thought the story, if written in an easy and natural manner, suitably to the simplicity of it, might possibly introduce a new species of writing, that might possibly turn young people into a course of reading different from the pomp and parade of romance-writing, *and dismissing the improbable and marvelous*, with which novels generally abound, might tend to promote the cause of religion and virtue. (*Selected Letters*, 41; italics added)

Much of the modern Richardsonian criticism tends to buy into Richardson's notion of his own realistic literature, which couples reality with instruction, and indeed much can be said for that perspective. However, while *Pamela* does mostly follow this model of realism, which dismisses the "improbable and marvelous," *Clarissa* and its references to ghosts and its Gothic elements bears indications that Richardson had changed his approach to the realistic novel between 1741 when he wrote to Hill and 1747 when he began to write *Clarissa* by incorporating more references to the supernatural.

Truly, *Clarissa* does draw largely on the social realities of its time, from standards of reading, writing, and printing to the tenets of religion and the advocacy of moral purity and virtue. Cynthia Griffin Wolff dedicates a large portion of her book *Samuel Richardson and the Eighteenth-Century Puritan Character* to a discussion of set standards and ideals for Puritans (the cultural movement, not the religious sect), and Richardson's mode of portraying a world of writing and reading that reinforces Puritan ideals for self-development and self-actualization. The process of becoming a fully realized self<sup>1</sup> in the Puritan sense involved a great deal of writing, generally in the privacy of a diary. For *Clarissa*, her letter-writing and correspondences function essentially in this capacity, although the privacy is often disrupted, not by her "echo" Anna Howe, who enters the secret chambers of *Clarissa*'s selfhood by being her correspondent (Richardson, *Clarissa*, 467), but by the rake Robert Lovelace, who steals

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<sup>1</sup> By the "self" I mean the "real" or constructed essence or sense of what or who one is. This thesis deals with the presence of multiple "selves" in *Clarissa*, both "real" and socially constructed. The idea of the self as explored in this project involves the conjunction of a temporary or material self with the concept of a transcendent and enduring self or essence that continues to exist beyond material existence.

and reads Clarissa's letters (much as Mr. B does in *Pamela*); one might even argue that the readership of *Clarissa* itself disrupts the privacy of Clarissa's representation. Like a conglomeration of voyeuristic Lovelaces at the keyhole, the audience gains access to Clarissa's inner self through reading her correspondence (Keymer 2), although, in a sense, like Anna they are granted access to Clarissa's inner sanctum rather than being reduced to spying through a keyhole. The process of writing was intended to reify, at least partially, a Puritan's identity by verbalizing or putting it in print, including a complete description of good and bad characteristics; the individual can then scan the writing for follies and foibles which he or she can then eliminate, thus improving his or her character in true Puritan fashion and resulting in a self anchored in good deeds, kindness, and moral purity. In a letter he wrote to Sophia Westcomb on September 15, 1746, Richardson talks about writing as a useful tool for distinguishing or improving one's self:

The pen will show *Soul* and *Meaning* too.—Retired, the modest Lady, happy in herself, happy in her Choice she makes of the dear Correspondent of her own Sex (for ours are too generally Designers); uninterrupted; her Closet her Paradise, her Company, herself, and ideally the beloved Absent; there she can distinguish Her Self: By this means she can assert and vindicate her Claim to Sense and Meaning. (*Selected Letters*, 68)

Both Terry Castle and William R. Warner expand on this connection between writing and the formulation of selfhood in a manner that synchronizes well with Richardson's ideas on textuality and the development of a Puritan identity. In *Clarissa's*

*Cyphers*, Castle claims that Clarissa herself is an object of reading, a text meant for interpretation:

In the midst of crisis, Clarissa finds a trope—a syllepsis—for catastrophe. Uncovering the crucial metaphor of reading, she stumbles, half-consciously, on a precise symbol for her bondage. She has become a cypher to Lovelace, a sort of text—and he, her exegete. “Clarissa Harlowe” is but a sign—the letter. (15)

Thus, as in Wolff’s reading of Richardson’s novel, identity and selfhood are connected by reading, writing, and textuality, except Clarissa is no longer reading her own writing; she *is* the writing, the represented self, and Lovelace (not to mention Richardson’s audience) is the reader. Clarissa’s act of purchasing a coffin near the end of her life and inscribing it with a *mélange* of fragmented signifiers and symbols, according to Castle, is merely a continuation of this textualizing process—of translating herself into a text and allowing others to read and interpret her. Her continued existence as a textual presence-in-absence then depends upon her being read and used as a reflection for others in which they may see their own weakness and shortcomings and become better individuals because of her *exempla*. In a way, then, she becomes the Puritan diary herself. Warner also takes a similar stance on Clarissa as a text, only he looks not at the coffin scene for proof of this self-preservation through writing, but at the novel as a whole. The novel *Clarissa* is a figurative coffin, a receptacle of transcendental selfhood that endures after the heroine’s death. Warner claims,

To the unalert reader it may appear that Clarissa has a book edited to tell her story *because* she is going to die. In fact, precisely the opposite is true.

Clarissa dies so that she may produce the book that will guarantee her triumph. Death is the crucial act in the generation of this book....By dying to life Clarissa can be born again in a book. (76)

Warner's main idea stems, once again, from the Puritan idea of representing the self through writing; Clarissa has simply picked a unique and enduring approach to writing the self, and Richardson represents the process in a way that showcases his knowledge of reality in the eighteenth century. However, while Warner's and Castle interpretation of *Clarissa* is valuable in that it addresses issues of identity and transcendent selfhood, they fail to address how certain supernatural tropes, namely ghosts, function in the novel and their role in Richardson's brand of realism and the development of the self. My question is, why does Richardson seem to deviate in certain instances from his declared purpose, his intended depiction of realistic representation in his narrative? Why does he seem to dismiss or exclude the "improbable and marvelous" from *Pamela* and then incorporate them into *Clarissa*?

The instances I refer to involve Richardson's inclusion of references to hauntings and ghosts in *Clarissa*: the haunted coppice and the hanging man; Clarissa's mention of ghosts in reference to two of her primary suitors, Lovelace and Solmes; Anna Howe's use of ghost metaphors to talk about love, its follies, and its misleading enticements; Clarissa's post-rape allusions to texts such as *Hamlet* and Dryden and Lee's *Oedipus: A Tragedy* (texts saturated with ghostly characters); and of course Clarissa's final appearance (as a ghost) to Lovelace on his deathbed.

Some critics, like Castle and Warner, have discussed related themes, such as Clarissa's death and her post-mortem existence as a text. Wolff herself speaks of the last

several hundred pages of the novel as Clarissa's "posthumous role of Saint" (52). Other critics, such as Mario Praz, Leslie Fiedler, Fred Frank, and R.D. Hume have spoken of Richardson's novels, including *Clarissa*, in relation to the tradition of the Gothic novel. Praz and Fiedler especially refer to Richardson's novels as "precursors of the Gothic" (Broome 19n), with Praz making much of Clarissa's role as a "persecuted maiden," a literary type that would later become a mainstay in Gothic literature (95). Frank speaks of *Clarissa* "as a major step toward making the novel of terror" (49). However, these analyses focus primarily on the emotional and sexual psychodynamics of the "Richardsonian Gothic" (Frank 49) instead of the symbolism of its ghostly motifs. D.L. Macdonald considers the ways in which Matthew Gregory Lewis's *The Monk* borrows from *Clarissa* for its narrative structure and plot (157). However, his analysis uses *Clarissa* as a means for discussing the Gothic tradition and its often ghostly literary elements instead of the inverse. Even Ann Kibbie speaks of *Clarissa* as a story about a ghost or ghosts, though she seems to be content to rely heavily on a theoretical—specifically a post-structuralist or Derridean—approach to the ghosts (of money and legal wills) in *Clarissa* rather than attempting to explain the symbolic significance of the actual references to folkloric ghosts in the novel and their connection to eighteenth-century literary realism.

The purpose of this project consists in examining more deeply, in light of historical and folkloric trends, the ghosts of Richardson's *Clarissa* and how they too may shed light on the development of a transcendent self. In fact, the image of the ghost inherently functions as a reminder of identity existing beyond the grave and of course beyond the text. The reason, perhaps, that Richardson changes his novelistic approach



comes from a certain realization that in committing to the “probable” one limits one’s ability to portray the multi-dimensional complexities of the self. If one focuses solely on what “is,” one might just miss what “may be.” Richardson incorporates the ghost because of its inherent connection to the transcendence of subjectivity and selfhood beyond death, and there is nothing more transcendent and enduring than that. His novel encompasses not only the physical realities of human society and relationships as one finds in *Pamela*, but his ghosts also allude to the spiritual and more abstract realities that can be explored best through the use of the “marvelous and improbable.”

Chapter 2 of this project consists of a historical contextualization of ghosts and ghost belief in the late-seventeenth and early-to-mid-eighteenth centuries. I rely greatly on the historical work of Sasha Handley as I explore the continued existence of ghosts in popular culture and printing trends. I also examine the significance of the Graveyard School of poetry (1742-45), including poets such as Edward Young, Robert Blair, James Hervey, Thomas Gray, and others, and their potential influence on Richardson’s writing. Because of the reoccurring images of ghosts in the poetry of the Graveyard School and the writing of Richardson (who even printed Young’s *Night Thoughts* and Hervey’s *Meditations among the Tombs* [Watt 217]), it seems logical to suggest that much had changed for Richardson and his dealings and treatments with the “marvelous and improbable” between the writing of *Pamela* (1740) and his letter to Hill (1741) and the writing of *Clarissa* (1747-48).

Chapter 3 begins a direct analysis of *Clarissa* and the haunted coppice as an overarching metaphor in the book regarding the construction and haunting of the self. Much of the chapter deals with the symbols (such as ravens, owls, etc.) with which the

coppice is populated and the significance of Lovelace's semi-permanent residence in that place. The chapter also explores the act of writing as a ghostly act and the theoretical significance of Richardson's relegation of the description of the haunted coppice to a footnote. Ultimately, the form and content of the ghostly footnote functions as a textual representation of a self estranged from itself, indicative of a sort of internal division in Clarissa's psyche.

Chapter 4 deals with the metaphorical use of ghostly references and allusions in everyday discourse, and both Clarissa and her friend Anna Howe employ these linguistic devices as ways to describe internal conditions often difficult to communicate. In the first part of the chapter, I analyze Clarissa's use of the term *ghost* in two separate instances, both of which involve one of her suitors. The situations are similar in that she is surprised by the presence of these men: Lovelace appears in church, and Solmes appears in her home, both places she did not expect either of them. Church and home are in themselves representative of parts of the ideal Puritan identity: religious piety and filial duty. That these places are penetrated—even violated—by Lovelace and Solmes perhaps conveys to Clarissa her actual powerlessness over her own self. Her security is gone as the boundaries of her constructed world and identity begin to crumble. Calling the men “ghosts” seems apt in that they seem unfazed by physical boundaries, and even Clarissa's devotion to family and religion will not protect her from their advances.

The second part of the chapter deals with Anna's descriptions of love in terms of ghost folklore and historical/religious accounts. She refers to it (love) as a type of demonic possession, which reference alludes to the religious history of possession and dispossession/exorcism as found in the Bible and other accounts. Her argument, logically,

seems to indicate that love causes people to act in ways they would not normally act, but her remarks also imply an aspect of sinful indulgence and need for purification from the influences of desire. Her second reference to “love” includes the mention of *ignis fatuus*, the will o’ the wisp, a well-known trope in ghost folklore. Her point, in this allusion, once again involves the need for a certain amount of caution when dealing with love and its disconcerting effects. This allusion follows Clarissa’s rape and thus also functions as a sort of commiseration while also once again reiterating Anna’s previous points about the illusory enticements and pitfalls of desire. Her use of ghostly metaphors in reference to sexual love or desire is significant in that it connects in a foreboding or cautionary way to the discussion of what the self really is and the role of desire in the formation of identity. People tend to be like the thing they desire, and Anna probably realizes this; thus, if Clarissa desires a rake, she must internally be a rake (which fits in with Lovelace’s theory of women, namely that “every woman is a rake in her heart” and “it concerns them by their *actions* to prove the contrary, if they can” [Richardson, *Clarissa*, 441]). Anna wishes her friend to desire correct and righteous things. Clarissa ultimately disregards her friend’s cautioning, to her own detriment and the undoing of her primary source of selfhood: her virgin or “best” self as she says to Anna after escaping from the Sinclair’s house of ill-repute. “Oh, my dearest Miss Howe!” she writes, “Once more have I escaped—but alas! *I*, my *best self*, have not escaped—Oh! Your poor Clarissa Harlowe!” (974).

Chapter 5 delves into the connection between the ghostly texts of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* and Dryden and Lee’s *Oedipus: A Tragedy* and Clarissa’s wavering sense of identity, her struggle with Lovelace, and her loss as she seeks to cope with the trauma of

her rape in what is known as “Paper X.” Margaret Anne Doody makes much of the connection between tragedies and dramas on the stage and Clarissa’s struggles against the oppressive and manipulative Lovelace. She says, “In *Clarissa* as in the heroic tragedies the sexual battle is a spiritual combat, and the terms ‘soul’ and ‘will’ are constantly invoked” (123). However, while Doody explains at length the connection between certain allusions and the text of *Clarissa*, she completely ignores two of the most interesting quotations in “Paper X”: one of the *Hamlet* quotations and the *Oedipus* quotation, and both of those plays have ghosts as central figures in the action. Doody does admit that “Richardson was openly adopting situations and language from the drama for his novel,” and “it seems that he expected his readers would see that the situations in which Clarissa is involved...resemble more and more closely the situations of the dramas” (Doody 119). However, being several centuries departed from Richardson’s primary audience, I feel that these ghost-ridden texts deserve a more thorough analysis in relation to Clarissa and her search for selfhood than they have received. In both texts, Clarissa identifies herself, it seems, with characters and the sentiments they express in the face of punishment and persecution, which the characters receive without having done anything to deserve it. Essentially, these allusions function as a cry against fate and its indiscriminate methods, as well as a call for revenge and remembrance. The plays also rely on ghosts as revealers of the secret self, a self for which Clarissa is desperate searching.

Chapter 6 approaches the matter of Clarissa’s death, its complicated cause, her post-mortem appearance to Lovelace, and the reasons behind it in light of historical (then-contemporary) and literary perspectives on preparing for death, dying, suicide, and the nature of the afterlife. In *The Rise of the Novel*, Watt speaks of the connection

between eighteenth-century publishing trends and *Clarissa*'s place in the tradition of funeral literature (217). In this final chapter, I examine such texts as Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Dying* and the anonymous *The Fair Suicide* in an attempt to show how *Clarissa* sets about to re-establish a self that is both impenetrable and enduring, a transcendent identity that endures beyond death and serve as a shining example of Puritan standards of excellence and morality. As a ghost, she appears to Lovelace in order to invite him one more time to reform before he dies, to follow her example, and to renounce the physical in favor of the spiritual, which he, in his cry "LET THIS EXPIATE!" refuses.

While this project shows how deeply ensconced these Gothic elements (ghosts) were in Richardson's work, almost twenty years before Horace Walpole published the "first" Gothic novel: *The Castle of Otranto*, it also shows that Richardson recognized the capacity of the Gothic to portray the complexity of the developing human identity. While Frank may claim that Walpole and Ann Radcliffe were merely supernaturalizing various Richardsonian tropes, the truth is Richardson in small ways was beginning (with the help of his ensemble of narrative and folkloric ghosts) to supernaturalize his own work (Frank 49)<sup>2</sup>. In addition, the ghosts of Richardson's novel, which are, to an extent, ghosts of the inner self, work to communicate the complexities of the Puritan inner life and the haunted

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<sup>2</sup> I am in no way dismissing the significance of Walpole's pioneering literary venture and the ripple effect it has had on British and American literature since the 1760s (providing literary space to such writers as Lewis, Ann Radcliffe, and William Beckford (the author of *Vathek*) in England and Charles Brockden Brown in the United States. However, I do, like Praz and Fiedler, propose that he is no way to be granted complete authorship of the Gothic movement, especially since Richardson's use of Gothic elements in *Clarissa* and their influence on our understanding of the inner self predate Walpole's writing by almost two decades.

nature of human relationships and development. The scope of this project then will illuminate just how deeply the ghosts of *Clarissa* are ensconced in and intertwined with the overarching meaning of Richardson's greatest novel.

CHAPTER 2  
GHOST BELIEF IN RICHARDSON'S ENGLAND

Early on in Richardson's *Clarissa*, the heroine Clarissa relates to her friend Anna Howe that she attended mass with her family, and in that mass they unexpectedly encountered by the rake Robert Lovelace. Clarissa refers to his appearance as "worse than ghost-like" (142). On another occasion, Clarissa's brother James leads Clarissa to the drawing room where she runs into the suitor Mr. Solmes, who appears from behind a door and surprises the girl. Writing again to her friend, Clarissa explains the situation: "Down I went: and who would I be sent down to, but my brother and Mr. Solmes? The latter standing sneaking behind the door, that I saw him not till I was mockingly led by the hand into the room by my brother. And then I started *as if I had beheld a ghost*" (323; italics added). These two references to ghosts are simple ones, but they indicate much about the individual who pens them and the culture she inhabits and traditions inherently preserved in the idiom and linguistic expressions of that culture.

By the time Richardson wrote *Clarissa* in 1747-48, members of polite and educated British society, which is the social setting in which *Clarissa* takes place, had "officially" begun to frown upon the existence of "real" ghosts, being encouraged by the students and perpetuators of certain branches of Enlightenment science and particularly Hobbesian empiricist philosophy. A war of words had commenced between empiricist adherents and theologians and believers like Henry More, Joseph Glanvill, Richard Bovet, and Robert Baxter in the late 1600s regarding the existence—or non-existence—of ghosts. The debate about their existence had been ongoing in one form or another since

the Reformation and, according to Samuel Johnson, even before.<sup>3</sup> Catholic and Protestant voices belonging to such personalities as Lewes Lavater, Pierre le Loyer, Reginald Scot, and Noel Taillepied clamored against each other for intellectual supremacy on the subject of ghosts, but none of them ever triumphed in the matter. How could they, when their arguments were predicated on the veracity of their religion? In the 1600s, however, the grounds for the debate shifted. No longer did the discussion exist between competing religious denominations, but rather between religious ideology as a whole, including Catholicism and whatever other diverse sects emerged from the Reformation period, and what was perceived as an “atheistic” scientific movement, with philosophers like Hobbes as representative figureheads. Kit Kincade summarizes Hobbes’s argument against ghosts, saying, “Logical reasoning begins with the point that humans cannot have knowledge (in the sense of empirical data) of the reality of incorporeal spirits because there must be tangible evidence. Incorporeal spirits, by their very name, are intangible” (x1). Hobbes, therefore, argues against the existence of ghosts on the grounds that the verification of their existence is a logical impossibility, for one cannot tangibly authenticate the existence of an intangible entity. Glanvill, Baxter, and the other “believers,” perceiving that the foundations of their theology were being attacked by a powerfully persuasive brand of atheism, began collecting ghost stories<sup>4</sup> in such works as

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<sup>3</sup> In his biography *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, James Boswell records Johnson as saying, “Five thousand years have now elapsed since the beginning of the world, and still it is undecided whether or not there has ever been an instance of a spirit of any person appearing after death. All argument is against it; all belief is for it” (371).

<sup>4</sup> John Aubrey is also a well-known collector of narratives about ghosts and other supernatural phenomena, but I do not include him in my list with the others because he was not a theologian (more like a rudimentary folklorist, though not all the stories in his



*Saducismus Triumphatus* and *The Certainty of the World of Spirits Fully Evinced* in order to counteract the empiricist onslaught. Glanvill counters Hobbes's philosophy specifically when he says,

If we are ignorant of the most obvious things about us, and the most considerable within ourselves, tis then no wonder that we know not the constitution and powers of the Creatures, to whom we are such strangers. Briefly then, *matters of fact* well proved ought not to be denied, because we cannot *conceive how* they can be performed. Nor is it a reasonable method of inference, first to presume the thing *impossible*, and thence conclude that the fact cannot be *proved*. On the contrary, we should judge of the *action* by the evidence, and not the *evidence* by measures of our fancies about the *action*. (12)

Glanvill, according to Shane McCorristine, was continually praised by both “spiritualists and psychical researchers as a pioneer—a Christian sceptic who argued for a rational belief in ghosts through investigation of the facts” (30). Despite Glanvill's arguments, though, the ongoing conflict between empiricists and “believers” eventually resulted in an “official” denial of the reality of ghosts in some of the more erudite social circles (with exceptions, of course). Dr. Charles Drelincourt, in the preface to his book *The Christian's Defence against the Fears of Death*, addresses this denial of the existence of ghosts during the 1730s: “To reject all Narratives of this Kind [ghost narratives, that is] as

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*Miscellanies* are derived from “folk culture”) and his stories do not have the same anti-empiricist agenda as the collections of Glanvill and Baxter (Bath and Newton 9). Thus, he should be considered separately.

fictitious, argues, in my Judgment, as great an Error, Weakness and Prejudice, as to believe all that is reported of Apparitions. To confirm the Possibility and Truth of some Apparitions, none can deny” (v). Drelincourt’s statement refers not only to those who deny the existence of ghosts absolutely, but also to those who, like Glanvill and Baxter, tended to be overzealous about believing almost any ghost story that corroborates their belief.<sup>5</sup> Drelincourt continues,

Now, as we live in such an incredulous Age, that will not believe in God, and his Divine Oracles, though attested by the working of Miracles, concerning the future State of the Righteous and Wicked, but requires a new Testimony and Evidence, as the Return of Souls from the Dead, to witness the Happiness of Heaven, the Torments of Hell, and the Immortality of the Soul: Who knows, but to render Men more inexcusable, God may condescend, that a departed Soul, or its good Angel in its Stead, may appear to declare these infallible and undoubted Truths to an unbelieving World? (vi)

Like Drelincourt, many people felt the need to retain their traditions and beliefs about ghosts because of what such entities signified culturally, religiously, and personally. Consequently, belief in ghosts continued to survive and function at different social strata, often the lower and middle classes, not simply because of the printing of Glanvill’s works and those of his fellow theologians on ghostly existence, but also because of the rise of the periodical in the popular press, the popularity of published ghost accounts, and the

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<sup>5</sup> Glanvill’s account of *The Drummer of Tedworth* was later proven to be a hoax, as were some of the other stories he vouched for.

continued publication of poetry in the early- to mid-eighteenth century that gave form and function to the traditional ghost-figure.

Sasha Handley describes the market for ghost literature, saying, “Eighteenth-century England saw a great proliferation in the publication and purchasing of ghost stories in a wide diversity of forms and genres” (10). Collections of ghost stories, like *Life after Death; or the History of Apparitions, Ghosts, Spirits or Spectres* and *The Complete Wizzard; Being a Collection of Authentic and Entertaining Narratives of the Real Existence and Appearance of Ghosts, Demons, and Spectres*, (in addition to those written in the previous century by Glanvill and Baxter) were printed and re-printed (sometimes under different titles for subsequent editions), which suggests a continuing market and interest for such volumes. Some writers even broached—or tried to—the subject of ghosts from a scientific angle, as the anonymous work *Aristotle’s New Book of Problems* (1741) clearly demonstrates with its interrogatory style. Around the same time, the botanist Samuel Frederic Gray even tried to compile a collection of ghost narratives called *Phantasmatopaneia; or Anecdotes of Ghosts and Apparitions*, but his attempt was thwarted by a lack of subscriptions.<sup>6</sup> In addition to these collections, the popular press

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<sup>6</sup> Gray’s failed attempt may be due to a number of factors. He may have had nothing new to offer in the way of ghost stories (no doubt he would probably rely on recycled accounts taken from other collections for his book); he also may have targeted the wrong audience, trying to convince the elitist skeptics of their incorrect ideas instead of targeting the middle and lower classes; and he may even have simply tried to add another literary drop to an already inundated market. All we know is that he failed to gain enough subscriptions to allow him to write his book, and the only evidence we possess of his endeavor is a marketing pamphlet with a statement from Gray on the harmful effects of skepticism and a plea to buy his book.

gave birth to a more accessible and less expensive type of literature that provided a literary space for the occasional ghost story: the periodical.

Periodicals generally offered “news items, official statistics and bills of mortality, . . . topical essays, reviews, articles and poems” (Handley 108). However, this popular new medium also became a forum for individual ghost reports and narratives in the tradition of the “The Deemon of Marlborough” (1675), “Strange and Wonderful News from Lincolnshire” (1679), and “A True Account of Divers and Most Strange and Prodigious Apparitions” (1679) continued to circulate in pamphlet, periodical, and letter form. These publications also provided the masses with vocabulary to discuss and debate such things as “the nature of the soul and its post-mortem location, the survival of individual personality in the afterlife, epistemological contests between ancient philosophy and modern empiricism”; in this way the periodical became a “varied menu of conceptual models and epistemological frameworks that allowed for both the authentication and rejection of ghost stories” (Handley 109). Because of such publications as *The Spectator*, *Tatler*, and others, as well as the learned men such as Joseph Addison, Samuel Johnson, and Richard Steele who produced or subscribed to those publications, belief in ghosts survived during a time of scientific advancement and spectral repression. In fact, Keith Thomas says, “By the time of Addison’s *Spectator* it had become more respectable to believe in ghosts than to be a total sceptic” (591). Despite the “official skepticism” of the eighteenth century (*Alas*, Bennett 146), ghost belief maintained a place—not necessarily of prominence, but a place nevertheless—in the discourse of British middle-class readers, the same audience to whom Samuel Richardson wrote his new genre of literature: the realistic epistolary novel.

While the popular press reinforced belief in ghosts by publishing ghost stories through periodicals and small accessible publications, it also gave poets a platform for talking about ghosts in verse. Addison says “that English poets were best suited to producing this kind of verse because ‘the English are naturally fanciful, and very often disposed by that gloominess and melancholy of temper, which is so frequent in our nation, to many wild notions and visions’” (Handley 119). According to George Sherburn, “the melancholy tradition in England was of long standing,” but the 1740s experienced a particularly great upwelling of poetry on the subject of death and melancholy (947), and a literary market emerged for the Graveyard School of poets, which included writers like Thomas Gray, Edward Young, James Hervey, Thomas Parnell, and Robert Blair and their ghostly poetry. Ian Watt claims,

It was the decade in which *Clarissa* was published that saw the triumph of this movement in such works as Blair’s *The Grave* (1743), Edward Young’s *Night Thoughts on Life, Death, and Immortality* (1742-1745), and Hervey’s very popular *Meditations among the Tombs* (1746-1747), the last two of which Richardson printed. (217)

Gray began writing his *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* around the same time that Young was finishing writing about the “melancholy ghosts of dead renown” and “thousand phantoms” of *Night Thoughts* (Sherburn 947), which work is essentially, as Andrew Sanders describes it, a “10,000-line blank verse meditation on a death-saturated life, on death itself, and on resurrection and mortality” (319). Hervey published his *Meditations among the Tombs* with its contemplation on corpses, coffins, skeletons, “shades of death” (4), though “no phantoms, but such as fear raises” only a year before

Richardson began writing and publishing *Clarissa* (3). Other ghostly and gloomy pieces such as “Young Bateman’s Ghost” (1710), “An Elecy: on the Much Unlamented Death of Mathias Merrideth” (1732), “The Fair Suicide” (1733), “Admiral Hosier’s Ghost” (1740), Blair’s “The Grave” (1743), Thomas Warton’s “The Pleasures of Melancholy” (1747), and William Collins “An Ode to the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland” (written in 1750, though not published until 1788) constitute a poetic tradition in the eighteenth century that relies on the ghost image as a way to discuss such concepts as are traditionally affiliated with ghostly presence, including justice enacted, wrongs righted, and business finished; these poetic ghosts also warn against immorality and promote virtue. Further, this exposure to ghostly and melancholic poetry seem to have influenced Richardson’s writing, and vestigial traces of the Graveyard poetry trickled into *Clarissa*, particularly Warton’s “Pleasures” and Gray’s “Elegy.” In fact, Warton’s poetic portrayal of the ghostly presence (which was written very close to the time Richardson wrote *Clarissa*) in stanza two of “Pleasures” eerily resembles Richardson’s depiction in *Clarissa* of the haunted coppice near the Harlowe mansion. Richardson describes the spot thus:

A piece of ruins upon it, the remains of an old chapel, now standing in the midst of the coppice; here and there an overgrown oak, surrounded with ivy and mistletoe, starting up, to sanctify, as it were, the awful solemnness of the place. A spot, too, where a man having been found hanging some years ago, it was used to be thought of by us when children, and by maidservants, with a degree of terror; as the habitation of owls, ravens,

and other ominous birds; and as haunted by ghosts, goblins, spectres.

(352n)

Richardson's imagery echoes very much the same sort of ghastly and grim atmosphere that Gray provides in "Elegy":

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tower  
 The moping owl does to the moon complain  
 Of such, as wandering near her secret bower,  
 Molest her ancient solitary reign. (Gray 96)

Warton's poem also possesses the same sort of foreboding and ghostly tropes in his depiction of a similar setting in his "Pleasures," and his description seems closer even to Richardson's than does Gray's:

Beneath yon' ruin'd Abbey's moss-grown piles  
 Oft let me sit, at twilight hour of Eve,  
 Where thro' some western window the pale moon  
 Pours her long-levell'd rule of streaming light;  
 While sullen sacred silence reigns around,  
 Save the lone Screech-owl's note, whose bow'r is built  
 Amid the mould'ring caverns dark and damp,  
 And the calm breeze, that rustles in the leaves  
 Of flaunting Ivy, that with mantle green  
 Invests some sacred tow'r. Or let me tread  
 Its neighboring walk of pines, where stray'd of old  
 The cloyster'd brothers: thro' the gloomy void

That far extends beneath their ample arch  
 As on I tread, religious horror wraps  
 My soul in dread repose. But when the world  
 Is clad in Midnight's raven-colored robe,  
 In hollow charnel let me watch the flame  
 Of taper dim, while airy voices talk  
 Along the glimmering walls, or ghostly shape  
 At distance seen, invites with beck'ning hand  
 My lonesome steps.... (5)

Not only do Warton's and Richardson's excerpts center on a grove of trees (though Warton's are pines and Richardson's are oaks) on holy ground populated with owls, ivy, and—last but not least—ghosts, but the similarity between the pieces indicates that Richardson was not exempt from the influences that were pervading the poetic tradition of ghosts any more than he was exempt from the ghosts of the popular press. If Handley is correct in her claims that ghosts still appeared with some frequency in the discussions of the middle class, it makes sense that references to ghosts might emerge in Richardson's work, not in spite of Richardson's intention to create an innovative fiction (an epistolary method combining sentimentality and realism of representation that sought to expose the private recesses of human intimacy and thought to its readership in “a full and authentic report of human experience” [Watt 32]), but rather because of it. Despite Northrop Frye's explanation of the anti-spectral and anti-marvelous conventions of what he calls “low mimetic fiction” in his *Anatomy of Criticism* (“In ordinary low mimetic fiction,” [like *Clarissa*] he says, “they are inadmissible” [50]), one might reasonably



expect ghostly references to appear in true accounts of mimetic fiction because of the discursive mode in which people situated ghosts and the supernatural during the eighteenth century.

According to Tom Keymer, “the gap between each novel’s underlying facts of character and action and their discursive presentation in narrative had been reduced to the barest minimum, leaving Richardson’s characters ideally placed to report their lives, both inner and outer, in uniquely intimate detail” (4). In accordance with Ronald Finucane’s statement that “ghosts ‘represent man’s inner universe just as his art and poetry do. As in the case of literary and aesthetic invention, the results cannot be divorced from their social milieu” (qtd. in Bath and Newton 1), such ghostly references as one finds in the discourse of Richardson’s characters, and particularly in Richardson’s description of the haunted coppice, fit very well in the context of the time and its literary traditions, as do other such metaphors and figurative uses of ghosts in *Clarissa*, as a method to discuss and expose the desires and yearnings of the inner self and the physical and spiritual realities of the Puritan individual to the middle-class readership.

## CHAPTER 3

## “A PLACE SO PATHLESS AND LONESOME”

In a footnote to Letter 86, the “editor” Richardson cross-references Clarissa’s use of the line “a place so pathless and lonesome” (352), a spot referred to in other passages of the novel as the “haunted coppice” or grove, to an excerpt from another of Clarissa’s letters that is not included in the novel:

A piece of ruins upon it, the remains of an old chapel, now standing in the midst of the coppice; here and there an overgrown oak, surrounded with ivy and mistletoe, starting up, to sanctify, as it were, the awful solemnness of the place. A spot, too, where a man having been found hanging some years ago, it was used to be thought of by us when children, and by maidservants, with a degree of terror; as the habitation of owls, ravens, and other ominous birds; and as haunted by ghosts, goblins, spectres. The genuine result of country loneliness and ignorance; notions which, early propagated, are apt to leave impressions even upon minds grown strong enough, at the same time, to despise the like credulous follies in others.

(352n)

Angus Ross explains, in his “Introduction” to *Clarissa*, that Richardson made many additions to his novel following its publication. Mark Kinkead-Weekes suggests that Richardson inserted many of these additions as a response to his critics (Ross 16). By the third edition, *Clarissa* had increased in length by 200 pages of “restored” material. One of the ways in which Richardson added to his text came in his use of footnotes, such as

the one discussed in this section. Twenty-two such footnotes appear in the second [C2] manuscript, and they are retained in later editions. Ross states that the purpose of eighteen of these footnotes involves either denigrating Lovelace's character or elevating Clarissa's (17). While an exploration of the footnote (in relation to other contextualizing passages in Richardson's novel) does reveal certain interesting nuances about the characters Clarissa and Lovelace, it may seem jarring and out of place at first glance (and it supplies what Terry Castle might term "gratuitous information" [175]), especially if one tries to consider it without the aid of other referents. Clarissa's description of the coppice and her fearfulness towards its supposedly haunted condition remains an interesting contrast to many of Richardson's depictions of polite middle-class life. In fact, the gloomy landscape that he draws of the coppice with its owls, ivy, and chapel ruins, as well as Clarissa's childhood apprehension of the wooded area and its spectral inhabitants, closely resemble those of later Gothic writers. One might inquire after the function of such a ghostly scene in a "realistic" novel like *Clarissa* and how it influences the interpretation of Richardson's book, as well as what reaction Richardson might hope to elicit from his readership by including such an ominous and ghostly description.

Interestingly, Walpole would later criticize writers who adopted Richardson's approach to fiction because he believed they had "dammed" up the imagination of the populace with their sentimental brand of realism (vii). However, the symbolic components of this ghostly scene demonstrate that Richardson had not entirely left the fancy dammed. Robert D. Hume suggests that such "wild landscapes, ruined abbeys, and the like, were merely a convenient convention, a standardized method of achieving the desired atmosphere" (286). The fact that Richardson employs such scenery in his fiction

more than a decade and a half before the pioneering and subversive Walpole published his novel *The Castle of Otranto* does indicate that Richardson did see some merit in Gothic-like narrative elements. Consequently, *Clarissa* does have some of the same tropes and motifs and objectives that later Gothic fictions would possess, particularly in the realm of identity and self-definition. Richardson lays bare Clarissa's inner self by creating an atmosphere of temporary terror; his owls and ravens, his ivy and mistletoe, situated among the crumbling walls where a man once hanged himself, serve, as Ann Radcliffe says of all Gothic fiction, to "expand[] the soul, and awaken[] the faculties to a high degree of life" (qtd. in Hume 284). The information in the footnote, therefore, is anything but gratuitous because it serves the purpose of bringing Richardson's heroine into contact with spectrality and creating a more introspective Clarissa, who in turn shows the reader a fear-swathed path into the ambiguity of the self, "a place so pathless and lonesome," and its often unfulfilled desires.

### **John Locke and "Early Propagated" Ghost Stories**

Near the end of Richardson's ghostly footnote, Clarissa's comments on the "notions" impressed in the minds of children of an "early" age that continue with those children into adulthood. Her comment implies that Clarissa is speaking of herself when she refers to children who believe in the ghostly realm in their younger years. Hers, it seems, is a mind now "grown strong enough," yet she retains those early impressions. In this confessional footnote, then, Clarissa shows an inner division: officially, she does not believe, but when confronted with "ghostliness" she cannot completely disavow its existence. While she attributes the blame for this condition to those who brought her into

contact with such beliefs, even she must admit that she is not of one mind on the matter. Her notions about ghosts and haunting are in themselves ghostly and haunting.

In his 1689 *Essay Concerning Humane Understanding*, John Locke expresses his concern over the too-constant exposure of children—like Clarissa—to ghost belief, generally transmitted through spectral narratives, and the inability of those young people to become completely rational on the subject or outgrow their fears of the supernatural, for the notion forever after taints their thoughts, especially when, as Clarissa is, confronted by an environment that might invite thoughts of ghosts and other things that go bump. Locke states,

Thus the Ideas of Goblins and Sprights have really no more to do with Darkness than Light; yet let but a foolish Maid inculcate these often on the Mind of a Child, and raise them there together, possibly he shall never be able to separate them again so long as he lives; but Darkness shall ever afterwards bring with it those frightful Ideas. (77)

Social paranoia over the transfer or retelling of such accounts and its effects on the minds of the impressionable youth continued well into the eighteenth century, showing up in such places as Mary Weightman's *The Friendly Monitor; or Dialogues for Youth against the Fear of Ghosts and Other Irrational Apprehensions with Reflections on the Power of the Imagination and the Folly of Superstition* in the 1780s. Weightman begins her work by explaining her anti-spectral rhetoric which she claims is put forward on behalf of the youth:

But to the tender parent, and those who have children under their care, the author feels an anxious wish that this little work may prove acceptable;

and trusts the design with which it is undertaken may recommend it to their notice; not as a perfect work, but as one professedly designed for the use and benefit of children, in assisting them to banish the tales of the nursery by pointing out their absurdity, and opening the way to reason and reflection. (1)<sup>7</sup>

Interestingly, both Locke and Weightman, despite the wide gap between their time periods, show a remarkable similarity in their approach to the “issue” of belief in ghosts and transmission of stories by making reference to servants or working class people as the purveyors of ghost belief. Such individuals as servants, governesses, nurses, and other people who belonged to a lower social class were generally responsible for the dissemination of the old stories, legends, and remnants of oral tradition, because they often were uneducated or simply preferred the old beliefs of their specter-saturated cultural heritage to the new philosophies and empiricist sciences of Locke’s age and afterward. Clarissa herself brings up the “maidservants” in the footnote reference, and since Clarissa herself is only eighteen years of age and is likely to have been born after the unfortunate suicide, she also probably heard the story from the servants, since such polite and genteel people like Mr. and Mrs. Harlowe would be unlikely to discuss such a

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<sup>7</sup> Obviously, Weightman’s views on the transmission of ghost stories, as demonstrated in *The Friendly Monitor*, would have had no bearing on Richardson’s writing since she did not write it until long after Richardson finished *Clarissa*. I only discuss Weightman’s perspective to show the popularity and persistence of Lockean anti-ghost rhetoric throughout the eighteenth century. The type of anti-spectral rhetoric being employed in both Weightman and Locke, while separated by a chronological divide of more than a hundred years, derives from the same sort of motivation to curb the telling of ghost narratives in order to protect the listeners from the psychologically diminishing effects of such “superstitious” belief.

horrific event. In Letter 35, Lovelace obliquely states that he received his account of the haunted coppice from the servants when he tells Belford about acquiring keys to the garden gate and the adjacency of that gate to “the haunted coppice as tradition has made the servants think it; a man having been found hanging in it about twenty years ago” (Richardson, *Clarissa*, 164). It seems clear then that beneath the surface of this comment remains a discussion about the association of ghost belief with inferior people and paranoia about social status and position.

Oliver Goldsmith’s treatment of the Cock Lane poltergeist in mid-1700s, a famous ghost hoax that fooled even such a well-read and respected individual as Dr. Johnson (and many others), conveys a sneering type of attitude toward those who believed in ghosts, typical of anti-ghost skeptics at the time. Gillian Bennett claims that to Goldsmith, “All those who believe in the ghost are ‘credulous,’ ‘ignorant publicans,’ and so on; all those who disbelieve it are of the highest rank and probity” (Bennett 147). Henry Fielding similarly conveys a similar perspective by depicting believers in ghosts as lesser-minded folks in *Tom Jones*, both in the character of the believer Partridge and Sophia Western’s maid, Mrs. Honour. Fielding’s depiction of lower-class individuals (country folks, really) Partridge and Honour as—to use Goldsmith’s terminology—“ignorant publicans” amply suits the skepticism and stereotypes of believers during the 1750s. Fielding’s “superstitious” pair is the direct result of “country loneliness,” “ignorance,” and no doubt ideas of ghosts “early propagated” (Richardson, *Clarissa*, 352n).

Both Partridge and Honour blatantly demonstrate their belief in and fear of ghosts. Partridge reveals his mortal fear of ghosts several times, either directly in

dialogue with Tom or indirectly through the text's omniscient narrator. The first time, Tom and Partridge are on the road to Coventry by night and in a storm, and they hear "a confused sound of human voices" (Fielding 579). Tom declares that they should stop and ask for directions to Coventry from the "merry-makers." Partridge responds, "Who could be merry-making at this time of night, and in such a place, and such weather? They can be nothing but ghosts or witches, or some evil spirits or other, that's certain" (580). Partridge's fear of the supernatural is so great that it endangers him and Tom in this situation. Later on, after Tom kills Mr. Fitzpatrick in a duel, Partridge fears the return of the dead man's ghost:

He went to the Gatehouse with trembling knees and a beating heart, and was no sooner arrived in the presence of Jones than he lamented his misfortune that had befallen him with many tears, looking all the while frequently about him in great terror; for as the news now arrived that Mr. Fitzpatrick was dead, the poor fellow apprehended every minute that his ghost would enter the room (771).

Once again, Partridge's belief distresses him almost to the point of a breakdown. Later Partridge admits that he could not stand the thought of having any person hanged upon "his evidence...for fear of seeing the ghost" of that person afterwards (Fielding 396), which serves as an illustration of the ignorance and mental inferiority that disbelievers associated with believers.

Mrs. Honour, like Partridge, functions in a similar manner. When Sophia makes a reference to killing herself rather than "submit to be the wife of [Squire Blifil]," Mrs. Honour tells Sophia about the ghost of one farmer Halfpenny who killed himself, and she



trembles to think of Sophia suffering the same end (304). First, suicide results in the lack of a Christian burial (she would be laid in a grave at a crossroads with a stake through her heart), so Honour is probably fearful that Sophia's eternal soul would be damned for enacting such an act. Secondly, and perhaps more to the point, Honour also fears that Sophia would become a ghost, like farmer Halfpenny, and possibly haunt her, the woman responsible for her safety and overall welfare. Thus, Honour is not simply afraid *for* Sophia; she is afraid *of* her (or at least the thought of her as a potential ghost), and in the process Honour has betrayed her silliness and even "lesser-mindedness." Sophia has done no more than obliquely mention suicide, and Honour automatically begins thinking of ghosts and her mistress as a ghost and the possibility of that ghost haunting Honour.

In light of the association between belief in ghosts and lesser-mindedness, Clarissa's comment also provides some relevant and revelatory information on Clarissa's potential insecurities about her place in the upper-middle class and her overall mental capacity. Her inability to shake the impressions left on her mind by "early propagated" ghost narratives and notions about the supernatural, and her pairing of this inability with the general opinion about the mental inferiority or weakness of "maidservants" and other lower-class individuals, indicates that she has doubts about herself and where she stands in relation to the people around her. She is double-minded as to her status and place in the social hierarchy. This insecurity and dithering is also analogous to her situation with the man she desires yet for whom she outwardly feigns contempt and disdain: Robert Lovelace. Clarissa, in her letters, tries to persuade Anna that she really only desires only to be single for the rest of her life, a desire she conveys to her family several times to no avail (123); this announced desire for singlehood is perhaps her way of saying that she is

able to resist the follies and pitfalls, the “false fires” and “quagmires” of desire. In fact, the comparison here suggests that she relegates romantic love, the kind that Anna speaks of, to childhood whimsy and naiveté. She is inferior to no one and will be subverted by nothing because her will is stronger than all of theirs. However, this insistence is merely another act; she does not wish to be fully freed from the follies of oppressive desire. Just as Clarissa—like so many others—claims to not believe in ghosts and yet cannot detach herself from impressions and notions of ghosts left over from her childhood years, she also professes to dislike Lovelace and yet cannot and will not leave off desiring him. In a sense, she has to become two Clarissas at once, one a strong skeptic, one a real romantic. The former conforms to social expectation, family, duties, and her own wish to fulfill her obligations; on the other side, she has love and desire—indeed the components of her most private self—which pull her toward a man she knows she should neither pursue nor seek to possess.

Clarissa appropriately situates this deep-seated anxiety about the conflict between social position and love and the effect of those forces on her within her description of the haunted coppice, especially considering the frequency with which the narrative mentions the “haunted” spot in connection to Lovelace, who lurks there in disguise during the nights (even when it rains), writing letters and attempting to convince his “angel” to come down to him. In fact, Clarissa almost never mentions the place without referring in some way to Lovelace. Thus, the coppice becomes the locus of desire and selfhood, despite its haunted reputation, as well as the source of Clarissa’s anxiety and turmoil, and it, like Lovelace, haunts her with allusions to inferiority and weakness.

### **Owls, Ravens, and Mistletoe: The Self as a *Selva Oscura***

Ah quanto a dir qual era è cosa dura / esta selva salvaggia e aspra e forte / che nel pensier rinova la paura! / Tant' è amara che poco è più morte. (Alighieri 3)

“Oh, how difficult to speak of the strength, the harshness, of that savage forest, which renews one’s fear in contemplating it! A bitterness little better than death.”<sup>8</sup>

In Clarissa’s depiction of the coppice, she mentions owls, ravens, ivy, mistletoe, crumbling chapel walls, and a man who hanged himself about twenty years before, whose ghostly memory has become synonymous with the coppice itself. These references work together symbolically to create both a typically Gothic atmosphere and an incisive lens for “reading” beyond Clarissa’s self-representation and into the realities of her inner life.

Traditionally, both the owl and the raven are ambiguous, complex, and even self-contradicting symbols. Richardson’s pairing of the two birds in the Harlowe’s coppice makes sense not only for their symbolic similarities, but also for their traditional biblical connections. Considering the highly religious atmosphere of eighteenth-century England and Richardson’s own desire to speak instructively to his Puritan audience, it stands to reason that the novelist would draw on such symbolic traditions in his writing. The King James Version of the Bible mentions the duo of fowls in conjunction on three separate occasions. Leviticus 11:17 and Deuteronomy 14:16 refer to these birds as unclean “abominations” under the Mosaic Law. Isaiah 34:11 talks about the destruction of Idumea (a name intended to symbolize those who defy God’s laws), and the presence of unclean scavenger birds, such as the owl and the raven, in that waste land alludes to the moral decay of the people who once possessed it, as well as the physical destruction of the land itself:

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<sup>8</sup> Author’s translation.

The land thereof shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever: from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever. But the cormorant and the bittern shall possess it; *the owl also and the raven shall dwell in it.* (Isaiah 34:9-11; italics added)

The theologian Matthew Henry, in his commentary on Isaiah's verses, writes briefly that these "frightful birds" congregate in the "desolation...invited by the dead carcasses" (34:9-17n4). In conjunction with Henry's remark, Richardson's scene becomes more terrifying when one considers that, quite literally, the birds are juxtaposed with the "carcase" of the hanging man in the description of the coppice; these "fowl that are ill omen" (Henry 34:9-17n2) have been, to use Henry's word for it, "invited" by an actual swinging corpse. The spot thereafter becomes their "habitation" (Richardson 352n) because the ground is tainted and decaying, not just because of the suicide or the man's suspected ghost, but because of something deeper and more vital. Though Clarissa does not indicate whether the chapel was already a ruin at the time of the man's death, it may be safe to assume that the state of the chapel functions as a clue as to what is haunting the coppice: the moral degradation of the society and its institutions, including the family unit and ecclesiastical authority. Her family's emphasis on social and economic advancement is one indication of this dissolution, and the behavior of the clergyman Mr. Brand, who becomes James Harlowe's lackey in hopes of receiving compensation, is another. The birds simply serve as omens to reaffirm that the dissolution of traditional institutions and their appending values is already underway.

However, the birds not only function as a general symbolic statement regarding the overall decay of Clarissa's social environment and the dissolution of middle-class values in the face of economic standards and objectives, but also of Clarissa's future life. In her relation of the encounter with Lovelace in church, Clarissa reveals herself to be an omen-seeker and -interpreter (perhaps another unshakeable impression left over from childhood years): "I am extremely apprehensive that this worse than ghost-like appearance of his bodes some still bolder step. If he come hither (and very desirous he is of my leave to come), I am afraid there will be murder" (Richardson, *Clarissa*, 142). Since Clarissa seems so inclined to interpret an appearance at church as an indication of a future murder, it would seem likely that she would also interpret a permanent habitation of owls and ravens as a possible sign of future misfortunes for her. Lovelace's appearance in church, to Clarissa, foreshadows a possible murder; oddly, however, his disguised residence in the coppice and the "diligence" of his lurking and writing among the fowl of ill repute, instead of giving her pause and causing her to interpret a similar sort of future event, seems to flatter her more than anything. The omen is still a ghostly foreboding of what is to come for Clarissa in her life and development as a Puritan individual, just like Lovelace's appearance in church; in fact, if anything, the aspect of the omen (what with Lovelace taking a semi-permanent residence among the scavenger birds) has only intensified in terms of its inherent terror. The discrepancy comes because of Clarissa's motives for and methods of reading the omens. Instead of having a "worse than ghost-like appearance" as she claimed he had in the church (142), she now chooses to reflect on "the gracefulness of his figure" (352). One may interpret this transformed

opinion of Lovelace as simply a shift in the girl's feelings toward him; whereas she feared and loathed him before, she now esteems and desires him.

Regardless of the source of this change in perspective, Lovelace still waits among the birds whose very presence indicates death, and she chooses to ignore it because of what she feels for the man who "diligently" waits for her; she brushes off the foreboding with the ease of one who has heard a story about ghosts in the woods, initially feels afraid, and seconds later "realizes" that ghosts do not exist. Reading one's fortune and future in fowl omens is for the Partridges and the Honours of society, not for middle-class Clarissas. Clarissa's future happiness will come as the result of will and desire, and no circumstantial group of birds congregating in a grove can combat what the self intends to effect. To her, happiness will come, as Lady Macbeth says, by screwing one's courage to "the sticking place" (Shakespeare I.vii.61), even when "the owls scream and the crickets cry" (Shakespeare II.ii.16); she will follow the lights of love, however misleading and whatever their destination.

However, the ghostly grove contains other symbols that indicate something of the terrors that will come. In addition to the crumbling values of the middle-class world, as already discussed, the ruined chapel, enmeshed by ivy and mistletoe, reflects Lovelace's true intentions; however, it also functions as a reflection of Clarissa's inner desires, for it reveals what she is willing to overlook because of her true feelings for him. Mistletoe and ivy both generally symbolize decay, ruin, and a lack of care, mistletoe especially because of its parasitic nature and its role as Loki's fatal weapon in the Norse myth of the death of the sun god, Balder (Frazer 763). Ivy, however, is a more complicated symbol: "In Christian symbolism ivy typifies the everlasting life, from its remaining continually

green” (Evans 599). Jean Chevalier adds to this interpretation of ivy, saying that it is a “feminine symbol” that also represents “the persistence of desire,” as well as “the eternal cycle of death and rebirth and the myth of the eternal homecoming” (546). Essentially, the presence of mistletoe and ivy becomes a prognostication of Clarissa’s death and achieving rebirth and sanctification through good works and righteous desires that outlast life itself, which is ultimately what Clarissa desires more than anything (even more than Lovelace). The ivy also represents the eternal self as the locus of desire; while in this instance it indicates the ruinous future path of Clarissa, it also, like “the overgrown oak...starting up, to sanctify, as it were, the awful solemnness,” also indicates a future redemption. Eventually, Clarissa will experience the “eternal homecoming” when she, as she tells Lovelace, goes to her “father’s house” upon her eventual death (Richardson, *Clarissa*, 1233).

This symbol of sanctification and redemption (the oak) is significant because both Clarissa and Lovelace reflect on the concept of redemption as they are dying. As she lies surrounded by admirers and friends on her death-bed, Clarissa remarks on scriptural verses that pertain to affliction and trial and “the *mediation* of my *Savior*” (1274). While her death is not the cause of her beatification, it does come at the end of the suffering which has allowed her to become sanctified. Lovelace thinks his redemption can only come with death (a trade for the “life” he stole from Clarissa), as with his last breath he says to an unseen other (whom his French comrade De la Tour thinks to be Clarissa), “LET THIS EXPIATE!” (1488), referring to Lovelace’s own concept of self-sacrifice and atonement for wrong-doing. These separate approaches to salvation represent an interesting inversion of themes that have been consistent with the characters of these two

figures throughout the novel. Ironically, Clarissa's focus has consistently been more on dying and the next life than on this one; however, her declaration right before she dies, "*It is good for me that I was afflicted,*" indicates an acknowledgement of the importance of a *life* of suffering in creating a stronger self and sanctifying the individual soul. Lovelace, on the other hand, focuses on the present life more than anything (though he does confess to Belford in Letter 35 that too much leisure has caused him "to look backward on the *have-been's*, and forward on the *will-be's*" [162]), yet his role in Clarissa's suffering and death cause him to think that death and the afterlife is his only chance of redemption. Consequently, while desire will lead her into trials, at the end of those trials she will receive her sought-for sanctification. In fact, she herself is the sanctifying influence amid crumbling walls (representative of family and social traditions, hegemonies, and hierarchies); she is the blossom of desire and selfhood that will grow and persist beyond suffering and death; the ghost and the haunted coppice are merely a way of showing that not only will desire and the need for self-definition lead her into danger and peril, but it will ultimately end in salvation. Lovelace's push for his personal salvation, on the other hand, will take a different route than Clarissa's and will require more perhaps than he is willing to give.

### **The Hanging Man**

The image of the hanging man in the middle of the grove is an interesting image that clearly foreshadows events in the novel, including the deaths of Clarissa and Lovelace, who are both in a manner responsible for their own physical passing. It even alludes to Clarissa's rape by Lovelace in that it connects to the legal consequences of



such a heinous act. Anna, in Letter 317, acquaints Clarissa with legal proceedings in the Isle of Man in the matter of rape:

“If a single woman there prosecutes a single man for rape, the ecclesiastical judges impanel a jury; and, if this jury finds him guilty, he is returned *guilty* to the temporal courts: where, if he be convicted, the deemster, or judge, delivers to the woman a *rope*, a sword, and a ring; and she has it in her choice to have him *hanged*, beheaded, or to marry him.”  
(Richardson, *Clarissa*, 1017; italics added).

Thus, in this allusion, it almost certainly represents Lovelace should he follow through with his purpose, which, of course, he later does, though Clarissa chooses not to prosecute after she escapes the Sinclairs' home. However, the best interpretation for the hanging man's presence suggests that Clarissa herself, not Lovelace, is the most direct referent. C.G. Jung explains that “hanging...has an unmistakable symbolic value, since swinging (hanging and suffering as one swings) is the symbol of unfulfilled longing or tense expectation” (qtd. in Cirlot 138). It seems likely then that the hanging man represents the longings Clarissa feels for Lovelace as well as her eventual sanctification, which is why she, as a good Puritan individual, writes these letters in the first place.

The hanging man is an image that has appeared in the mythologies of many different cultures, especially the Greeks, so while it may seem somewhat out of the ordinary for a Richardson novel to have such an eerie image, it possessed a great deal of symbolic baggage long before Richardson appropriated it for *Clarissa*. Sir James George Frazer, in *The Golden Bough*, points out several uses of the hanging man in Greek myths, such as the musical contest between the satyr Marsyas and Apollo in which the loser

(Marsyas) “was tied up to a pine-tree and flayed” (Frazer 411). He further explains a similar rite “at Ephesus, the most famous of [Artemis’] sanctuaries, in the legend of a woman who hanged herself and was thereupon dressed by the compassionate goddess in her own divine garb and called by the name of Hecate” (Frazer 413). Hecate, of course, in the Greek mythology is a female Titan known for teaching sorcery and witchcraft (Bulfinch 134n), an interesting tidbit considering how often Clarissa is referred to as a “witch” or “bewitching” both by her family and Lovelace. These legends lend an interesting facet to the interpretation of Clarissa as the hanging man because of the concept of competition or struggle that takes place in the tale of Marsyas and Apollo. Ultimately, the story suggests that struggling against a higher power, instead of submitting to it, leads to destruction, which will prove true for Clarissa, if she follows her desires. She will struggle against Lovelace for mastery of her virginal body, and he will ultimately deprive her of that part of her identity.

The story of the hanging Ephesian woman, however, is a more hopeful one as the one called Hecate is visited by the goddess Artemis, who dresses the dead woman in “divine garb,” a symbol of the woman’s ascension to a higher state. Such an interpretation agrees with the claims of Chevalier, who says, “there is, however, another level to the Hanging Man. His seeming stillness and pose are signs of complete submission, the promise and assurance of an accretion of greater esoteric and spiritual powers—chthonian rejuvenation” (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 471). For Clarissa, that symbolic narrative would not eliminate her physical destruction (it still anticipates it), but it does hint at a potential salvation or spiritual empowerment thereafter if she remains true to the desires of her inner self.

### **Ghostly Lovelace and Haunted Writing**

Clarissa's description of the "haunted coppice" in the footnote to Letter 81 with its ghosts and its ivy and mistletoe amid the chapel ruins represents the last instance in which Clarissa mentions that spot. Lovelace, however, brings it up briefly later on, referring to it as the "bleak coppice" as he describes to Belford the rainy night he passed in it with "linen and wig frozen; my limbs absolutely numbed; my fingers only sensible of so much warmth as enabled me to hold a pen; and that obtained by rubbing the skin off, and beating with my hands my shivering sides—Kneeling on the hoar moss with one knee, writing on the other" (718). Lovelace's recounting of the night in the coppice involves a rather dramatic description of the weather and its effect on him. He describes the wet, the cold, and his attempts to write letters despite his physical discomfort, "if the stiff scrawl could be called writing" (718). He then makes an interesting comment to his friend about his physical state: "My feet, by the time I had done, seeming to have taken root, and actually unable to support me for some minutes" (718). This remark implies much in the context of the scenery, especially the "overgrown oak, surrounded with ivy and mistletoe, starting up to sanctify, as it were, the awful solemnness of the place" (352) because it seems to indicate that Lovelace himself has become a part of ("taken root" in) the grove and its haunting nature; his identity has become inextricably linked to the grove within whose confines he lurks and which represents the haunted self of the woman he desires. However, his function as a part of the grove, his ghostly role, emerges most strongly in two of his actions: kneeling and writing.

Traditionally, kneeling constitutes a submissive act. Chevalier claims that the knee symbolizes "the main seat of bodily strength" or symbol of "man's authority and

power in society,” from which we draw the meaning of the phrases “‘to bend the knee’ (perform an act of self-abasement)” and “‘kneel before someone’ (perform an act of allegiance or worship)” (573). Lovelace’s act of kneeling constitutes a necessary posture in order to further his own ends. It is not sincere submission; it is simply an act he must perform, a disguise he must don, to draw out Clarissa. Thus, the fact that he writes from his knees while also writing upon his knee constitutes a contradiction of symbols; even though his knees are bent, he is still in a position of power. His role as the ghost in the grove is iterated through this performance, this disguised submission, because he is quite simply not what he is.

His ghostly maneuver is also accentuated by his habit of letter-writing in the grove. The act of writing is essentially a ghostly one because it requires the medium of a presence-in-absence to carry out its objective, for it represents the author even when the author is absent; thus, the writer is simultaneously represented to the reader while also concealing himself, and the reader has no way of discerning the identity of the “actual” author from that of the represented author. Consequently, the author, like a ghost, becomes the thing that is and is not, and just as Lovelace adopts a submissive position, like Brutus bootless kneeling, he conspires to plunge his dagger into Clarissa.

### **The Ghostly Footnote**

Although Letter 83’s ghostly footnote does introduce an interesting symbolic depth to the nature of Clarissa’s haunted subjectivity, its inclusion does raise another question: why does Richardson decide against inserting such information into the text itself and rely on a footnote to relay this scene and other “editorialisms,” especially since

“many of the notes act against the subtle process of unfolding the story in the letters, by brusquely pointing into the following narrative?” (Ross 17). Castle indicates—and Ross concurs—that Richardson’s purpose as the “Editor” is “disarmingly clear: to institute precisely those ‘controuls’ on reading which the letter sequence itself fails to supply. By insinuating himself into the text as its editorial voice, Richardson tries, almost as an afterthought, to confine the meaning of Clarissa’s ‘story,’ to close off its gaps, and make it over as the pellucid fable of Christian heroism he desired that it should be” (*Clarissa*, 175).

Castle points out the flaw in such a maneuver, indicating that such exertion of heavy-handed editorializing and dictating like Richardson’s ironically leads to reader rebellion rather than submission (175); the more control Richardson tries to exert over his own text and the reaction of his readership to the text, the less control he actually possesses. Unfortunately, because he is unable to learn the lesson of his own villain, Lovelace, he tries and fails in stabilizing the interpretation of his narrative.

Also, from a narrative standpoint, Richardson’s need to insert footnotes does not make sense for another reason: the presence of footnotes pulls the reader out of the realistic depiction he is trying to establish by constantly placing reminders that an “Editor” is participating in the production of the narrative. Thus, footnotes jar the reader out of the representation with cross-references and so-called “gratuitous information.” If Richardson’s purpose were more focused on creating a realistic novel and less on “instruction,” he probably would have left them out.

All weaknesses aside, however, the appearance of the footnote in Letter 86 that describes is not without potential as an object of literary discussion. While Richardson

certainly could have found a way to insert his description into the text itself, the form of this footnote and its relation to the primary text does result in some rather interesting interpretive effects, and they stem mostly from the binary which haunts the margins of all others in matters of the structure of Western metaphysics and writing: presence/absence. In aforementioned binary, presence functions as the preferred concept, and this preference extends to nearly every other binary in Western thought: male/female, day/night, light/dark, speech/writing, etc. The reason for this preference has been set down by many other critics and theorists and will not form part of this author's exposition. Richardson's inclusion of a footnote indicates a movement toward this preference; as the "Editor" he makes present what was once "absent" in order to stabilize and limit the fluidity of interpretation on the part of his reader. However, the attempt is ultimately deconstructive for the reasons discussed previously. It undermines the "realism" of the text in favor of a more controlled and controlling "instruction."

Interestingly, though, the ghostliness of the content in Richardson's ghostly footnote is augmented by this presence/absence binary. Ghosts are often characterized by their ambiguity and paradoxical nature (Orrin N. C. Wang calls it "tangible intangibility" [204] or "indeterminacy" [221]); they are both there and not there simultaneously; for this reason, they make an ideal medium for talking about the nature of the self which, according to post-structuralist thought, is also there and simultaneously not there. Writing itself indicates a presence that is absent because it implies the existence of an author by preserving the author's words; however, the author herself does not exist. Only text remains as a ghostly presence-in-absence. Richardson's interest in writing as presence-in-absence appears in a letter written around 1746 to Sophia Westcomb, he expresses his

opinion of writing in this manner: “Who then shall decline the converse of the pen? The pen that makes distance, presence; and brings back to sweet remembrance all the delights of presence; which makes even presence but body, while absence becomes the soul” (*Letters*, 65; italics added). Thus, Richardson’s idea of writing seems to propose a sort of ghostliness in the non-materiality or spirituality of textual exchange, a virtual meeting of spirits.

Richardson’s footnote shares this paradoxical complexity in its very form because it is physical manifestation of writing; it is ghostly in the same way that all writing is ghostly. However, because the footnote is also a part of the text of *Clarissa* that exists outside of the text of *Clarissa*, it, too, for that reason becomes a “there” that is not there. It haunts the margins of the text while also adding to the text and participating with the text without actually mingling with the text.

Further, the footnote relies on a kind of embedded textuality because it refers to a letter that *Clarissa* wrote but which does not actually exist. Thus, the footnote implies a presence which is absent because the letter never appears anywhere but in the body of the footnote, which leads to the formation of a multi-level paradox: a piece of writing which is part of the text and is not part of the text contains within it a reference to a text which exists and does not actually exist.

Finally, to an audience which thinks it is reading a “realistic” representation of middle-class life, the ability of the “Editor” to call into existence or make present a thing which was formerly absent from “a full and authentic report of human experience” (Watt 32) would call into question the “fullness” and “authenticity” of that report. Instead of thinking about what is there, which is the point of Richardson’s attempt at instructing his

readership, his audience would begin to think about what is not there, or what things the “Editor” might be holding back. The “there” that is “there” is no longer the focal point in such a case; in a ghostly motion of rebellion against the purposes of the author, their thoughts would be pointed instead toward the “there” that is not there, another ghost haunting the text of *Clarissa*. Ultimately, the ghostly footnote of *Clarissa* raises questions about who the characters really are and if they truly represent themselves, if the self-representation of each individual is merely a shadow of what actually is, if there is an identity that exists apart from the written representation, or if the representation is actually all there is.

### **Conclusion**

The haunted coppice is a treasure trove of symbolic play for Richardson. Most of the imagery is dark, indicating a foreboding future for the heroine if she continues to desire and pursue what she should not. For *Clarissa*, the coppice retains significance only as long as Lovelace haunts it, and as soon as she leaves with him, she gives it no more thought. The presence of the desired object, like the ghost of the hanging man, leaves a haunting impression that *Clarissa* cannot shake. Lovelace’s semi-permanent residence in the haunted coppice symbolizes his role as the one who will bring destruction and decay on her. He is, in essence, a ghost who haunts *Clarissa* with professions of love and omens of misfortune. However, in the midst of this decay and gloom, an oak surrounded by ivy symbolizes the hope for *Clarissa*’s and Lovelace’s final redemption. *Clarissa* will gain her glory, but Lovelace’s salvation is less certain. In all of this, the haunted coppice



becomes a reflection of Clarissa's inner self, the dwelling of haunting desires, a place so often "pathless and lonesome.

## CHAPTER 4

## THE GHOST AS METAPHOR: POSSESSION AND PARLOR-SPECTERS

In Letter 30, Clarissa writes to Anna about Lovelace's disruptive appearance when she and her family attend church together: "This man, Lovelace, gives me great uneasiness. He is extremely bold and rash. He was this afternoon at our church: in hopes to see me, I suppose: and yet, if he had such hopes, his usual intelligence must have failed him" (Richardson, *Clarissa*, 140). After devoting a fair bit of her letter to Lovelace's probable motivation for coming (to see her) and the chaos and terror his presence caused, Clarissa states, "I am extremely apprehensive that this worse than ghost-like appearance bodes some still bolder step. If he come hither (and very desirous he is of my leave to come), I am afraid there will be murder. To avoid that, I would most willingly be buried alive" (142). Later on, Clarissa has a similarly surprising experience when she runs into Mr. Solmes within her own family's home. Betty informs her that Mr. Solmes has left the house, so "down I went," Clarissa tells Anna,

And who should I be sent down to, but my brother and Mr. Solmes? The latter standing sneaking behind the door, that I saw him not until I was mockingly led by the hand into the room by my brother. And then I started as if I had seen a ghost. (323)

In both of these instances, Clarissa is caught off guard by her suitors, and in both situations the narrative refers to a ghost. For Clarissa, using the ghost metaphor is neither more nor less than an expression of her extreme fear and surprise upon seeing these men when she did not expect them. However, the presence of the ghost metaphor reveals

something about Clarissa's true identity, regardless of what she intended. In one instance, the ghost-like Lovelace appears in church; in the other, Solmes appears in the Harlowe mansion itself. Because these two places are intricate parts of who Clarissa is and wants to become (church symbolizes religious piety; home symbolizes filial or familial duty), the disruptive presence of these ghostlike figures represents the beginning of the end for Clarissa's constructed self.

Traditionally, homes and churches are hotspots for ghost sightings because both have an association with the dead. People die at home; they are buried in the churchyard. Rev. John Christopher Atkinson mentions both of these places in his list of what Owen Davies calls "the traditional range of haunted locations": "houses, always old and mostly old-fashioned, barns, lanes, the moated sites of old manor-houses, 'four-want-ways' or the place of intersection of two cross-roads, churchyards, suicides' graves" (qtd. in Davies 45). In terms of folklore, then, it makes sense to see ghosts in such places.

The pairing of home and religion as loci of selfhood also makes sense in light of what Cynthia Griffin Wolff has said about the connection between Richardson's novels and Daniel Defoe's conduct manuals, *The Family Instructor* (1715) and *Religious Courtship* (1722), both of which address the interplay of family duty and religious comportment in a series of intra-familial dialogues. Wolff says,

“[*The Family Instructor*] focuses on the condition of a person who assumes a conscious definition of self which is contradicted by behavior; in religious terms, this dilemma is seen as the avowing of pious attitudes by someone whose way of life reveals contempt for religion. Surprisingly, what Defoe portrays here is not so

much conscious hypocrisy as the confused state of someone acting “unlike himself”—or at least unlike the person he believes himself to be. (10)

*Religious Courtship* continues this type of investigation of Puritan selfhood in the context of intermarriage, “when an individual’s private life becomes bound up with people whose beliefs and practices are unlike his own” (Wolff 12). Consequently, these early texts suggest a push for selfhood through the institutions of family and religion. Wolff later claims that Richardson’s novels never “portray an identity crisis which is, by modern standards, successfully resolved” and Clarissa’s “suicidal refusal” to “attain a new personality which could enable her to resume successful relationships with others contains, perhaps, an implicit condemnation of the society which she would have had to enter” (13). In the same way, the metaphorical ghosts themselves function as an “implicit condemnation” of or at least a warning regarding the social institutions that hold the key to full self-realization in the Puritan way.

Clarissa is startled by the presence of these ghostly men because these places where they appear are also supposed to be her sanctuaries, whose boundaries are designed to keep intruders at bay. The ghostliness of these two men comes from their ability to infiltrate or permeate physical boundaries. While they are both material and materialistic, they can temporarily overcome obstacles such as walls and doors, passing through them with ease like spiritual essences. These ghosts are a symbol of the corruption seen in the haunted coppice. This is the first violation in the text, and Clarissa’s endeavor to achieve Puritan selfhood is disrupted by the presence of this ghostly duo; they can penetrate these parts of her because the institutions of church and family are loci of the self which exist outside of Clarissa. What she needs is a focal point

of selfhood beyond their reach, and neither religion nor home is beyond their ghostlike capacity to corrupt. Religious and familial devotion is no doubt a good thing, but the presence of the ghosts symbolizes the present corruption of those institutions and the need for a more individual subjective or intrapersonal mode for development and safe-keeping of the self.

### **Anna's Ghostly Metaphors**

Clarissa is not the only one who thinks about ghosts or relies on them as a discursive method of structuring and organizing her personal and social realities. Her friend Anna Howe also uses ghost references in her discourse as metaphors to describe experience in a meaningful way. Anna is Clarissa's confidante in every miniscule detail of Clarissa's life. She is the keeper of Clarissa's secrets and very much a mirror of her friend. She describes their connection by saying, "I have been called your echo" (Richardson, *Clarissa*, 467). In Letters 10 and 310, Anna illustrates this type of "echoing" by engaging briefly in the same sort of "ghost-talk" that Clarissa uses. In both cases, Anna attempts to define love by using supernatural or spectral imagery. In the first instance, she references demonic possession as a metaphor for love, which reveals her anxiety about what desire for Lovelace might cause her friend to do. The second time, she uses the term *ignis fatuus*, the Latin term for "will o' the wisp," to illustrate the illusory effects of desire. However, both of these metaphors, which channel old traditions of folklore and religious history, contain multiple layers of meaning that reveal hidden things about the nature of Clarissa's inner self, her relationship to Lovelace as the object

of her desire, and the function of that relationship in Clarissa's search to be sanctified and free.

**“Why Should I Not Call It *Possessed*?”:  
The Tradition of Demonic Possession and Dispossession**

In Letter 10, Anna notes her friend's interest in Lovelace, but as a warning she compares love to demonic possession, telling Clarissa,

But you know best—Yet you don't neither, I believe. For a beginning love is acted by a subtle spirit; and oftentimes discovers itself to a bystander when the person possessed (why should I not call it *possessed*?) knows not it has such a demon. (Richardson, *Clarissa*, 70)

This figurative comparison between love and demonic possession functions in the text as a unique method of describing desire and its potential effects on the individual it possesses. It may seem odd to address demonic possession and obsession in a discussion on ghosts in *Clarissa*, but in his book *Dissertations upon Apparitions of Angels, Demons, and Spirits*, Dom Augustin Calmet says, “Under the head of apparitions may be reduced the case of *obsessions* by the devil, which I distinguish from *possessions*, by defining the latter to be an internal acting of the devil upon the person whom he molests, while the in the former, his influence is wholly external” (107). Owen Davies supports the inclusion of these conditions as ghostly in the introduction to his book *The Haunted: A Social History of Ghosts*, explaining that the definition of a ghost is fairly broad, incorporating, “souls,” “spirits,” “fairies, *devils*, and angels” (2; italics added). The ghostly metaphor of possession (and its counterpart *obsession*) creates an interesting framework for the rest of the novel, as Clarissa is beset from within by her desire and from without by the object of

that desire, and in this interplay of forces between which Clarissa finds herself struggling lies the girl's path to sanctity. The metaphor draws strongly from a Christian tradition of possession, obsession, and dispossession in the Bible, the Middle Ages, and the Reformation up until Richardson's time. It also provides a commentary on "otherness" which plays into Clarissa's role in the text.

Some of the more well-known biblical possessions and dispossessions (to which Anna might be referring) are found in Matthew 17 (the possessed child); Mark 5 (the man possessed by "Legion"); Mark 7 (the possessed daughter of a Greek woman); Luke 8 (Mary of Magdala who was possessed by seven devils); and Luke 11 (the man possessed by a dumb spirit). These biblical passages regarding possessed individuals, particularly the stories of the Gadarene man and Mary Magdalene, have certain characteristics that illuminate Anna's comment on the true nature of desire and its effects.

The association between "otherness" and possession emerges first in the story of the Gadarene man found in Matthew 8. Gadara was a Gentile city on the southeastern side of the Sea of Galilee ("Gadara"), so it is likely that the possessed man in the story is also a Gentile (either Greek or Syrian) who would have been avoided by Jews because he was, according to the Mosaic Law, unclean. His uncleanness or "otherness" is even more pronounced by his proximity to "the tombs" (Mark 5:3). In his commentary on Mark 5, Matthew Henry says, "The touch of a grave was polluting....The *unclean spirit* into that company that is *defiling*, and so keeps possession of them" (274). Finally, as further evidence that Jesus was among "others," a herd of swine becomes host for the "Legion" of demons (Mark 5:9). This theme of "otherness" continues in the other accounts of demonic possession; in Matthew 17 and Mark 7, both of the possessed

individuals are children, and one of those is female and Greek. Mary Magdalene, also female, represents the “other,” too. Her case, above all the others, is probably one of the most famous ones simply because of her continued association with Jesus during his ministry and even after his resurrection. The interpretation of these possessions and dispossessions may be viewed as a demonstration that Jesus deemed everyone worthy of his assistance, but the experiences also capture deep-seated hegemony and antipathy for others, and even the belief that “unclean” individuals or sinners as such were more vulnerable or susceptible to demonic possession.

The susceptibility of the “other” (particularly women and children, both of whom, Clarissa represents) perpetuates itself into the Catholic and Protestant traditions of possession and “obsession,” or external “assault of devils,” a phase of trial often endured by Puritan saints on the path to becoming blessed (Thomas 478). In *Clarissa*, the obsession is represented in the form of Lovelace, who hounds Clarissa in a lengthy endeavor to possess her, which he only accomplishes through intrigue and drugging her tea (even then, the possession is only partial—physical—and is never fully successful). Keith Thomas claims, “The affliction [possession] does not seem to have been confined to persons of any particular age, sex or social origin” (480). However, it does seem that during the Middle Ages and Reformation periods children and women (social “others”) were viewed as particularly vulnerable to such possessions, given the connection between witchcraft and possession discussed in Heinrich Kramer’s and James Sprenger’s *Malleus Maleficarum* with its “strong anti-feminist streak” (Thomas 568), Dr. Edward Jorden’s views on the association between possession and female hysteria, and the Catholics’



paranoia about exorcising women in childbirth and those same children at their christening.

In *Clarissa*, Anna Howe's insinuation that Clarissa is possessed by this spirit of love for Lovelace does hold up with the tradition of the "other." Like Mary Magdalene, Clarissa is female and therefore functions inherently as "other" in her patriarchal society. Even when Clarissa is held in high esteem by her family and friends, she is set apart from the rest of them because of her piety and good nature; she is objectified to the point that her grandfather leaves her his fortune and the uncles are prepared to leave her theirs. However, this "otherness" indeed becomes a catalyst for the tragedies that consistently occur in the novel. Anna says, "But oh my friend, depend upon it you are in danger. Depend upon it, whether you know it or not, you are a little in for't. Your native generosity and greatness of mind endanger you" (70). Anna's metaphor conveys that not only is Clarissa susceptible to the demon love (even possessed by it already), but the susceptibility caused by love itself will make her susceptible to another more formidable demon: Lovelace, the "obsessing" demon incarnate who longs to possess the pure and virtuous Clarissa.

Possession and obsession, as such, are both traditionally conditions which lead an individual to behave in ways in which the individual might not have otherwise. Thomas claims, "To be the victim of a possession was a means of expressing forbidden impulses and attracting the attention of otherwise indifferent or repressive superiors" (481). Anna's comment seems to hint at the need to eradicate or exorcise the demon love before it causes Clarissa to commit acts of a regrettable nature against the wishes of her controlling family.

These acts to which Anna might be hinting are illustrated symbolically in Henry's commentary on the story of the Gadarene man. He describes the man thus:

He was very strong and ungovernable. *No man could bind him*, as it is requisite, both for their own good, and for the safety of others....Not only cords would not hold him, but *chains and fetters of iron* would not v. 3, 4. Very deplorable is the case of such as *need to be thus bound*, and of all miserable people in this world they are the most to be pitied...This sets forth the sad condition of those souls in which the devil has dominion; those *children of disobedience*, in whom that unclean spirit works. Some notoriously willful sinners are like this madman; all are herein *like the horse and the mule*, like the *wild ass*, that will not be so held. The commands and curses of the law are as *chains and fetters*, to restrain sinners from their wicked courses; but they *break those bands in sunder*, and it is evidence of the power of the devil in them. (Henry 274)

Anna's metaphor in a way expresses her anxiety that Clarissa's partiality to Lovelace will lead (and is already leading) to what Henry is describing in his commentary. Indeed, her metaphor and its analogous connection to Henry's explication of Mark's passage prove to be prophetic as Clarissa is eventually bound (or confined) to her room by her family.

Clarissa's father frequently talks about her "disobedience" and even "curses" her, thus placing another figurative fetter on her that she spends the rest of the novel seeking to break. Clarissa eventually breaks her family's fettering by escaping with Lovelace.

Perhaps, then, what Anna is suggesting in her ghostly metaphor is that Clarissa consider

dispossession (a self-directed exorcism) in order to avoid the negative consequences of allowing desire to rule her and guide her in the direction of the object of her affection.

Clarissa ultimately refuses her friend's advice to dispossess herself of her feelings. Instead she retains the desires of her inner self, the forces that possess her, even though she must struggle against them for control. It does not matter if "the devil is love, and love is the devil, when it gets into any of your heads" as Clarissa's uncle Antony claims (Richardson, *Clarissa*, 157). She neither gives into her inner desire nor into the obsessive Lovelace, who can only take possession of her body and not her soul or her inner self. The secret of Clarissa's autonomy and selfhood lies not in the desire that possesses her, but rather in the fact that she renounces all claim to the thing she desires; she remains content to struggle against her feelings for Lovelace and her own desire to be possessed by him. Like Dorothea Brooke of George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, she renounces or sacrifices the thing she wants most, and in that renunciation (not of desire, but of the desire's object) she intends to achieve sanctity and a greater sense of self.

### ***Ignis Fatuus: The Pursuit of the "Dead Lights" of Love***

Anna's later metaphor hinting at the figurative connection between love and ghostliness occurs in Letter 310, after Lovelace has already raped Clarissa at Mrs. Sinclair's house with the help of his friends. Anna writes to her friend, "But, alas! my dear, we see that the *wisest people* are not to be depended upon when *love*, like an *ignis fatuus*, holds up its misleading lights before their eyes" (Richardson, *Clarissa*, 994). This comment draws on a very old folkloric tradition of the "will o' the wisp" or "ghost lights"

to make the point that desire is not only misleading, but often illusory and instrumental in causing personal disaster.

Owen Davies says, “Over the centuries, ghosts have often been reported to have a luminescent quality, and sometimes, particularly outdoors, manifested themselves as lights, often of a bluish hue” (18). Dom Augustin Calmet says, “There are many who, in the catalogue of spirits, rank those meteors, or ignes fatui, which are frequently seen in meadows, upon rivers, and in church-yards; as also the phantoms which are seen in burying grounds, downs, fields of battle, and other places” (105). John Aubrey, in his *Miscellanies*, talks about the appearance of “corps-candles” in Wales, which is in itself a derivation of the same tradition of luminescent ghosts or *ignis fatui* referenced by Anna. Aubrey calls them “fiery apparitions” among other things, which is an appropriate description considering Anna’s metaphor:

And candles we call them, not that we see anything besides the light; but because that light doth resemble a material candle-light as eggs do eggs, saving, that in their journey, these candles be *modo apparentes, modo disapparentes*, especially, when one comes near them; and if one come in the way against them, unto whom they vanish; but presently appear behind and hold on their course (165).

The main characteristics of these elusive lights include—as already mentioned—luminescence (often blue) and location near “damp and boggy places” and graves because of “great quantities of flammable gas, mostly methane” that come from decomposing bodies and organisms (Barber 70). These lights had such an alluring effect as to convince people to follow them, which, near a bog, could often be quite dangerous.

The danger of following such ephemeral luminescence is certainly part of Anna's meaning.

Anna's primary meaning, of course, implies Clarissa's susceptibility to the attractive influence of the force called love, powerful enough to overcome even the "wisest people." Anna acknowledges that even the power of intelligence and experience are not sufficient to match the beckoning pull of luminescent desire. Anna does not fault Clarissa completely in being lured by the light of love; the enticements of desire are quite attractive, and Anna's metaphor references this quality. In a similar manner the poet John Clare explains his experience with *ignis fatuus* by describing its ability to deprive him of his usual common sense, saying that it "robd me of the little philosophic reason[in]g which I had" (qtd. in Davies 19), which connects to Anna's reference to the "*wisest people*" being led away by love. On the surface, then, Anna's ghostly comparison carries with it a sense of commiseration, of course, because she claims that anyone would have done the same. Desire is sometimes too powerful, too alluring, to resist.

Unfortunately, the comparison also demonstrates that love and desire essentially form a two-way trap, a snare which brings danger through indulgence and embracing those feelings, as well as through suppression and denial. Calmet's chapter "On Ignis Fatuus, or Will with the Wisp" illustrates the haunting or dogging aspect of *ignis fatuus* in his inclusion of Diodorus Siculus' account of such phenomena. He says, "Some of them seem to be quite at rest, other in motion: they are sometimes known to retire, but generally they pursue those that endeavor to run away from them, surround them, and put them in mortal fear" (105). One can easily see how this characteristic applies to the concept of desire, especially as Clarissa tries to suppress her feelings. The comparison to

*ignis fatuus* reveals just how difficult it can be to diminish those emotions and attachments, for in running away from them, they only tend to follow, haunting the individual to whom they belong. Further, by extending the metaphor of *ignis fatuus* and its appearance near bogs and marshy places, the reader also understands that Anna's metaphor carries with it a dark outlining of the consequences of Clarissa's situation, a reminder of the dangers that come from following after desire. This facet of the metaphor functions as a reminder that Clarissa ought to have listened to Anna in the first place; if she had, Clarissa would not be where she is now: a ruined woman stripped of her virginal pride and imprisoned in a brothel. Lovelace symbolizes, in fact, the bog and the corpse from which that light emanated, and Clarissa has followed the light of her own desire right into a figurative grave.

### **Conclusion**

Metaphors are useful as a way of capturing a great deal of meaning in an image or figurative device. Clarissa and Anna both use the metaphorical ghost in their discourse; although Clarissa's emerges out of momentary anguish, Anna's means a lot more than one might think at first. Whether or not he intended to capture such minutiae, Richardson's inclusion of such ghostly references merely emphasizes his devotion to exposing the seemingly insignificant details of the discourse of the middle-class individual and her perspective on herself and life in general. It also provides a deeper glance into the psyche of Clarissa and her journey to selfhood.

## CHAPTER 5

“I COULD A TALE UNFOLD...”: COMPARING TEXTS  
AND LITERARY GHOSTS IN *CLARISSA*

In the words of Valerie Grosvenor Myer, “That Richardson made fruitful use of the literary allusion is well known; Gillian Beer has charted his use of Milton, Margaret Anne Doody his use of Restoration drama” (127). Richardson also deals in classical drama and biblical allusion to a great extent, because these works were of standard use to theologians and scholars in his time. Since one of Richardson’s main goals in the writing of *Clarissa* is supposedly “instruction,” it makes sense that he would draw on such works in his efforts to teach his audience a thing or two about behavior and the good and bad consequences that can stem from disobedience. However, this chapter will deal with two particular texts to which Richardson alludes in the eerie text that Clarissa writes just after Lovelace rapes her known as Paper X: William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* and John Dryden and Nathaniel Lee’s *Oedipus: A Tragedy*. Both texts deal abundantly with the concepts of ghosts and ghostliness, thus figuring into the discussion of ghosts as a framework or lens for interpreting Richardson’s novel.

In considering these works in conjunction with *Clarissa*, one must ask why Richardson draws on these texts for his novel. Why does his heroine summon from memory these passages when dealing with the sexual violence that Lovelace has enacted upon her? The answer lies in the abundance of ghosts which one finds in both texts and Clarissa’s appropriation of ghostliness as a way to regain control of her existence. She equates sex with death, and following her forced sexual encounter with Lovelace she

metaphorically assumes the habit of ghostly existence in order to reduce the reality of the event and her own materiality.

***Hamlet and Clarissa: "I Could a Tale Unfold..."***

Richardson frequently alludes to Shakespeare in *Clarissa*. Myer claims, "Shakespeare was similarly available to [Richardson] as a great classic written in his own tongue, and more immediately present to him than to ourselves, since ways of thinking and feeling expressed in Shakespeare, though under attack in Richardson's day, were not yet historical curiosities" (127). According to *The London Stage*, *Hamlet* alone, as a stage production, was performed nearly 180 times between 1729 and 1747, so Richardson had ample opportunity to see the play in person. The use of the play *Hamlet* as a scene in the 1749 novel *Tom Jones* certainly speaks to the popularity of that play in London's elite culture during that time (751).

Richardson makes a point of emphasis with Shakespearean content when Lovelace tells his friend Belford, "The lady is well read in Shakespeare, our English pride and glory; and must sometimes reason with herself in his words, so greatly expressed that the subject, affecting as it is, cannot produce anything more so" (Richardson, *Clarissa*, 1148). The practice of reasoning with oneself about something is an interesting one, especially since so much of Richardson's novel bases itself in the struggle for identity and representation; Clarissa's reasoning through words given to her by her studies seems to contradict and undermine her attempts at self-representation and autonomy more than it enhances it merely because she speaks with borrowed words and not her own. While the argument could be made that she has appropriated Shakespeare's words and made



them her own by internalization and self-application, it still seems odd that she should have to rely on words written by another in order to establish her own selfhood. After all, by using Shakespeare as a means of self-expression, she mutes her own unique voice in favor of the bard's. Yet, in Paper X, the tenth document in a collection of papers that Clarissa writes and compiles after her rape, the allusion seems appropriate. Clarissa channels old Hamlet's ghost from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, along with other voices and excerpts, as a way to express and represent herself to her reader, a ghostly indication that Clarissa feels that her selfhood and autonomy have diminished and even died because of her struggle with and forced submission to Lovelace.

In Paper X, most of the quotations that Clarissa provides are arranged according to established printing standards, reading horizontally from left to right. Oddly, however, three of the quotations are arranged differently: all are printed along the margins, though only one (the excerpt from *Oedipus*) stand perfectly vertical, while the other two are slanted, one sloping to the left while the excerpt from *Hamlet* slopes to the right, almost as if it is turning upside-down.

If the position of this particular quotation from *Hamlet* serves as a metaphor for Clarissa's internal state or personal selfhood, it may be that Clarissa in a figurative sense feels her existence and her control over it has been turned on its head. Her "best self" destroyed by Lovelace's designs, everything has flipped 180 degrees, and she sees the world inverted. However, the position of the quote serves only as a visible manifestation of her inward sentiment; the allusion itself—the fact that she quotes the ghost, as if she herself were the ghost—functions as a textual example of Clarissa's self-perception:

*Miss Clarissa Harlowe.* 239

P A P E R X.

**L**EAD me, where my own Thoughts themselves may lose me,  
Where I may doze out what I've left of Life,  
Forget myself; and that day's guilt! —  
Cruel remembrance! . . . how shall I appease thee?

—Oh! you have done an act  
That blots the face and blush of modesty;  
Takes off the rose  
From the fair forehead of an innocent love,  
And makes a blister there! —

Then down I laid my head,  
Down on cold earth, and for a while was dead;  
And my freed Soul to a strange somewhere fled!  
Ah! foolish soul! said I,  
When back to its cage again I saw it fly,  
Fool! to resume her broken chain,  
And row the gally here again!  
Fool! to that body to return,  
Where it condemn'd and destin'd is to mourn.

O my Miss Howe! if thou hast friendship, help me,  
And speak the words of peace to my divided soul,  
That wars within me,  
And raises ev'ry sense to my confusion.  
I'm tottering on the brink  
Of peace; and thou art all the hold I've left!  
Assist me in the pangs of my affliction!

When honour's lost, 'tis a relief to die:  
Death's but a sure retreat from infamy.

Then farewell, youth,  
And all the joys that dwell  
With youth and life!  
And life itself, farewell!

For life can never be sincerely blest.  
Heaven punishes the *Bad*, and proves the *Best*.

Death only can be dreadful to the bad:  
To innocence 'tis like a bugbear dress'd  
To frighten children. Pull but off the mask  
And he'll appear a friend.

I could a tale unfold—  
Would harrow up thy soul!—

By swift misfortunes  
How am I punish'd!  
How am I punish'd!  
Which on each other are,  
Which on each other are,  
Which on each other are,  
Which on each other are,

as far as she is concerned, she has figuratively gone from living to dead, becoming a ghostly apparition or version of herself who no longer belongs to the world she inhabits.

Clarissa's channeling of the ghost in *Hamlet* also carries interesting religious implications. She quotes the lines, "I could a tale unfold.../ would harrow up thy soul" which come from Act I, Scene 5 of *Hamlet*, when old Hamlet is relating to his son about his "foul and unnatural murder" and "the secrets of the prison house," which probably refers to the Catholic notion of Purgatory. If, as Kibbie remarks, "Clarissa...has, in effect, been dead all along, a ghost haunting her own story" (126), then it makes sense that she would feel a kinship to the ghost of Hamlet's father, not simply because she feels ghostly, but also because her imprisonment in the Harlowe house and the Sinclair house has functioned as a type of Purgatory as far as Clarissa is concerned. Further, by donning the identity of Hamlet's ghost, Clarissa indicates that she wants precisely what the ghost wants: vengeance, remembrance, escape, and—especially—a second chance at salvation.

### **Clarissa and the Intermediary State**

It seems clear, in a remark made by Clarissa to Belford that she considers herself to be in just such a middle state following the rape. Belford comments in a letter to Lovelace, "I told her I was sorry to hear she had been so ill since I had the honour to attend her; but rejoiced to find that now she seemed a good deal better" (Richardson, *Clarissa*, 1273). He also writes Clarissa's reply to his remark: "It will be sometimes better and sometimes worse, replied she, with poor creatures when they are balancing *between life and death* (1273; italics added). The idea of the middle state probably comes in part from Jeremy Taylor's *The Rules and Exercises of Holy Dying*, which text refers to

old age as a “middle-state between Life and Death-bed” (5). However, the concept also connects to the Catholic idea of Purgatory (which the Anglican Church retained), a middle place set aside for the purgation of souls preparatory to entering Paradise.

Clarissa’s dependence on texts like Taylor’s as a way to prepare her soul for entrance into her “father’s house” indicate that she sees her current life as a type of study-time in which to meditate and free herself from the persecutions and afflictions of the flesh. Like John Donne, she sees herself as one who possesses, not a “perfect heart” nor a “[heart] that burns like an oven,” but rather “a middle kind of [heart], not so perfect as to be given but that the very giving mends them; not so desperate as not to be accepted but that the very accepting dignifies them. This is a melting heart, and a troubled heart, and a wounded heart, and a broken heart, and a contrite heart” (qtd. in Greenblatt 42). The use of Purgatory as a metaphor for Clarissa’s notions about her physical state makes sense since Purgatory itself is an intermediary location, a place where Clarissa, like the ghost of old Hamlet, can receive purification from sin and prepare for salvation and eternal bliss.

According to some historians, the belief in Purgatory has its roots in Judaistic practices concerning the care and remembrance of the dead. However, critic Jacques Le Goff disagrees, saying in an interview he gave with Annamaria de Simone, “È convinzione diffusa che il Purgatorio sia sempre esistito, ma non è affatto così” [It is a prevalent notion that Purgatory has always existed, but it simply isn’t true]<sup>9</sup> (“L’invenzione del Purgatorio”). He goes on to say,

“Esso ha preso forma nella seconda metà del XII secolo. In precedenza, pensando all’aldilà, gli uomini immaginavano solo due luoghi antagonisti,

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<sup>9</sup> Author’s translation.

l’Inferno e il Paradiso. A poco a poco, ha poi iniziato a delinearsi una realtà intermedia, la cui funzione era quella di consentire la purificazione delle anime prima dell’ingresso nel Paradiso” [it (Purgatory) came about in the second half of the twelfth century (C.E.). Before that, when people thought of the afterlife, they imagined only two directly opposed destinations: Hell and Paradise. Gradually, an intermediate state began to emerge whose function consisted in purifying souls before their entrance into Paradise].<sup>10</sup> (“L’invenzione del Purgatorio”)

Perhaps the most famous depiction of Purgatory comes from Dante’s *La Divina Commedia*, although many other medieval writers and artists made Purgatory a key trope in their religious writings. In Canto IV of *Purgatorio*, Dante asks Virgil,

Ma se a te piace, volontier saprei  
 Quanto avemo ad andar; chè’l poggio sale  
 Più che salir non posson li occhi miei  
 [If you please, I’d like to know  
 How far we have to go; the incline ascends  
 Faster than my eyes can].<sup>11</sup> (Alighieri 331)

Virgil replies,

Questa montagna è tale,  
 Che sempre al cominciar di sotto è grave;  
 E quant’uom più va su, e men fa male”

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<sup>10</sup> Author’s translation.

<sup>11</sup> Author’s translation.

[This mountain is such /  
 That the beginning is always hard; /  
 But the more one climbs, the less it hurts].<sup>12</sup> (Alighieri 331)

This exchange, in a nutshell, is the crux of belief in Purgatory: it is a location that promises ascension and gradual relief through spiritual trial and hardship.

The ghost of Old Hamlet speaks of this purgatorial turmoil when he announces his identity to his son, saying,

I am thy father's spirit,  
 Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night,  
 And for the day confined to fast in fires,  
 Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature  
 Are burnt and purged away. But that I am forbid  
 To tell the secrets of my prison-house,  
 I could a tale unfold whose lightest word  
 Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,  
 Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres,  
 Thy knotted and combined locks to part  
 And each particular hair to stand on end,  
 Like quills on the fretful porpentine:  
 But this eternal blazon must not be  
 To ears of flesh and blood. (*Hamlet*, I.V.9-22)

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<sup>12</sup> Author's translation.

Clarissa does not rely on the metaphor of Purgatory as a place of burning torments, or as Le Goff calls it, “fuoco purgatorio” [purging fire] (“Invenzione del Purgatorio”), but the figurative idea of Purgatory as the “prison-house” is one she certainly would relate to in light of her captivities in her own home and in the Sinclairs’ house. It even proves to be something of a narrative foreshadowing as the Sinclairs’ have her arrested on false charges and thrown into an actual prison, where she stays until Belford rescues her. Clarissa desires to escape the prison that Lovelace has created for her, but in light of her affinity to death it seems she also regards life itself as a type of prison from which she seeks escape. The sentiment smacks of Hamlet’s discussion with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern on their arrival in Denmark:

*Ham.* Let me question more in  
particular: what have you, my good friends,  
deserved at the hands of fortune that she  
should send you to prison hither?

*Guil.* Prison, my lord?

*Ham.* Denmark’s a prison.

*Ros.* Then is the world one.

*Ham.* A goodly one; in which there are

Many confines, wards, and dungeons....

To me it is a prison. (II.II.243-252, 257)

The idea of fire and the prison-house are parts of the Purgatorial metaphor meant exclusively for the purification of the person confined in it. The ghost of Hamlet expresses not only a desire to escape the prison-house (which escape would signify a

readiness for the eternal blisses of heaven), but also a need for revenge and remembrance. If one follows the analogy, Clarissa also desires revenge and benefit of memory, although she does eventually give up her desire for vengeance against Lovelace.

The ghost tells Hamlet about his “foul and most unnatural murder” in order to spur the young man into action (I.V.25), and it may be that Clarissa is hinting at the same thing. From her living death, her intermediary position as the ghost of a murdered virgin, she calls out for retaliation in her behalf. Lovelace has wounded and killed her figuratively, and she desires that justice be done in her behalf. While Clarissa’s thirst for vengeance against her assailant is out of character for her, her circumstances have temporarily endowed her with a need for retaliation as a way to work through her trauma. In fact, this may be another reason why she relies on Shakespeare’s words instead of her own to express her inner feelings: Lovelace’s assault has robbed her of what she feels is her voice and true identity, including her desire to co-exist peacefully with those around her. Thus, she uses the words of another because her sense of self has been temporarily extinguished. However, she gains control of her situation and moves on, desiring entrance to her “father’s house” rather than revisit the rape and gain supremacy over her attacker. One might argue that the reason she chooses not to pursue legal action against Lovelace is not actually because she chooses mercy over justice for the rake, but she rather recognizes, as Lovelace does, the difficulty of carrying out such a prosecution. Rita Goldberg claims that “Lovelace...knows that [Clarissa] will never bring suit against him” (99), and [he] is of course justified in his confidence that the law—the law of the land—would be on his side” (100). While it is certainly true that Clarissa is probably aware that “in the eighteenth century...it is the victim who is on trial when an accusation of rape is



brought before a court of law” (Goldberg 100), and for that reason she, as she always has, makes “the Law her refuge” (meaning the law of God), the point remains that she does not, as the ghost does, continue in its purpose of carrying out justice against her betrayer. Instead of retaining a sense of hurt and need for retribution, she renounces her claim to justice and continues to her journey toward personal salvation and the reconstruction.

### **Remembering Clarissa**

As the final piece in the Purgatory puzzle, Clarissa also has the desire for remembrance, in keeping with the final words of old Hamlet’s ghost in Act I: “Adieu, adieu! Hamlet, remember me” (Act I.V.91). Clarissa says,

But when I am no more, I charge you, as soon as you can, the smarting pangs of grief that will attend a recent loss; and let all be early turned into that sweetly melancholy regard to MEMORY, which, engaging us to forget all faults, and to remember nothing but what was thought amiable, gives more pleasure than pain to survivors--especially if they can comfort themselves with the humble hope, that the Divine mercy has taken the dear departed to itself. (1201)

This expressed desire for remembrance connects well with the doctrine of Purgatory in that it promoted a sentiment of unification between the living and the dead. According to Keith Thomas, “The doctrine of Purgatory gave impressive reinforcement to the notion of society as a community uniting the dead and the living” (603). In Clarissa’s case, she desires to be remembered by her family because she loves them, despite their ill-treatment of her, and wishes them to think better of her than they do, especially her

father, who has placed a curse on her that is meant to endure to the life beyond. Her desire to be remembered is a subtle request for the removal of that curse and the unification of a family divided.

In a way, though, Clarissa's wish for remembrance also combines well with Richardson's purpose for the novel, that it be an instrument of instruction. If the readership also remembers Clarissa and what she suffers, her penitence for whatever wrong she may have committed, and her desire for salvation, she serves an inspiring example of the way of the Christian saint or any Christian interested in eventual salvation. Purgatory is not the point, and neither is the ghost. Both are simply metaphors for discussing the need to remember the lost, the imprisoned, and the dead, for everyone who participates in life belongs to one or more of these categories.

### **Clarissa and *Oedipus*: Haunting Hands, Feet, and Bugbears**

At three separate instances in *Clarissa*, Richardson quotes excerpts from Nathaniel Lee's and John Dryden's play *Oedipus: A Tragedy*, a seventeenth-century adaptation of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*. The play itself, being only slightly less popular than *Hamlet*, did have a few performances during the early to mid-eighteenth century (according to *The London Stage*, *Oedipus* played 21 times between 1729 and 1747), so Richardson probably also had the opportunity to see the play if he so chose. Twice Clarissa herself quotes lines from the play, the first time from the character Oedipus, and the second time from Euridice, the daughter of Oedipus and Jocasta. The third time Richardson alludes to *Oedipus* occurs at the death-scene of Belton, one of

Lovelace's rake-friends, when Mowbray, another friend, reads a passage (Oedipus' own lines) to his dying friend.

*Oedipus* deals very much with the idea of identity and selfhood, as is evidenced in the preface to the 1741 edition of the play: "To a modern, the whole play is founded on an ideal of criminality—for we consider the heart as indispensably necessary to constitute either crime or merit; and no more affix the imputation of guilt to unconscious offence, that we do of virtue to unintended good" (vi). In other words, actions tell us nothing of what or who a person really is unless we know their desires and intent in performing the action. In *Oedipus*, the figure of the ghost (particularly the dead Laius) becomes the revealer of the inner self; the other characters seem to know almost nothing about themselves until the ghost unwillingly spills their secrets. Once confronted with the "truth" about themselves, we may see them as they truly are. The "truth" which hangs over and permeates the action comes out at last only when Tiresias, like the infamous witch of Endor, conjures the ghost of the murdered king, Laius, the father of Oedipus and the former husband of Jocasta. The appearance of the text in the play is intriguing because it fits in neither the "polite" nor in the "realistic" categories of literary productions. Richardson probably includes excerpts from this text because the mythological structure of the Oedipus narrative so closely mirrors that of his novel. In a way, Clarissa is both Euridice and Oedipus, Euridice because she is an oppressed woman haunted by a man (Creon) who desires her for gain, and Oedipus because she is condemned by fate to suffer despite good intentions. Euridice also loves a man, Adrastus, who is a brave warrior but also a hothead (Lovelace is very much a mixture of Creon and Adrastus because he is simultaneously repulsive and attractive).

The first time Clarissa quotes from the ghostly text of *Oedipus: A Tragedy*, she does so in a letter sent to Anna (Letter 174) from the Sinclairs' house of ill-repute. The quotation, of course, is taken from memory and is misquoted somewhat. In *Clarissa*, the quotation is from Oedipus himself when he is beginning to suspect his role in the curse and its effects which plague his country, Thebes. Jocasta tries to convince him that he did not murder her husband, Laius, but rather avenged his death when he killed a group of men before entering Thebes and becoming her ruler. Clarissa quotes Oedipus' reply as

To you, great gods! I make my last appeal:  
 Or clear my virtues, or my crimes reveal.  
 If wandering in the maze of life I run,  
 And backward tread the steps I sought to shun,  
 Impute my errors to your own decree;  
 My FEET are guilty; but my HEART is free. (568)

However, the original Dryden and Lee text reads thus:

To you, good gods, I make my last appeal;  
 Or clear my virtue, or my crime reveal.  
 If wandering in the maze of fate I run  
 And backward trod the steps I sought to shun,  
 Impute my errors to my own decree;  
 My hands are guilty, but my heart is free. (*Oedipus*, Act III)

The slight misquotations, such as changes from singular to plural ("crime" to "crimes"), changes in degree ("good" to "great"), changes in tense ("trod" to "tread"), and changes in synonyms ("fate" to "life") throughout Clarissa's recitation may be chalked up to

Richardson's either poor memory himself or his dedication to a realistic recitation. Ordinarily, a memorized passage might carry such slight errors without changing the overarching meaning of the passage. However, one glaring difference between the two pieces does call the reader's attention: the change from "hands" to "feet." Clarissa does retain the phrase "my heart is free" because she must acknowledge that her intentions and desires have always been pure. However, by changing "hands" to "feet" she declares that even her actions have been above blemish.

According to J.E. Cirlot, hands and feet are not that different symbolically: both represent symbols of support to the body (111). However, the connotation conveyed in the change from "hand" to "foot" does provide a clue into Clarissa's personality. Chevalier says that "the hand expresses ideas of action, as well as those of power and dominion" (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 466), while feet are symbols "not simply of power, but of coming and going" or movement (399). Thus, whereas the use of hands would symbolize that Clarissa is ultimately responsible for having done something of which to be "guilty," changing the word to "feet" indicates that she sees nothing at all wrong with her conduct; rather, she is only guilty of trying to live, running through "the maze of life" (568). Consequently, the reason for the oppression which haunts her wandering is only made more ghostly because, unlike Oedipus' situation, Clarissa has no mystery to solve, no ghost to raise, and no way to find the resolution to her problem, because there *is* no answer, no reason for the assault which dogs her from every side. The law of causes and effects is, to Clarissa, broken, and she is haunted by a cause that to her cannot and should not exist.

In Paper X, Clarissa continues the recitation of *Oedipus*, although this time she draws on the words of Euridice, who is fending off the advances of the suitor Creon, whom Euridice describes as “hunch-back’d.” Clarissa quotes,

Death can only be dreadful to the bad:  
 To innocence ‘tis like a bugbear dress’d  
 To frighten children. Pull but off the mask  
 And he’ll appear a friend. (Richardson, *Clarissa*, 893)

Unlike the previous quotation, Richardson has taken the passage verbatim (with a punctuation change) from the original text. However, the passage is significant because it appears in Clarissa’s Paper X and that she seems to be channeling Euridice. Like Euridice, Clarissa is being pursued by a suitor, whom she knows she must resist. Unlike Creon, though, her suitor is a man who is externally attractive and proficient in combat (like Adrastus, Euridice’s lover). However, he is like Creon in that he is *morally repulsive*, and therefore she must fight off his advances as well as she can. At this point, however, Clarissa has been physically violated already, and she brings up this quotation not only because she must continue to resist Lovelace (as Euridice does Creon), but also because she is currently thinking about the figurative death she has undergone (as has been discussed earlier) and the physical death she must still undergo. Significantly, she uses the term *bugbear*, a haunting or spectral influence/ hobgoblin figure used traditionally to symbolize dread (especially for little children), as a metaphor for death. The word for *bug* in *bugbear* is potentially derived from the Middle Welsh root word *bwg* meaning “ghost” (“Bug,” *Oxford English Dictionary Online*). This reference a goblin/ghost figure is also significant because it refers back to her childish notions of the

goblins and specters of the “haunted coppice” as the locus of her selfhood and dwelling place of the object of her desire. Now her desire has shifted from Lovelace to death, both of whom have a tendency of going about in disguise. In light of the trauma she has suffered and the enduring captivity she has received, she looks to death as a friend (a ghostly friend, but a friend nevertheless), despite its unknown terrors. Anything, even death, is better than the prison house (the Sinclairs’ house and Lovelace’s clutches) if it gives her the chance of release and relief. Thus, this excerpt is really a kind of comfort to Clarissa because, rather than dwelling on the terrors of the prison house, as the excerpt from *Hamlet* might allude to, it at least points out that her stay in captivity will have an eventual end.

All of that aside, though, while Clarissa at one time or another identifies with Oedipus and Euridice, in relation to ghost and its revelation, it makes no difference which of the *Oedipus* characters Clarissa mirrors most, as both are drastically affected by the secret which haunts Thebes and its royal family: 1) because of the discovery of their sexual taboo (Oedipus is in bed with his mother, but Euridice must cope with the shame of being the fruit of the unblessed union of her father/brother and mother/grandmother), and 2) because the horrifying consequences were unintentional, giving one the idea that no one and nothing is actually in control but fate. In the time of literary figures like Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe and Moll Flanders, who seem able to adapt to any kind of situation and make something of it, the realization of one’s true impotence in the face of destiny would come as a great shock, but indeed that is exactly the realization that Clarissa comes to following her rape. This is the real “truth” that the ghost reveals to

Tiresias: people are insignificant and much of the time not in control of their own existence.

**“Babbling Ghosts”: Mowbray Reads *Oedipus***

The final excerpt from *Oedipus: A Tragedy* comes at the bedside of Belton, one of Belford and Lovelace’s rake-friends, who has suffered a mortal wound in a duel (a foreshadowing of Lovelace’s future demise). Mowbray finds a passage in Lee’s and Dryden’s play that he thinks will “give courage to the dying man,” expecting “praises for finding this out” (Richardson, *Clarissa*, 1228). Belford remarks, “’Tis poetical and pretty. This is it.”

When the *sun sets*, shadows that show’d at *noon*  
 But small, appear most long and terrible:  
 So when we think fate hovers o’er our heads,  
 Our apprehensions shoot beyond all bounds:  
     Owls, ravens, crickets seem the watch of death  
 Nature’s worst vermin scare her god-like sons.  
 Echoes, the very leavings of a voice,  
 Grow babbling ghosts, and call us to our graves.  
 Each mole-hill thought swells to a huge Olympus;  
 While we, fantastic dreamers, heave and puff,  
 And sweat with our imaginations weight. (1228)



In the play Oedipus speaks these lines upon hearing for the third time the words of the ghost who calls his name, “Oedipus!” He feels and knows the effects of the ghost, but he does not yet know the secret behind the haunting.

Mowbray’s purpose in sharing the ghostly quotation is to allay his friend’s fears about dying. However, he does not understand the context of the literature he reads or else he would realize the extremities to which he will put his friend, who is already weighed down by his sins and the idea of leaving the world unprepared to face the next. *Oedipus: A Tragedy* is a play all about justice and balance restored, even when the individuals do not understand the consequences or ramifications of their actions, which is exactly what Belton must face when he dies. Consequently, rather than providing a comfort to the dying man, the “poetical” and “pretty” passage only reiterates Belton’s burden and fear of facing death. He says, “Ah Dick!...these are not the reflections of a dying man! What thou wilt one day feel, if it be what I now feel, will convince thee that the evils *before* thee, and *with* thee, are more than the effects of the imagination” (1228). Significantly, the subject of the passage is death, just as it is in the passage that Clarissa writes down in Paper X; further, the verse incorporates “owls” and “ravens,” another allusion back to the haunted coppice, as if Richardson is using the literary similarities to emphasize the connection between the rake Belton (as representative of all sinful people) and the chaste Clarissa, even in their contemplations of death.

However, the literary allusions also foreshadow the connection between their eventual experiences with death itself. Belford describes his friend’s “dying agonies,” saying, “To hear the poor man wish he had never been born! To hear him pray to be

nothing after death! Good God! How shocking!” He later describes his friend’s last minutes:

He is now at the last gasp—rattles in his throat: has a new convulsion every minute almost. What horror is he in! His eyes look like breath-stained glass! They roll ghastly no more; are quite set: his face distorted and drawn out by his sinking and erected staring eyebrows, with his lengthened furrowed forehead, to double its usual length as it seems. It is not, it cannot be, the face of Belton, thy Belton, and my Belton. (1242)

The shocking scene, however, pales in comparison to the death of Mrs. Sinclair, whose cries Richardson compares to a “wolf” and a “bull” (1387). When Belford mentions the word *die* to her, she responds desperately,

*Die*, did you say, sir?—*die!*—I *will not*, I *cannot* die!—I know not *how* to die!—*Die*, sir!—And *must* I then die!—leave this world!—I cannot bear it!—And who brought *you* hither, sir..., who brought you hither to tell me I must *die*, sir?—I cannot, I will not leave this world. Let others die who wish for another! who expect a better!—I have had my plagues in this; but would compound for all future hopes, so as I may be nothing after this! (1389)

The connection between the two dying individuals exists in their unrest at the thought of finding something else after this life, when neither has done anything to prepare for it. Mrs. Sinclair’s comment about not knowing how to die is significant because, by comparison, Clarissa spends much time before her death reading, meditating, and studying the correct way to depart this life, courtesy of Jeremy Taylor’s volume *Holy*

*Dying.* Consequently, Clarissa's death scene stands in stark contrast to the deaths of these two wicked people, Belton and Mrs. Sinclair, simply because she has pondered death and prepared for it, and her death-bed scene conveys the sense of peace that one receives if one has prepared dutifully for passing. Belford describes her death thus:

Then turning her head towards me—Do *you*, sir, tell your friend that I forgive him! And I pray to God to forgive him!—Again pausing, and lifting up her eyes as if praying that He would—Let him know how happily I die—And that such as my own, I wish to be his last hour...Bless—bless—bless—you all—and now—and now (holding up her almost lifeless hands for the last time)—come—Oh come—blessed Lord—JESUS!

And with these words, the last but half-pronounced, expired: such a smile, such a charming serenity overspreading her sweet face at the instant as seemed to manifest her eternal happiness already begun. (1362)

Critics, and Richardson himself, have firmly established the instructive connections between these death scenes. Richardson creates a contrast between them in their deaths, showing that death holds no terror for those who are prepared, while the wicked fear it as Belton and Mrs. Sinclair do. Consequently, the ghostly excerpts from *Oedipus* only tighten that connection. In this moment of triumph, unlike Belton and Sinclair who shy away from the bugbear's mask, Clarissa rips the mask from death's face and embraces it as a friend. She believes truly in the salvation she has sought and the release that death provides. Her confinement in the earthly prison ended, she rests in Jesus.

## Conclusion

The preceding explication of literary allusions at work in *Clarissa* is a mere sampling of the host of allusions Richardson employs in the novel. He draws from many different works throughout the novel; however, the ones explained here have everything to do with Richardson's use of the ghost image in *Clarissa*. Both *Hamlet* and *Oedipus* possess ghost-figures and ghost references at an enormously high concentration. In both cases, it is the responsibility of the ghost to inform the living characters in the play about who they really are and what they have done. Because of the ghost's visitation, Hamlet learns of his uncle's treachery and suddenly becomes himself capable of enacting a complicated revenge. In *Oedipus*, Oedipus and Euridice both learn of their true origins and their current condition, along with the startling discovery that neither one is as in control of themselves as they thought. Thus, the ghost empowers one, while castrating others, but either way it comes to convey the truth of the inner self. Richardson uses these texts as a literary backdrop for his heroine and her quest and desire to receive sanctification and stable identity.

## CHAPTER 6

## “TAKE HER AWAY”: SUICIDE, SPIRITS, AND POST-MORTEM APPEARANCES

At the end of *Clarissa*, Lovelace dies in a duel at the hands of Colonel Morden, the cousin of Clarissa Harlowe. As his life slips away, Lovelace cries out in a feverish state, in the words of F. J. De la Tour, “*as if he had seen some frightful spectre, Take her away! Take her away! but named nobody*” (1487). Lovelace speaks to this unseen other (whom De la Tour feels to be Clarissa) three more times, then he dies. Richardson, in a letter to his friend Edward Moore, discusses the content of this dramatic scene, acknowledging that readers may interpret it as a real ghostly appearance, although, Richardson claims, “I had not intended any body but Lovelace shou’d see it...I leave it to the Reader to suppose it the ghost of Miss Betterton, of his French Countess, or of whom he pleases, or to attribute it to [Lovelace’s] delirium for the sake of...probability” (*Letters*, 121). Richardson’s indifference to the interpretation of this scene is strange considering his frequently problematic self-insertions (footnotes, textual additions, etc.) which are intended to wrest control of the text from the reader for the sake of instruction and control. It raises the question as to the true identity and existence of the apparition, as well as its function, which questions Richardson willingly lets alone. Jeremy Taylor’s passage on the death of the wicked, namely that they are prone to “see affrighting Shapes” on their death-beds (56) might suggest that the apparition is a hallucination, the text does provide enough evidence to suggest that the textual existence of the “apparition” and its appearance not only can be substantiated by folkloric narrative regarding the ghosts of suicides (for Clarissa is a suicide, according to Rita Goldberg),

but also by the similarities between *Clarissa* and a small poetic work called “The Fair Suicide” written anonymously in 1733. Clarissa does appear to Lovelace because he is possessed by her memory, and her appearance in its way becomes one more example of the manner in which the ghost speaks of the creation and maintenance of the self, only this time Clarissa has achieved a more lasting and transcendent essence.

### **Clarissa’s Infatuation with Death**

Clarissa’s demise near the end of the novel met with a great deal of criticism from Richardson’s readership, including some of his closest friends and literary confidantes. Lady Bradsaigh sent a note to Richardson, requesting that he allow the heroine to survive. Richardson “replied by telling Bradsaigh that Clarissa must die ‘for the sake of the example to be given by it,’ [and] she responded by asking him not to send the final volumes, observing that ‘our hearts are not much alike’” (Budd 1). Obviously, Richardson felt that more could be gained from the example of a woman who endures tribulation and triumphs over it (even in death) than from a woman who consents to marry the man responsible for persecuting and violating her.<sup>13</sup> Further, the final passing of the heroine makes sense because what we know of her personality and special affinity for death.

Clarissa’s consistent references to her own death indicate a romanticized notion of death and an almost wishful attitude regarding it. On several occasions, when her parents bring up the idea of marriage to Mr. Solmes, she states, in person and through her maid

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<sup>13</sup> Lady Bradsaigh liked and sympathized with Lovelace, ultimately hoping that he and Clarissa would find a way to be together a la the marriage of Pamela and Mr. B in Richardson’s *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded*.

Betty, that she would rather die than have the man: “If I *must* speak briefly,” says Betty, “miss will sooner die, than have—” (Richardson, *Clarissa*, 180). “I will never be that Solmes’ wife—I will die first—,” Clarissa says to Anna in a later letter (191). “Could I have been sure of being struck dead at the altar before the ceremony had given the man I hate a title to my vows, I think I could have submitted to it” (190). In a letter to her brother James, she remarks that she could no better defend herself against his attacks than if she were dead. When Lovelace surprises the family in church, she immediately begins to think of what his appearance portends: “If he come hither..., I am afraid there will be murder. To avoid that, if there were no other way, I would most willingly be buried alive” (142). Clarissa also relates in a letter to Anna a close encounter with death during a “dangerous fever, some time ago”: I engaged my mama to promise me, that, if I died before I could do anything for [Mrs. Norton], she would set her above want for the rest of her life” (181). While that particular story solidifies the reader’s good opinion of Clarissa, it also begs the question as to why Clarissa chooses to dwell so frequently on her own eventual death. Cynthia Griffin Wolff claims that even “in the infernal world of Mrs. Sinclair’s brothel, exiled from all that has been meaningful and confronted on all sides with the terrifying power of her own passions, Clarissa is more than half in love with death” (157). Clarissa’s repeated references to April 10, the day Lovelace takes her away from the Harlowe mansion, as the “fatal day” only confirm what Kibbie calls her “already posthumous nature” (127); even before Lovelace rapes her, Clarissa sees herself as already dead.

As the result of Lovelace’s rape, Clarissa undergoes what Jolene Zigarovich refers to as “sex-in-death” (112), the physical death of the virgin self and identity. Wolff also

explains, “Clarissa’s identification of death with sexuality has been consistent throughout the novel, but here [in the penknife scene] death takes on added meaning. It becomes not just the final physical violation but the loss of that very self which letter-diary and the struggles recorded in it had been designed to preserve” (153). This figurative death through renders ironic Lovelace’s letter to Belford just after the rape, in which the rake says, “And now, Belford, I can go no farther. The affair is over. Clarissa lives” (883). In her own eyes, the Clarissa as she was once exists no longer, regardless of what Lovelace believes.

Regardless, Zigarovich’s explanation of Clarissa’s experience with “sex-in-death” is merely a theoretical and metaphorical method of talking about Clarissa’s loss of identity at the time. If the reader accepts such a statement on the literal level, the reader must inevitably come to the conclusion that Lovelace—and Lovelace alone—is responsible for Clarissa’s physical death, which is simply not the case. While Lovelace is responsible for raping Clarissa, which results in a great deal of trauma and Clarissa’s temporary loss of identity as the virgin self, her death ultimately comes not because of sex, but because of starvation. Goldberg states, “However Clarissa may protest on the subject, it is quite clear that the *physical* cause of her death is starvation. Belford calls her a ‘lovely skeleton’ (IV, 154) when he sees her in his last days” (124). Thus, even as she prepares for death, it seems her very preparation is ultimately the main cause of the death for which she is preparing.

One reason for Clarissa’s rejection of physical sustenance may come from Jeremy Taylor’s *Holy Dying*: “For as the hypochondriack Person that thought himself dead, because dead People eat not; so do despairing Persons lose God’s Mercies by refusing to



use and to believe them” (229). Clarissa, thinking herself to be figuratively dead already, may be just such a hypochondriac and refuses to eat simply because she regards herself as dead to her family, her society and its expectations, and herself. Taylor’s volume also emphasizes the need for suppressing physical appetites. Clarissa follows Taylor’s advice and suppresses her need to eat, just as she suppresses her need for physical intimacy and passion. Taylor is against suicide and desiring death, as he says,

*Let not the smart of your Sickness make you call violently for Death: You are not patient unless you are content to live....Stir not from thy station till thou be’st call’d off; but abide so, that Death may come to thee by the design of him who intends it to be to thy Advantage. (128)*

Ironically, though, it seems that Taylor’s words, coupled with Clarissa’s incessant *thanatos*, provoke the heroine to suicide. Thus, Clarissa’s death or suicide, as it seems, equates to the strivings of an individual who set out too soon and worked too diligently to arrive at her “father’s house.” She longs for the spiritual and to be rid of the physical, as reflected in her complaint in Letter 436, “How this body clings!—How it encumbers!” (1265).

Clarissa belongs to a literary tradition of female suicides, and, as in the case of her Shakespearean predecessor Ophelia, the reaction to her death from the novel’s other characters reflects a then-current cultural attitude towards self-murder. The clowns who dig Ophelia’s grave complain about a suicide receiving Christian burial because she drowned herself, as the first clown puts it, “wittingly.” He says, “If this has not been a gentlewoman, she should have been buried out o’ Christian burial” (V.i.11, 26-27). This attitude of judgment and condemnation for suicide accurately represents the cultural

attitudes that existed in Shakespeare's time and well beyond it. While the Christian religions today possess a more lenient and understanding viewpoint on suicide,<sup>14</sup> the religious leaders during the Middle Ages were more severe and judgmental in such situations. Dante's Canto 13 conveys this sense of medieval severity with his depiction of "l'orrida selva de' suicidi" [the horrid forest of suicides]<sup>15</sup> in the Inferno's seventh circle (87), where "le brutte Arpie lor nidi fanno, / che cacciar delle Strofade i Troiani / con tristo annunzio di future danno" [the brutal Harpies, who the Trojans hunted from the Strophades in a sad foreshadowing of future straits, build their nests]<sup>16</sup> (88), and the suicides themselves are preserved as trees who bleed at the breaking of a limb or twig.

Clarissa's suicide, on the other hand, receives almost no notice—let alone judgment—by the other characters in the novel; they mourn her passing faithfully, but without calling attention to its "real" cause or laying blame for it on Clarissa herself. This lack of notice may be due in large part to the transformation of the common prejudices against suicide because of the social and secular influence of the popular press. What had traditionally had been abhorred (suicide) because of the religious and legalistic implications associated with killing oneself in large part came to be tolerated: "In the century and a half following the English Revolution, secular and tolerant views of self-killing gradually became fashionable among upper- and middle-class laymen" (M.

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<sup>14</sup> Catechism 2283 of the Catholic Church illustrates a more generous attitude in the cases of suicide, saying, "We should not despair of the eternal salvation of persons who have taken their own lives. By ways known to him alone, God can provide the opportunity for salutary repentance. The Church prays for persons who have taken their lives."

<sup>15</sup> Author's translation.

<sup>16</sup> Author's translation.

Macdonald 41). However, not everybody was willing to change from the traditional viewpoint on the sin of self-murder, and they remained vibrant among “some groups, notably the nonconformist clergy, evangelicals, and Methodists, and they also remained strong among the lower classes—although just how strong, we cannot know” (M. Macdonald 41). Regardless, the act of suicide, because of the popular press, became more of a public and even literary event: instead of simply relegating the bodies of self-murderers to a crossroads burial with a stake through their hearts, their accounts were placed in pamphlets and newspapers for the pleasure of the subscribers.

Granted, the practice was still discouraged in publications like *The Humourist* and W. Withers’s pamphlet “Thoughts concerning Suicide, or Self-Killing,” but Richardson’s exclusion of judgmental references to suicide in *Clarissa* may stem from the popular trend to “tolerate,” sympathize with, or at worst dismiss rather than condemn and pass judgment on the act and its perpetrator. The greater question, however, comes not as a query on what his influences were for writing about a rape victim who potentially starves herself to death because of diligently observing harsh ascetic practices; the answer seems obvious enough given publishing trends in the eighteenth century, of which Richardson, being a master printer, would certainly have been aware. The question is, how does the act of suicide connect to ghosts and the formation of stable, autonomous, and transcendent selfhood?

Wolff explores the textual implications of Clarissa’s suicide by suggesting that the action of self-killing equates to Clarissa’s need to re-establish an identity or acquire a new self after Lovelace has taken the girl’s physical virginity. Wolff says, “In death Clarissa finally finds the identity which she was denied at the beginning of the

novel....She has triumphed over those who would rob her of her self, by fashioning a new self whose lifetime is forever” (164). Interestingly, Wolff does not mention either the later “appearance” of Clarissa’s “spectre” to Lovelace or any of the folkloric background behind Clarissa’s death and burial, which essentially confirm Wolff’s argument. Richardson’s inclusion of a suicidal heroine indeed functions to highlight Clarissa as an autonomous and enduring self “whose lifetime is forever.” Further, exploring these folkloric motifs enhances the likelihood that Clarissa is actually a ghost, as well as set up that final “encounter” between Lovelace and Clarissa as a meeting between the earthbound man and the spiritual or ghostly woman who has transcended the physical as she always desired.

### **Ghosts of Suicides: Apotropaics and Unfinished Business**

According to Michael Macdonald, ghosts became less and less important in published accounts of suicide in the eighteenth century (40). Clarissa’s appearance as a ghost, then, becomes even more interesting because of that fact. Even if the changing perspectives and accounts of suicides in the eighteenth century began to disintegrate the link between suicides and ghosts, they still go hand in hand. Clarissa’s ghostly appearance may stem from two points of origin in connection to her suicide, both of which have to do with leaving things undone: 1) the funerary rites were not carried out according to traditional practices and burial rituals, and 2) Clarissa’s ghost had unfinished business with Lovelace. This section will investigate both of these folkloric traditions in reference to Clarissa. The tradition of suicides appearing as ghost was firmly established by Richardson’s time period, which is why so many pre-emptive regulations were placed

on their burials. Keith Thomas supplies the account of a man named Robert Tooley, who dispatched the ghosts of suicides on behalf of those they troubled by driving stakes through the corpses as they laid in their graves. The matter proved to be a hoax by which Tooley made a great deal of money (twenty shillings apiece). Thomas says, “The case reveals both the ingenuity of the rogue Tooley and the survival of the notion that the ghost of a man who killed himself would not rest quietly until a stake was driven through the corpse’s heart” (595). In fact, Thomas goes on to say, “This was indeed the legally required method of burial for suicides until 1823” (595). Remnants of this belief and practice also appear in *Tom Jones* (Mrs. Honour and Sophia’s discussion about suicide and farmer Halfpenny), and Owen Davies further confirms its existence in eighteenth-century England (51). Paul Barber provides an account from 1591 (“The Shoemaker of Breslau”) that includes the ghost of shoemaker who slit his own throat. The ghost haunts the town until the next year, when the body is exhumed and disposed of properly (in this case, the disposal involved mutilation). Barber’s account clearly demonstrates that there is a correct and incorrect way to dispose of suicides’ corpses (10).

One can make the argument, then, that Clarissa appears as a ghost at the novel’s end because her body was not disposed of in the correct manner. Suicides require apotropaic methods to prevent the return of ghosts. In Clarissa’s case, textual evidence exists that points toward some apotropaic measures being taken, but they are insufficient (especially when one considers how drastic such practices can be and often were). Belford describes the scene in Letter 495, in which Clarissa’s body is being prepared for transport to the Harlowe mansion: “As [Clarissa] directed rings by her will to several persons, with her hair to be set in crystal, the afflicted Mrs. Norton cut off before the

coffin was closed four charming ringlets” (Richardson, *Clarissa*, 1381). In the act of hair-cutting and distributing emerges an act that resembles a type of mutilation, i.e. dissembling the body, but the connection only faintly resembles the typical methods of corpse dismembering or staking. It certainly would not dissuade a suicide’s ghost from returning. Belford continues his account, saying, “Between four and five in the morning, the corpse was put into the hearse; the coffin before being filled, as intended, with flowers and aromatic herbs, and proper care taken to prevent the corpse suffering (to the eye) from the jolting of the hearse” (1381). Herbs were often used as apotropaic measures; in fact, anything with a strong smell could be used to ward off revenants, including garlic and wolfsbane (Barber 63). While the text does mention such a measure being taken in Clarissa’s case, it was likely a method primarily employed for masking the scent of decomposition. However, it is possible that it was also used to prevent the return of her spirit.

Colonel Morden describes the corpse upon its arrival and initial viewing by the Harlowes; decomposition had stopped, despite the lack of embalming or external preservation. After the initial viewing, he says, “I directed the lid of the coffin be unscrewed, and caused some fresh aromatics and herbs to be put into it. The corpse was very little altered, notwithstanding the journey” (Richardson, *Clarissa*, 1400). The description smacks somewhat of the shoemaker of Breslau in that the corpse remained intact and fresh until the ghost was finally laid (Barber 10), which makes no sense in Clarissa’s case because she never received proper preservative care. No doubt Richardson uses this time to try and push his instructive message that Clarissa continues to exist as an example of piety and sanctity to her family; holiness and preparation lead to a type of

spiritual preservation. However, the sight of a corpse in which the natural decomposition processes have stopped for no physically attributable reason is almost more eerie than one in which decomposition is working. Later, the family places the body in the Harlowes' family vault in the church, a Christian burial, and the corpse never receives the legal process for such deaths (i.e. the staking and crossroads burial to which Keith Thomas and Henry Fielding refer). Of course, the family probably never understood that Clarissa's death was self-inflicted, but regardless she does not receive the proper burial rites that might convince her spirit to remain at rest.

The other potential reason for a suicide's haunting involves the common motif of unfinished business. In Clarissa's situation, this business has to do with the role of Lovelace in her death. The 1733 poem "The Fair Suicide" (author Anonymous) may have provided Richardson with some inspiration in this regard, though the trope long predates both *Clarissa* and "The Fair Suicide." The narrator of "The Fair Suicide," much like Clarissa, seems to think of herself (as the first two lines below indicate) as already figuratively dead and threatens to revisit the individual responsible for her death:

Methinks, like Sprites, of whom I've often read,  
 The dismal, lonely, silent Room I tread.  
 And, if beyond this restless Scene of Pain,  
 The Soul has Pow'r to visit Earth again.  
 If likewise conscious of past Wrongs she knows,  
 The cause and author of her former Woes,  
 Then of Security no longer boast,  
 But dread the Vengeance of an injur'd ghost.

Yet if Forgiveness thou, tho' late, would'st crave,  
 And have my Shade rest peaceful in the Grave;  
 Then future Kindness to my Parent shew,  
 Nor kill the Daughter, and the Mother too.  
 Thus I to thee the Means of Safety show,  
 And lost myself would still advise my Foe.  
 Base as thou are, I not thy Death design,  
 No, rather live to be the Cause of mine. (4)

This poem, which is written as a letter (another connection to Richardson) from the woman who is soon to kill herself to the man responsible for her state of mind, leaves the reader with the threat of haunting, but it will desist on the condition that the reader reforms and performs certain good works as restitution. Though Clarissa's final (posthumous) letter to Lovelace does not mention haunting of a vengeful ghost as a punishment for changing his ways as "The Fair Suicide" does, Clarissa does extend the invitation to change on the basis of good works and contrition and threatens Lovelace with the judgments of a vengeful God instead of her own. However, that does not exclude Clarissa's spirit from returning to ascertain that justice has been done. After all, "The Fair Suicide" does retain an interesting resemblance to *Clarissa* in its implication of shared responsibility for the death of the suicide. In its very title ("The Fair Suicide: Being an Epistle from a Young Lady, to the Person Who Was the Cause of Her Death") as well in its text, it presents an interesting paradox which may well have influenced Richardson's treatment of Clarissa. The speaker is a suicide (or rather is about to be), yet the responsibility still lies with the man who has disgraced her in some way (if Clarissa is



any indication, the disgrace probably comes through sexual violation and betrayal). Logically, it does not follow. However, in light of the more tolerant attitudes prevailing in the eighteenth century, readers would probably have been more likely to possess such a perspective on “The Fair Suicide” than Shakespeare’s audience would have been for poor Ophelia. Consequently, Clarissa’s suicide would have been seen as owing partly to Lovelace, even if Clarissa herself is the one who refuses to eat. Lovelace’s death at the hands of Colonel Morden also reflects this sense of shared responsibility; while Lovelace gives Morden the chance to stab him (a parallel to the cause of Clarissa’s figurative death, the reason she is “cut off in the bloom of youth” [1426]), one must acknowledge Morden’s sword thrust as the cause of Lovelace’s death. Perhaps, then, her visitation at the end of the book is merely to see that her business is finally complete.

### **Clarissa as an Angel**

The idea of the actual ghost of Clarissa appearing at the novel’s end clarifies a somewhat troubling issue with Richardson’s text, namely that the title heroine dies more than a hundred and thirty dense pages before the book actually finishes. Granted, Clarissa is still a focal point as Belford clears up her legal affairs and will, her family members mourn and bicker over her legacy,<sup>17</sup> and Morden and Lovelace have their final confrontation for the sake of Clarissa’s honor. However, it seems that Richardson could have made his point quite well if he had merely finished with Clarissa’s death and

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<sup>17</sup> Derrida has much to say about the connection between ghosts and legacies in his wonderful volume *Specters of Marx*, and Ann Kibbie applies his theories to *Clarissa* in her essay “The Estate, the Corpse, and the Letter: Posthumous Possession in *Clarissa*.” However, pursuing that line of thought is outside of the scope of this particular project, and the author only mentions it for the benefit and instruction of the reader.

declared that it was good. However, his dedication to instruction motivated him to extend the contrast between the tranquility and peace inspired by Clarissa's death and the horror of the deaths of the wicked Belton, Sinclair, and, of course, Lovelace. Richardson, consequently, creates an atmosphere in which Clarissa remains present, even in her absence; she is haunting his text. However, without the final appearance, the attempt would fall flat, since it functions like an exclamation mark on the whole narrative ordeal. Thus, she sends posthumous letters, she constructs a will, and above all she even "appears" to Lovelace on his death-bed, all in an effort on Richardson's part to keep his absent heroine present, even at the risk of ghost-ifying his "full and authentic" representation of human existence.

However, his need to retain the deceased Clarissa in his text creates ideological problem. If Clarissa is actually saved by her good works and faithful submission to grace, how can she visit Lovelace as he is dying? On the other hand, if she is a suicide (and the text and criticism seem to indicate that she is), and thereby becomes a ghost, she could not have been "saved." If she were saved, she would have gone to heaven, and she would have had no desire to return and visit the living. The issue is certainly a puzzling one, and one which makes the reader tend toward accepting the apparition as an "affrighting Shape" rather than an actual ghost simply because it avoids this issue. Unfortunately, accepting that proposition takes the reader back into the narrative problem and the reason Clarissa dies far in advance of the ending of her own story. If Lovelace "sees" an apparition that exists only in his mind, such a narrative action takes the focus away from Clarissa's influence as an *exempla* instead of emphasizing it; the effects of her presence-in-absence diminish, if not vanish completely. In keeping with Richardson's need for

instruction, her ghostly appearance remains vital. However, that leaves the reader with the need to resolve her haunting/ghostliness-by-way-of-suicide with her salvation by submission to God's grace.

According his essay *The Secrets of the Invisible World Disclos'd* (published in 1729), Daniel Defoe approaches the issue of the existence of ghosts in a way that seeks to merge the dogmatic with the rational. Defoe believed in ghosts, though he did not appreciate the appellation "ghost" (deeming it a vulgar term), and he says, "Spirits Unembodied may appear, may reassume their humane Shape, their own former Likeness, or any other, and may show themselves to the World, or to as many Persons as they please" (50). He acknowledges the theological ramifications of this claim, saying,

The Difficulties which attend this are not a few, tho' none of them destroy the thing itself; as (1.) Whether the Souls of good or bad People unembodied, are really in a State or Condition for such an Appearance? And whether it consists with the just Notions we have we ought to have of the unalterable State? (51)

Defoe rationally resolves this problem by introducing the notion of a "World of Spirits...from whence we receive the frequent Visits in Publick, and the frequent Notices in Private, which are so perceptible to us" (52). This world of spirits is a place of waiting and assigning, which differs from the Catholic/Anglican idea of Purgatory, where spirits reside until they are allowed into Paradise. Defoe finishes his presentation of the idea by asking (rhetorically, of course),

Is it at all irrational to suppose, or improbable to be, that God may have made a Degree of Angels or of ministring Spirits (whether they are

angelick, or of other Species is not for us to determine) who may be of a differing Degree, appointed for a differing Residence, and to different Employments from the superior Angels, for a Season? (54)

Consequently, it may be that Richardson's heroine is just such a ministering angel or spirit: a "saved ghost" in a sense. It makes sense in light of the frequent opposition that Richardson sets up in the text between the "angel" Clarissa and the "demon" Lovelace. As a result, their final encounter constitutes Richardson's final attempt to establish this opposition, but it also reinforces that Clarissa has become a ghost, a ministering ghost capable of bridging the gap between worlds: the earthly and the spiritual. Lovelace, unfortunately, is unable to see past his earthly perspective, which has always been a problem for him. For example, when Clarissa writes a letter to Lovelace telling him that she intends to set out for her "father's house," he interprets the phrase to mean her physical, not her heavenly, father's house because his mind is always with the physical and not with the spiritual. That Lovelace sees a "spectre" as he dies is indicative that Richardson is still drawing on Taylor, an interesting point of reference considering Taylor slips in a reference to a ghost at the end of *Holy Dying* as he speaks of paying duty or homage to the dead:

I have no other end in this Discourse, but that we may be engaged to do our Duty to our Dead; lest peradventure they should see our Neglect, and be witnesses of our transient Affections and Forgetfulness. Dead Persons have Religion passed upon them, and a solemn Reverence; and if we think a Ghost beholds us, it may be we may have upon us the Impressions likely to be made by *Love*, and *Fear*, and *Religion*. (258)

Taylor does not suggest that ghosts actually visit people when they die; his remark on the wicked seeing “affrighting Shapes” indicates just the opposite. However, Richardson may be employing an “actual ghost” to demonstrate that Lovelace thinks about love and fear and religion, even as he expires. Consequently, Clarissa, because it is her “ghost” he sees, is a representation of grace to Lovelace, a final extension of mercy toward the worldly man, a chance to submit to God’s goodness (as Clarissa has) before he exits the material world.

Lovelace’s final exclamation to the unseen specter, “LET THIS EXPIATE!” indicates a subversion of this final attempt to save the rake from his sins. Clarissa’s salvation comes from working it out by pious works, enduring affliction, and eventually submitting to the grace of Christ, which, according to biblical practice, conforms to notions of God’s higher law as Christ taught it in the New Testament. Lovelace’s approach to expiation conforms to the old or Mosaic practice. By giving his body and life in propitiation for his role in Clarissa’s death, he demonstrates obedience to the eye-for-an-eye principle, a lesser or preparatory law. Lovelace thinks he can save himself by his own actions, but the higher law, which Clarissa follows, indicates that he must relinquish his need for control, to submit himself to God’s grace, and he cannot. His cry of “LET THIS EXPIATE!” is a command, not a request; his need for control keeps him from seeing the correct way, which Clarissa represents, to approach salvation.

Ultimately, Richardson intends Clarissa to be an exemplar to his readership. She shows the “way” to Lovelace (not necessarily in literal method of death, but rather in its symbolism) as well as to Richardson’s audience, (though many of them chose to forego the opportunity of reading the final portion of the novel). In a way she becomes a type of

Christ-figure herself: she lays her life down because she can and “must,” and she takes it up again as a new transcendent self, and that transcendent self appears to Lovelace after her death. She is a narrative reiteration of Drelincourt’s point, as discussed in chapter 2 of this work:

Now, as we live in such an incredulous Age, that will not believe in God, and his Divine Oracles, though attested by the working of Miracles, concerning the future State of the Righteous and Wicked, but requires a new Testimony and Evidence, as the Return of Souls from the Dead, to witness the Happiness of Heaven, the Torments of Hell, and the Immortality of the Soul: Who knows, but to render Men more inexcusable, God may condescend, that a departed Soul, or its good Angel in its Stead, may appear to declare these infallible and undoubted Truths to an unbelieving World? (vi)

## **Conclusion**

Richardson does not hold Clarissa’s suicide against her; he is lenient and tolerant of the means of her demise, in keeping with attitudes of his time period. In Clarissa’s appearance then, we have mixture of influences. We have the folklore of suicide, which provides the basis for supposing her to be a ghost; we have the prevailing notions about suicide (as propagated by the popular press), which withhold judgment from Clarissa; and we have Defoe’s “World of Spirits” and Drelincourt’s ideas on returning spirits which allows the ghost or spirit of Clarissa to return to earth as a positive reminder to Lovelace that he must submit to Christ, which he ultimately refuses in his haste to redeem

himself in *his* own way and on *his* own terms. Clarissa becomes the hanging woman, dressed in divine garb, suspended between material, spiritual, and textual worlds as an instructive—though ghostly—guide to the living.

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