

Introduction

In the preface to the first edition of *Clarissa*, Richardson makes the familiar eighteenth-century gesture of reassuring his reader of the moral lessons the text is to impart:

In the great variety of subjects which this collection contains, it is one of the principal views of the publication: to caution parents against the undue exertion of their authority in the great article of marriage: and children against preferring a man of pleasure to a man of probity, upon that dangerous but too commonly received notion, *that a reformed rake makes the best husband*. (C 36)

Clarissa's scope may be vast in addressing a 'great variety of subjects' and in being an epistolary 'collection' of different writers' letters and viewpoints, but it can nonetheless claim to be reducible to two main points of argument. Parental tyranny in the sphere of love is likely to bring misfortune, and young women shouldn't be fooled by the apparently attractive prospect of the 'reformed rake': the man who claims to have abandoned his days as a seducer while retaining the wit, manners and sensuality that allowed him to fulfil that role in the first place.

It is not unusual for authors of Richardson's time to begin their books by identifying certain follies in the world and to claim (with varying degrees of sincerity) that they have only written about them in order to put them right. But Richardson's preface is distinctive in intimating a quite specific process or

mechanism by which those follies have come to be in first place. For Richardson, we might say, there must indeed be something ‘dangerous’ in the very way that public knowledge is constituted if such demonstrably false ideas can, through the various iterations they undertake in the culture, become ‘commonly received’: enshrined as truth, received wisdom or *doxa*. In this book, I should say from the start, I am less interested in the specific content of those ideas about tyrannical parents and reformed rakes than I am in the mechanism by which Richardson suggests they have perpetuated themselves.

The first argument of this book, then, is that Richardson’s positioning his novel against the ‘received notion’ is not simply a passing remark in a conventional moralistic preface, but rather is one of the organising principles of the whole novel. I take it that whatever else it is, *Clarissa* is a diagnosis of a certain malignity in what we think of as common knowledge, or what Richardson sometimes refers to as ‘public talk’ (C 94). In *Clarissa*’s use of repetitions and quotations between and within the letters written by the novel’s characters, Richardson seems compelled to show this dangerous ‘public talk’ at work, demonstrating how damaging ideas can become axiomatic simply by being repeated by the right people in the right way. We can say that the problem Richardson is analysing receives its parodic embodiment in a remark made by a man who speaks almost entirely in other people’s proverbs, Lovelace’s uncle, Lord M: ‘*what everyone says, must be true*’ (C 606).

Once Richardson has made this analysis, the other challenge for his novel is to find some means by which to respond to or resist this problem of information. The privileged means – such is my book’s second main argument – comes in the form of a figure of tragedy. *Clarissa* herself, by her unexpected and self-destructive resistance to the ‘received notions’ of her community, becomes the novel’s greatest retort to them. This in turn effects a transformation not only in the way information is treated in the novel but also in the novel’s own resources of representation: a transformation, I contend, that can rightly be called ‘tragic’. To begin to sketch out this argument, this

introduction does three things. First, it considers what it means for Richardson to turn to tragedy as a way of combating the dangerous situation of mediation into which the novel suggests discourse has been thrown. Second, it details Richardson's own arguments about tragedy in his fiction and conduct writing. And, third, it draws on nineteenth- and twentieth-century theorists of the disruptive power of tragedy to suggest how its importance to *Clarissa* extends well beyond Richardson's own sometimes contradictory statements about it.

I

Late in *Clarissa*, Lovelace's friend, John Belford, meditates on the phrase from Richardson's preface, '*a reformed rake makes the best husband*', and expresses concern for the 'many worthy women betrayed by that false and inconsiderate notion, raised and propagated no doubt by the author of all delusion'. Such women, he says, do not realise

what a total revolution of manners, what a change of fixed habits, nay, what a conquest of a *bad nature*, is required to make a man a good husband, a worthy father, and true friend, from *principle*; especially when it is considered that it is not in a man's own power to reform when he will. (C 1393)

The rake's profligacy begins with his fallen state, and, while the Devil – 'the author of all delusion' – may lie about how easily that fall can be reversed and reformation found, it is too much inscribed in 'fixed habits' and repeated behaviours to be straightforwardly purged. True reformation, says Belford, would take nothing short of a complete transformation in identity: 'a total revolution of manners'.

The terms of Belford's argument are conventionally Christian, but the demarcation it makes between the part of subjectivity that is supposed to be inherent and the part merely produced in 'habit', as well as its interest in how the false information about 'reformed rakes' might have got around,

puts it in line with the interests of a certain 'Enlightenment'. While it has become unfashionable to think of the eighteenth century as uniformly driven towards the principles of secularism, democracy and reason, Clifford Siskin and William Warner have argued that the category of the 'Enlightenment' nonetheless retains its usefulness if we take it as marking out the period as 'an event in the history of mediation'.¹

This is to say that the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were constituted by an unprecedented proliferation of means by which information could be dispersed, alongside an unprecedentedly detailed and adventurous cultural vocabulary for discussing those mediating processes of dispersal. In this view, the eighteenth century was not uniformly the 'age of reason' it has often been described as, but it did make the problematisation of knowledge, its provenance and its dissemination, its reigning conceit.

Clarissa's preoccupation with the dissemination of information and with the self-consciously mediated status of its epistolary form makes it consistent with this Enlightenment conceit. This interpretation finds support in the work of Mary Wollstonecraft, who seems to have Belford's remarks from *Clarissa* in mind in the section on rakes and women's attitudes to them in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792). Whereas Belford's concern is with the aggressive rehabilitation required to rescue a rake, Wollstonecraft is more interested in what it is that makes women attracted to rakes in the first place. This is her more pressing 'revolution of manners', one concerned not so much with good and bad men as with the coordinates of female desire itself. 'In its present infantine state', she argues, feminine sexuality is little more than 'a set of phrases learned by rote', 'hackneyed in the ways of women', and, given the paucity of the culture supplying those phrases, it is unsurprising that in turn 'half the sex ... pine for a Lovelace'. 'Supposing', by contrast, 'that women were, in some future revolution of time, to become, what I sincerely wish them to be', Wollstonecraft says, 'even love would acquire more serious dignity', meaning finally that women 'would turn with disgust from the rake'.² For Wollstonecraft,

a culture that consistently represents women as lascivious objects for men cannot subsequently be surprised to find the desire of its women interpellated by this representation in some way.

As with the moral claims of Richardson's preface, I am for now less interested in Wollstonecraft's specific views on problems in sexuality (as fascinatingly ambivalent towards their subject as they are) than in emphasising the mechanism of obscurely originating received notions by which Wollstonecraft proposes those problems have come about. Wollstonecraft's subtle adaptation of Belford's words from *Clarissa* raises Richardson's intuition about the dangers of 'public talk' to the level of an explicit, and newly feminist, political programme. But what, for either author, is the way out of this deadlock when, quite apart from knowledge and information conventionally defined, even the deep subjective reaches of desire itself are coded by dangerously self-confirming 'phrases learned by rote'? 'If such be the force of habit', as Wollstonecraft puts it, how are we to 'guard the mind from storing up vicious associations'?³

For Wollstonecraft and her circle, the meta-discourse that will get one beyond this fog of desire and hearsay is *reason*. Reason, imparted through education, will allow received notions to be circumvented and less damaging forms of desire to emerge. This radical kind of reason is one of the great democratic inheritances of the eighteenth century, and it is not going too far to say that it is the basis of modern critical thinking. What Wollstonecraft and her colleagues were practising was, at heart, a form of ideology critique: its central insight was that the areas of experience which appear to be outside politics are the most political spaces of all, and that which appears most intimately personal to us is the first thing that needs interrogation. But, at the same time, the terms available to Wollstonecraft clearly have their limits, and to address these we must have recourse to later tendencies in anti-Enlightenment thought.

If the keystone Enlightenment insight, that knowledge is not self-evident but is constructed and mediated in culture,

is taken in all its radical force, what claim can reason have to rise above and speak over these other notions? Who is in a position to be so sure of themselves as to speak for what Wollstonecraft's compatriot Thomas Paine called 'common sense'? Certainly, the political duplicity of reason and common sense couldn't be any more clear today, when it is most often those on the right who appeal to them as a way of rejecting the supposed obfuscating abstractions or hopeless utopianism of left-wing intellectuals. The most polemical and important formulation of the wrinkle in reason's claim to clamber above the obfuscations of mediation and habit came from Friedrich Nietzsche. As Martin Jay summarises, whereas the Enlightenment radicals never quite abandoned their faith in a historically 'real' existence of reason somewhere beyond the mess of cultural mediation, 'Nietzsche's more radical gesture was to deny the premise of historical reality "in itself" ... All that was left was an irreducibly nontranscendental riot of interpretation without an external object to serve as the standard by which their veracity could be measured.'⁴

If this part of Nietzsche's argument is no doubt familiar to many readers, it is still worth emphasising just where he *does* identify truth if it is not to be found in some sort of transcendental reason or liberated common sense. In *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), Nietzsche formulates an approach to truth that does not depend on Enlightenment reason, in what he calls 'tragic knowledge', a kind of knowledge with no final metaphysical referent outside what he calls 'eternal suffering and contradiction'.⁵ Whereas the project of the Enlightenment radicals was to find in reason a truth that would redeem the contradictory distortions of culture, the articulation of tragedy is that the only available 'truth' emerges precisely from the gap of non-recognition between these areas of contradiction. I will explain what I mean by this a little more later on, but for now it is enough to say that as much as Nietzsche's association of tragedy with a traumatic 'other' kind of knowledge has been of constituent importance to subsequent critical theory, it can also be read backwards as part of the articulation of *Clarissa*. In *Clarissa*, Richardson had already intuited his

own response to the deadlock of the 'received notion', which is different to the one Wollstonecraft later tried to use his novel to make. As with Nietzsche, the resources of response Richardson finds are not in reason but in tragedy.⁶

II

Richardson published the seven volumes of the first edition of *Clarissa* in three instalments in December 1747 and April and December 1748. Rumours began circulating after the publication of the second instalment that the novel's hitherto muted intimations of tragedy were to build to define its final three volumes. The revelation that the rake Lovelace was to do something that would place him beyond marriageable reprieve, and that Clarissa should die in the aftermath, provoked remonstrations from Richardson's circle of confidants, who had expected that the pair would finally be united in marriage.⁷ As one critic remarks, Richardson seems to have been determined to 'challenge ... current notions of tragedy', even at the risk of 'social and financial liability'; in the words of another, he went as far as to consider 'the desire for a happy ending' among his readers as itself 'a mark of moral fault, an ameliorating concession to the religious laxity that plagued British culture at mid-century'.⁸

Richardson responds to the minor crisis the turn to tragedy presented for the serial publication of *Clarissa* in a postscript appended to its final volume. This begins by dramatically breaking the big illusion of all Richardson's novels: that the letters are real and that Richardson himself is merely their discoverer and editor.⁹ Here, 'the author of the foregoing work' steps forward to describe the correspondence he has received from readers pleading that Clarissa and Lovelace be spared this dreadful mutual destruction. Richardson attributes their disquiet to the ongoing influence of the doctrine of '*poetical justice*', a seventeenth-century addition to the theory of tragedy developed in France but becoming influential to the point of being axiomatic in the English drama of the Restoration.

In *The Tragedies of the Last Age Considered* (1678), the critic Thomas Rymer had imagined a version of the birth of tragedy in which the genre was created by the Greeks to undo in art the moral mistakes of 'real' history:

Finding in history, the same *end* happen to the *righteous* and to the *unjust*, *virtue* often oppressed, and *wickedness* on the throne: they saw these particular *yesterday-truths* were imperfect and unproper to illustrate the universal and eternal truths by them intended. Finding also that this unequal distribution of rewards and punishments did perplex the *wisest*, and by the *atheist* was made a scandal to the *Divine Providence*. They concluded, that a *poet* must of necessity see *justice* exactly administered, if he intended to please.¹⁰

In this analysis, tragedy is superior to the 'yesterday-truths' of history because it secures a space in which dreadful actions and dreadful consequences neatly coincide in the same person: tragedy may represent the most wicked behaviour, but it also demands that it is punished in full measure. It was only, one might add, by logical tricks such as this that the genre traditionally most preoccupied with incest, murder and dismemberment could become what Timothy Reiss has called 'the ideal ordering and instructive mode'.¹¹

For Richardson, appealing to poetical justice as a way of arguing against his killing the innocent Clarissa is inadequate on two grounds. First, its claims to being based in Christianity are decidedly shaky, demanding a worldly dispensation of punishment and reward that God never promised, for a mankind that has been placed here 'only in a state of probation'; God having 'so intermingled good and evil as to necessitate them to look forward for a more equal distribution of both' (C 1495). And, second, it is simply bad reading, misinterpreting Aristotle and great swathes of the canon of tragedies both ancient and modern, as the postscript quotes extensively from Joseph Addison's *Spectator* no. 40 in order to show. Richardson goes on to introduce the additional twist that, even given the inadequacy of the concept of poetical justice, justice actually is imparted to most of his characters, most particularly Clarissa

herself, whose virtue 'HEAVEN *only* could reward' (C 1498). In this sense, Richardson is not among those modern commentators for whom Christianity and tragedy are diametrically opposed. On the contrary, if we push his view a little further, it transpires that while tragedy presents any number of examples of punishment far in excess of wrongdoing, it is Christianity that emerges as the truly tragic worldview, since its promise of justice after death actually licenses all kinds of injustice and cruelty prior to it. Much as tragedy in the French neoclassical dramatist Jean Racine's works is often thought of as an effect of God callously losing interest in man's worldly fate, true Christianity for Richardson is not there to offer consolation for tragedy but may even go as far as to produce it as part of its own internal logic.¹²

The alluring comparison between the *deus absconditus* of Racine and the worldview of *Clarissa* has been made in Leo Damrosch's book, *God's Plots and Man's Stories* (1985). In this analysis, the radical Catholic milieu of Jansenism that gave Racine his training and the English Puritanism that is often thought to have produced the English novel may not share much, but they do share a God who is fully willing to allow tragedy to occur in the world. What makes *Clarissa* formally 'post Puritan', in Damrosch's terms, however, is less any of its specific theological references or arguments than Richardson's employment of the epistolary form. Forgoing 'the normal basis of narrative, the presence of a teller and a tale', Damrosch argues, the 'editor' Richardson himself can be understood as 'a *narrator absconditus*', 'miming the hidden God who presides over the sublunary world but never shows his hand directly'.¹³ In more recent criticism, the tragic dimension of this absconding of the ordering agency in Richardson's novels has been taken yet further, going bone deep into the characters themselves, who are no longer thought to be even the gods of their own behaviour. For Sandra Macpherson, *Clarissa* is full of actions, which, 'once begun', stubbornly refuse to 'come to rest' but insist on having disastrous effects quite contrary to the first intentions of their actors.¹⁴ A similar insight underlies Jonathan Kramnick's reading of the novel

through the lens of modern cognitive science as ‘a series of questions about agency’.¹⁵ Neither of these critics frames this specifically in terms of Richardson’s discussion of poetical justice in the postscript, but it seems clear that there can be no dispensation of rewards and punishments according to moral worth in a universe where our actions do not come under our own control.

Richardson had not always allowed such tragic insight – or, indeed, patience for drama in general – so close to his writing practice. Before the explosion of *Pamela* established him as a literary celebrity, he had made a small but polemical contribution to what Thomas Keymer refers to as the ‘new life’ enjoyed by the old seventeenth-century campaigns to limit the freedoms of London’s theatres, in a pamphlet called *A Seasonable Examination of the Pleas and Pretensions of the Proprietors of, and Subscribers to, Play-Houses* (1735), as well as in his conduct book for apprentices of the kind he employed in his own printing house, *The Apprentice’s Vade Mecum* (1734).¹⁶ These early pieces are reasonably conventional in calling for what he calls a ‘double restriction’ (EW 18) on taverns and playhouses as comparable sites of lechery and crime. More sophisticated are his arguments about the effects of play-viewing itself on the socially precarious young apprentices. With the exception of George Lillo’s *The London Merchant* (1731) (a tragedy actually about an apprentice lured into vice by ‘the artifices of a lewd woman’ [EW 23]), Richardson argues that ‘all our modern plays are calculated for persons in *upper* life, and the good instructions, if any are design’d to be convey’d by the representation to the mind of the auditory, lie much above the common case and observation of the class of persons to which I am addressing myself’ (EW 19).¹⁷ For Richardson, what goes on in the theatres is a pretty shameless example of what we would now call cultural hegemony: the plays enjoyed by a lower social group naturalise the worldview and concerns of a higher one. Worse, the Restoration plays still dominant in repertoire at mid-century assume a spectator who is explicitly contemptuous of the class and class values of the apprentices themselves: ‘those written

in a late licentious reign, which are reckon'd the best, and are often acted, are so far from being so much as *intended* for instruction to a man of business, that such persons are generally made the dupes and fools of the hero of it' (EW 20).

Even after Richardson's conversion to tragedy in *Clarissa*, something of the terms of his early antagonism to drama on social grounds remains. In 1753, the third and fourth editions of *Clarissa* were printed with a supplementary appendix entitled *An ample Collection of such of the Moral and Instructive SENTIMENTS interspersed throughout the work, as may be presumed to be of general Use and Service*. This was a different kind of conduct-writing to that which Richardson had produced before, a commonplace book collecting individual morally serviceable maxims from the novel itself and organising them under alphabetical thematic headings.¹⁸ In 1755, Richardson published the *Collection* as a stand-alone text, accompanied by similar anthologies of quotations from both his first novel, *Pamela* (1740) and his latest one, *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753). Given what Richardson had staked on tragedy during the publication of *Clarissa*, it seems surprising to find in the *Collection* a return to the old suspicion of drama that had dominated his conduct-writing in the 1730s.

First off, *Clarissa*'s remarks about tragedy are compiled under the heading 'Comedies. Tragedies. Music. Dancing' (CL 100), putting the emphasis back onto the social entertainment side of drama as opposed to the aesthetic and ethical considerations that had dominated the postscript. This organisation also relegates tragedy from the privileged position it receives in *Clarissa*, forcing any reader interested in the topic to look first for 'Comedy'. These are the citations on comedy and tragedy given under this entry:¹⁹

LIBERTINES love not any Tragedies, but those in which they themselves act the parts of tyrants and executioners. (C 618)

Libertines (afraid to trust themselves with serious and solemn reflections) run to comedies, in order to laugh away compunction, and to find examples of men as immoral as themselves. (C 618)

Very few of our comic performances give good examples.
(C 618)

Mr *Lovelace*, Mrs *Sinclair*, Sally *Martin*, Polly *Horton*, Miss *Partington*, love not Tragedies. They have hearts too *feeling*. There is enough in the world, *say they*, to make the heart sad, without carrying grief into our diversion, and making the distresses of others our own.

The woes of others, well represented, will unlock and open a tender heart, *Lovel*. (C 620)

The female heart expands, and forgets its forms, when its attention is carried out of itself at an *agreeable* or affecting entertainment, *Lovel*. (C 620)

Women, therefore, should be cautious of the company they go with to public entertainments.

In the *Collection*, tragedy is made superior to comedy for its moral seriousness, while a preference for the escapism of comedy becomes an indicator of the wickedness of the libertine characters. Defending *Clarissa's* tragic conclusion yet again in the revised postscript to the third edition, Richardson put the same charge to some of his readers, who, he says, 'declared against tragedies in general, and in favour of comedies, almost in the words of *Lovelace*, who was supported in his tastes by all the women at Mrs *Sinclair's*' (3C VIII, 278).

Despite this distinction, however, the terms of the critique of drama in general in Richardson's early conduct-writing remain, even if concerns originally raised about the class of the audiences have been reworked into ones about gender. Much as the earlier Richardson had warned that the theatre 'may entirely unhinge' an apprentice's 'mind from business', making 'music ... always play upon his ears' (EW 21), the *Collection* cites *Lovelace* to the effect that 'the female heart' is vulnerable to 'being carried out of itself' by the affecting spectacle of a tragedy. While tragedy is the genre favoured by virtuous women, it is also the genre that leaves them most vulnerable to manipulation by more powerful men: as much as the apprentices should be wary of the political implications of the plays they attend, women '*should be cautious of the company they go with to public entertainments*'.

On the face of it, this warning that glosses the quotations about drama in the *Collection* is a bit of a let-down. It appears that for all that Richardson's brilliant experimentation with tragedy in *Clarissa*, little had changed in his suspicion of drama in performance between the conduct books of 1730s and the 1750s. But such a reading only stands up until we use the page references Richardson added to the 1755 version to follow these passages back into the novel itself. The episode from which the warning about women going to the theatre is sourced is presented in Lovelace's Letter 194, which details his plan to take Clarissa to see a performance of Thomas Otway's Restoration tragedy *Venice Preserv'd* (1682):

Whenever I have been able to prevail upon a girl to permit me to attend her to a play, I have thought myself sure of her. The female heart, all gentleness and harmony when obliged, expands and forgets its forms when attention is carried out of itself at an agreeable or affecting entertainment: music and perhaps a collation afterwards, co-operating. (C 620)

Women might well be advised to '*be cautious of the company they go with to public entertainments*' if this is the kind of thing their men are plotting, but the more important point is that the novel actually gives remarkably little evidence that such plots are particularly effective. Earlier in the novel, Clarissa has written similarly of how young women's vulnerability to seduction is exacerbated by the pressure they are made to feel to be 'obliging': 'an undesigning open heart, where it is loath to disoblige, is easily drawn in, I see, to oblige more than it designed. ... One's heart may harden and contract, as one gains experience' (C 269–70). And, indeed, her description of the theatre trip to Anna Howe does suggest that she may at least have been fooled into thinking the play has had such an emotional effect on Lovelace, who she thinks was 'very sensibly touched with some of the most affecting scenes' (C 640). But as for *her* 'heart' being 'carried out of itself' or inclined 'to oblige more than it designed' in the way Lovelace hopes and Richardson fears, it simply doesn't transpire that way. In fact, the letters that follow the performance

of *Venice Preserv'd* are utterly indifferent to whether the play has affected her or not.

In other words, the old conduct-book-style arguments about the dangers of the theatre deployed in the *Collection* are pointedly *not* supported by the very episode in the novel that the *Collection* claims illustrate them. Perhaps Richardson betrays his own misgivings about having elevated Lovelace's plan to the status of a generally applicable warning when he attributes the last two passages specifically to 'Lovel', whereas the others are allowed to stand unattributed as transparent universal truths. Richardson never considered that his apprentices might approach the plays they enjoyed with critical distance enough to avoid becoming their 'dupes and fools' (EW 20), and it might as well be that he assumes that, since we cannot all be Clarissas, most of us need his warnings about what goes on at the theatre more than she does. But either way, taken as they stand, one cannot avoid the interpretation of these texts that the novel is making its own protest of resistance against its reduction to its constituent maxims in the *Collection*. At this tragedy, Clarissa is not only to casually sidestep Lovelace's plan but even frustrates the assumptions of Richardson's own conduct writing.

III

Perhaps it should not be surprising that, isolated in this way, Richardson's individual statements about the moral positioning of tragedy, on stage or on page, do not altogether cohere. At a time when all the major synthesising attempts to make a consistent theory of tragedy had at least claimed to be classically rooted in Aristotelian principle, Richardson himself was aggressively making a virtue of his separation from the classical tradition. In the retreading of the debate between the ancients and the moderns in *Sir Charles Grandison*, and in his contributions to his friend Edward Young's *Conjectures on Original Composition* (1759), the Richardson of the 1750s aligns himself against the cultural centrality of the

classics in a way that Ian Watt goes as far as to compare to the militancy of William Blake's anti-classicism.²⁰ Even when Aristotle and the ancient tragedians do come up as authorities in Richardson's postscript to *Clarissa*, it is only in quotations from the great handbook for an emergent and proudly vernacular bourgeoisie, *The Spectator*. I cannot help but suspect that this lack of Aristotelianism and solid classical grounding in Richardson's approach to tragedy is what – whatever Richardson's intentions – makes it so amenable to comparison with the anti-Aristotelianism of theories of tragedy since German Romanticism. In this section, I want to outline an understanding of tragedy based on such theories and to explain how I am going to use them to understand Richardson's practice of tragedy in *Clarissa* for the duration of this book.

In his compressed and mysterious 'Notes on the *Oedipus*' (1804), Friedrich Hölderlin claims that tragedy is always a genre of 'emptiness', 'interruption', 'caesura', or what he calls here 'the pure word':

The tragic *transport* is essentially empty, and the most unbounded of all.

Hence the rhythmic succession of ideas wherein the *transport* manifests itself demands a counter-rhythmic interruption, a pure word, *that which in metrics is called a caesura*, in order to confront the speeding alternation of ideas at its climax, so that not the alternation of the idea, but the idea itself appears.²¹

For Hölderlin, the truth of a tragedy is not simply to be decided by a choice of one of the 'rhythmic succession' of available hypotheses or interpretations its situation presents. It is not enough if we come away from *The Baachae* thinking that Pentheus had it coming to him when he honoured his own authority over Dionysius, or from *King Lear* feeling that the old man should have shown more humility from the start. Nor is it the case, as Hölderlin's contemporary and one-time friend Hegel had it, that truth emerges as the new 'synthesis' of various opposing but, in themselves, equally valid positions. Instead, the tragic articulation comes out of

an insistence on the materiality of *the gap between positions* itself, a commitment to the hard moment of 'interruption', which Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe memorably refers to as a 'wound ... that does not heal and reopens constantly under the hand that would close it'.²² This is why, for Nietzsche, Hamlet's delay in killing his uncle has nothing whatsoever to do with the usual psychologising explanations that he is too frightened to act for himself, or is sidetracked by procrastination. On the contrary, it is his delay, and not the final killing, that constitutes Hamlet's tragic heroism. When, at the start of the play, 'the time is out of joint', with everyone in a position of radical insecurity in relation to one another, to actually kill Claudius would smack of a kind of capitulating closure. In this respect, the least tragic thing about *Hamlet* is the massacre at the end, because it clears the way for the stabilising return of young Fortinbras. For the interim, at least, Hamlet's delay works at sustaining a gulf, in which, Nietzsche says, 'insight into the horrific truth, outweighs any motive leading to action'.²³

In a very similar way, *Clarissa* is a tragedy in which nothing happens, but not just in the sense of the familiar reader's complaint that its length is spectacularly out of proportion with the handful of however dramatic episodes it narrates. Rather, *nothing* happens, in the material sense of 'nothing' the Lacanian philosopher Alenka Zupančič describes as 'a certain – rather ghostly – materiality of nothing ... insisting/emerging in the real, while being deprived precisely of its symbolic support'.²⁴ Situations are set up, expectations are raised, only for an all-too-material 'nothing' to take the place of the anticipated outcome, and Clarissa's neglecting to comply with the expectations of either Lovelace or Richardson's own conduct writing at the performance of *Venice Preserv'd* is only one relatively innocuous example of the weight the novel places on this. When, finally frustrated with Clarissa's obtuse refusal to comply with virtually any of his expectations, Lovelace drugs and rapes her, he reports the action to Belford with these peculiar words: 'AND now, Belford, I can go no farther. The affair is over. Clarissa lives' (C 883).

This 'I can go farther' is especially difficult to interpret. Does Lovelace mean that there can no longer be any 'affair' between him and Clarissa since whatever was authentic in their strange relationship was dependent on a subtle interplay of wills which he has now broken by violence? Or does it mean he is too ashamed to write any more about the 'affair' of the rape to Belford now it is done? At least one critic has suggested that the words are a veiled confession of impotence and that Lovelace was unable to go through with the rape at all.²⁵ Perhaps the more important thing, however, is the way in which Lovelace's confusing words give a material acknowledgement of the most famous caesura in the text itself. For this is also the point in the novel where the punctual reportage of every minor event by dated letters suddenly breaks down, and the rape itself goes unreported.

This is perfectly, if rather surprisingly, Hölderlinian and marks the point at which Richardson's stated interests in contesting received notions in the preface and in tragedy in the postscript can be said to come together. For what is an epistolary novel but a 'rhythmic succession of ideas'? Particularly one in which so many of the writing characters, from the Harlowe family to Lovelace, have been so sure of their own. Bonnie Latimer has remarked of the meandering ambiguity of the ending of *Sir Charles Grandison* that, while it is true that 'there is no firm conclusion', none is actually needed because the characters' 'probable fates ... are to be inferred from their behaviour to date'.²⁶ The situation in *Clarissa* is almost exactly the opposite. The 'speeding alternation' of inferences about Clarissa's 'probable fate' voiced by the novel's characters (and by some of its readers) are exposed for the facile received notions they are when they are met with the caesural intervention of Clarissa at the point of the rape. What makes the novel truly tragic is that, whatever Richardson's own famous battles over interpretation with his more roguish readers, the text itself is far less interested in our reasonably making the right choice between various competing ideas than in insisting on the materiality of the gap between them: marking the traumatic space where 'the speeding alternation of ideas'

becomes suspended and naked 'pure word' of 'the idea itself' is allowed to stand.

We can better take stock of this with reference to two further quite different theories of tragedy which nonetheless have a common point of reference in Hölderlin's '*Oedipus*' notes. These ideas will be familiar to some readers but are worth describing in detail since I will be referring to them throughout the book. First, I consider the German Jewish philosopher Walter Benjamin, who judged that the 'fundamental significance' of Hölderlin's '*Oedipus*' notes 'for the theory of art in general, beyond serving as the basis for a theory of tragedy, seems not yet to have been recognised'. Benjamin's whole philosophy, with its habitual investment in the notion of a 'tiger's leap' into an unknowable and unanticipatable sphere of difference might be characterised as an exercise in such a recognition. In Benjamin's view, such opportunely disruptive caesuras are potentially everywhere in modernity, as likely to crop up in the repetitive jarring of factory machinery, an abrupt cut in a silent film or the jerky gait of a drug-addled poet as they are in the divine violence of communist revolution. It is simply a case of radical thought developing the ability to recognise these gaps when they are there, for they are prone to appear without warning, much like the Messiah in the Jewish tradition in which Benjamin's thought is so entrenched.²⁷

This, so to speak, is Benjamin's politics of tragedy: as much as for Nietzsche's Hamlet, it means committing to the caesural gap of what he refers to as 'the expressionless' (*das Ausdruckslose*):

In the expressionless, the sublime violence of the true appears as that which determines the language of the real world according to the laws of the moral world. For it shatters ... the false, errant totality – the absolute totality. Only the expressionless completes the work, by shattering it into a thing of shards, into a fragment of the true world, into the torso of a symbol.²⁸

While Greek tragedy offers one iteration of this 'expressionless' in what Benjamin describes as its heroes' silent refusal

to speak in the compromised language of the community, the figuration is more strongly embodied in that drama's creaky and maligned early modern counterpart: the baroque *Trauerspiel* of the German seventeenth century.²⁹ Of these, the plays of the scholar-statesmen of the Second Silesian School, Daniel Casper von Lohenstein, Andreas Gryphius and Johann Christian Hallmann, are Benjamin's focus, although he finds their favoured tropes registered in a great range of cultural corners of the European sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Jane O. Newman has emphasised that these plays were originally performed as part of the education of Protestant schoolboys and were aimed at shaping them 'as male civil subjects destined for positions in the early modern administrative bureaucracies of the Holy Roman Empire'.³⁰ This goes some way to explaining their ostentatiously 'academic' scholarly learning because, whereas 'the Renaissance explores the universe', Benjamin contends, 'the baroque explores libraries', so much so that in some of these plays 'the corpus of notes ... rivals the dramas in length'.³¹

Their civil and political function also accounts for what Benjamin frames as one of the *Trauerspiel*'s characteristic objects of analysis: the figure of 'the sovereign'. As the German jurist Carl Schmitt argued, law can only function if it has at its centre a figure, whether real or symbolic, to whom its strictures do not apply: that is to say, who has the power to occupy or declare a 'state of exception'.³² While Schmitt, later a member of the Nazi Party, intended this as an apology for emerging fascism, Benjamin had already employed a very similar formulation from a leftist perspective in his *Critique of Violence* (1921).³³ In the *Trauerspiel* book meanwhile, Benjamin reads Schmitt's analysis of the sovereign back into the seventeenth century's preoccupation with the figure of the tyrant, remarking that 'the function of the tyranny is the restoration of order in the state of emergency: a dictatorship whose utopian goal will always be to replace the unpredictability of historical accident with the iron constitution of the laws of nature'. But for Benjamin, the melancholic outlook of the baroque merely demonstrates how there is no such law of

nature capable of redeeming the chaos of 'historical accident'. Unlike Schmitt's anticipated Führer, the Hamlet-like sovereign of the *Trauerspiel* 'reveals, at the first opportunity, that he is almost incapable of making a decision'.³⁴ As it must for the famous angel of history Benjamin saw in Paul Klee's painting, history in the baroque remains an unredeemed 'catastrophe' of 'piling wreckage'.³⁵

For Benjamin, this has both a theological context and an aesthetic one. If Richardson's fairly benign personal Anglicanism has been seen to be belied by the more startlingly Calvinist implications of his fiction, the *Trauerspiel* is even more avowedly a form in which God has absconded from the scene, leaving its practitioners 'taken up entirely with the hopelessness of the earthly condition'.³⁶ For Benjamin, this is the inheritance of the Lutheranism of German Protestantism for which there is no 'divine plan of salvation' accessible to the living, only a 'bare state of creation' emptied of cosmic meaning.³⁷ But this is not to set up Protestantism as some sort of prototype for the modern atheist-scientific position that finally sees the world stripped of obfuscating transcendence, 'as it really is'. Rather, as Samuel Weber emphasises, this emptying 'only endows' that transcendence 'with an all the more powerful force', an 'otherness' reappearing 'even more radically as *allegory*'.³⁸ The aesthetic corollary of the peculiar cultural situation of the baroque, Benjamin's idea of allegory goes well beyond the conventional definition of 'saying one thing in the language or imagery of another' and extends instead to a whole 'allegorical way of seeing'. 'In the field of allegorical intuition the image is a fragment, a rune', says Benjamin, 'the false appearance of totality is extinguished. For the *eidos* disappears, and the cosmos it contains shrivels up'. The arbitrary relationship of an allegory to whatever it is supposed to communicate means that, unlike the 'symbolism' theorised by the Romantics, it cannot sustain a 'totality' between material language and transcendental idea. The fallout of this is that 'any person, any object, any relationship can mean absolutely anything else'.³⁹ We should be

careful here not to mistake Benjamin's notion of allegory for a forerunner of a postmodernist relativism in which, semantically speaking, 'anything goes'. The point is not that meaning is blissfully liberated from logocentric stricture in allegory but that the weight of significance is now placed on the rather grim and all too material space of mismatch between statement and supposed meaning.⁴⁰

In a celebrated passage, Benjamin explains this with reference to the *facies hippocratica* – the face as it appears in between the last moments of life and dying – and what he treats as the prototype of all allegories, the *memento mori* of the bare skull:

Whereas in the symbol destruction is idealised and the transfigured face of nature is fleetingly revealed in the light of redemption, in allegory the observer is confronted with the *facies hippocratica* of history as a petrified, primordial landscape. Everything about history that, from the very beginning, has been untimely, sorrowful, unsuccessful, is expressed in a face – or rather in a death's head.

Deprived of either a reliable sovereign's myth-making decisionism or the plenitude of meaning that a belief in an interventionist God can lend itself to, the baroque subject's perception is radically materialist. The paraphernalia of destruction are not 'transfigured' or dignified as they are in, say, the Romantic storm paintings of a Turner. Those chaotic objects that seem to have lost their reassuring place in ordinary existence, as a skull has lost its human face, are not to be symbolically recuperated by having 'deeper' meaning attributed to them. Rather, for Benjamin, the materiality of this very loss – the gap between the object and its supposed 'human' purpose – is actually a precious thing that must be melancholically maintained. To do so is to undertake the melancholic 'state of mind in which feeling revives the empty world in the form of a mask, and derives an enigmatic satisfaction in contemplating it'.⁴¹ This, finally, is the rather shopworn tragic heroism available to modernity. For it is the last vigil capable of understanding, *pace* Schmitt, that "the state of emergency"

in which we live is not the exception but the rule'; that the caesura is not to be thought of as a temporary suspension declared for the convenience of an opportunistic sovereign but as continual rupture at the heart of being.⁴²

This book argues that much of what Benjamin's elaboration on the Hölderlinian caesura attributes to the baroque is equally pertinent to the even more belated and confused form of mid-eighteenth-century tragedy as Richardson practises it. But to understand the place of the caesura in *Clarissa* more specifically we must introduce a second twentieth-century engagement with Hölderlin's thesis. In seminars delivered over 1959 and 1960 entitled *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan considers the potential of Sophocles' tragedy *Antigone* as a text for rethinking ethics in post-war Europe. Discussing the play, he offers the following surreptitious translation of Hölderlin's words into his own characteristic idiom. For Lacan, Antigone is most of all a figure who 'evokes' a certain 'right':

a right that emerges in the language of the ineffaceable character of what is – ineffaceable, that is, from the moment when the emergent signifier freezes it like a fixed object in spite of the flood of possible transformations ... it is to this ... that the unshakeable, unyielding position of Antigone is fixed.

Whereas for Benjamin, the caesura is a recurring trope, inscribed in every part of the melancholy patchwork of the *Trauerspiel*, Lacan identifies it specifically with a single character in classical tragedy. The importance of Antigone is her unyielding refusal to compromise on her desire, a character trait that makes her exemplary of Lacan's central maxim for ethical conduct: 'the only thing one can be guilty of is giving ground relative to one's desire'.⁴³

The 'desire' in question has a very specific meaning within psychoanalysis. Certainly what we are dealing with here is not the 'pursuit of happiness' enshrined in the American Declaration of Independence, or a matter of 'finding what you really want', as is recommended in today's discourse of self-help and spiritual well-being. Rather, the dimension of

desire that Antigone commits to is located in the machine-like underbelly of the desired objects that seem to motivate us: what Freud called 'the drives'. Freud argues in the *Three Essays on Sexuality* and later in *The Drives and Their Vicissitudes* that there is a distinction to be made between the objects we take as the focus of our desires and the motivating forces in which desire originates. While it is reasonably common for us to imagine desire as coming into being in response to our encountering some stimulating object – as when a cartoon character's eyes leap out of his head when he sees a beautiful woman – Freud insists that the object is actually only the 'most variable' dimension of desire, 'is not originally connected with it' and 'becomes assigned to it only in consequence of being peculiarly fitted to make satisfaction possible'.⁴⁴

Satisfying objects come and go, but the 'driving' force of desire prior to this moment of 'assignation' is characterised by a bleak kind of continuity, as Lacan says, with 'no day or night, no spring or autumn, no rise and fall', only 'a constant force'.⁴⁵ The decidedly unlikely miracle of desire then, comes about when this identity-less force of 'drive' is allowed to lock on to a given object.⁴⁶ In Lacan's view, this is only allowed to happen by the intervention of the little shard of the extra-linguistic Real, which at the time of the *Ethics* seminar he refers to as 'the Thing'. Impossible to symbolise, 'the Thing' momentarily promises the subject that it offers the completion of the founding lack that has set her drive in motion in the first place. Hence the Lacanian formula for the work of sublimation involved every time we single out one of the sea of basically interchangeable objects as constituting the object of our desire: 'it raises an object ... to the dignity of the Thing'.⁴⁷

But what has this to do with either ethics or tragedy? First off, for Lacan, the Freudian account of the drives calls for the reorientation of every previous system of ethics. The drives' headlessly meandering relationship to their objects means that human desire is constitutionally resistant to its own fulfilment. The unpredictableness of object choice meanwhile, means that desire is in no way especially predisposed to the beautiful or healthy objects that would supposedly do us

'good'. Indeed, they are not even limited to actual 'objects' conventionally defined. In *Civilisation and its Discontents*, Freud posits that the very psychological glitches and symptoms which are part of all communal living themselves may become for a person 'substitutive satisfactions', weirdly materialised objects of unconscious enjoyment, even if they cause 'suffering in themselves or become sources of suffering for him by raising difficulties in his relations with his environment'.⁴⁸ This is why Lacan argues that the most distinctive ethical inheritance of the Enlightenment, the utilitarian demand for the 'greatest good to the greatest number', doesn't only need to be qualified by the predictable objection that 'my good is not the same as another's good'.⁴⁹ More damning is the fact that what I momentarily select as my 'good' may actually be a curiously externalised part of my own desiring constitution; or – because as Lacan famously puts it, 'desire is desire of the other' – those of other people.

For Lacan, the ethical problem of capitalist societies is that their subjects are encouraged to be bound to this ever vacillating drama of shifting objects of desire, this 'service of goods', while embarrassedly laying down any part of their desire that poses too much of a threat to their stable self-image of consistent identity. But, much as I am arguing that tragedy provided Richardson with a conceptual vocabulary with which to explore the possibility of the transformation of the very language of his society, Lacan contends that 'the good cannot reign over us all without an excess emerging whose fatal consequences are revealed to us in tragedy'. And this is where Antigone comes in. In contrast to human-all-to-human life under this 'reign of the good', Antigone's desire for the burial of her brother to the cost of all else is 'something uncivilised, something raw', going well beyond any conventional identity-confirming elevation of a given aim. Instead, behind Antigone's actions is a brute commitment to the drive itself, burning through the comfortably socialised 'object-ness' of her attachment until 'there is no longer any object', only the bleak inhuman 'Real' of the naked drive. This, finally, is the ethical lesson offered in tragedy. One does not resist the malignity of

the 'service of goods' by laying down selfish desires in favour of the 'greater good' but rather by taking them to their very inhuman limit.⁵⁰

Admittedly, for most of us, the momentary opportunity to behave ethically in relation to this desire-in-the-Real is not usually as dramatic or presented in such clear sight as Antigone's desire for the burial of her brother. It is not even always so in tragic drama. Antigone's quasi-incestuous transgression is often thought of as analogous to that of her father, Oedipus, who killed his father and slept with his mother. Is Oedipus' pursuit of his desire for Jocasta to the destruction of all else, then, an equivalently ethical refusal to 'give ground'? For Lacan, the truth is slightly more banal. Oedipus' unknowing incest may send him, like Antigone, 'beyond the sphere of the service of goods ... into the zone in which he pursues his desire', but it scarcely represents the same kind of heroic sacrifice as his daughter's, since Oedipus thought he was doing little more than settling into a conventional marriage having successfully avoided the destructive fate that had been predicted for him.⁵¹ The way in which he does not 'give ground in relation to desire' is actually found in the more subtle detail of the way he acts *after* the terrible realisation has been made. Lacan notes that in the moment of his having lost everything, Oedipus nonetheless continues to behave in much the same way as he did before, haughtily demanding further answers from his various courtiers. This desire to know, which is usually thought of as marking all Oedipus' conduct up until this point, is retained even in the tragic space of the completely unrecognisable new constellation that it has created. It is in this rather more modest commitment to desire that Oedipus' ethical stance is located.

In *Antigone*, then, the dilemma over the burial of the brother presents only a rather elevated example of how the coincidence of a desire with an act that will overturn one's existing symbolic coordinates will always prompt the elementary ethical question: should I allow this desire to tumble metonymically into something more safely acceptable to the service of goods (as most of us usually do)? Or should I commit to my

desire at the risk of losing all my recognisable subjectivity? *Oedipus the King*, meanwhile, offers a more everyday or even bathetically comic instance of this dilemma. For Oedipus, it is no longer a grand political gesture like the burial of a war criminal that produces this radically desired 'object' but an externalised element of his own desiring constitution. There is an analogous moment in Clarissa's Letter 82, written days before her abduction from Harlowe Place by Lovelace. There, she countenances the possibility that however justified her resistance to the marriage her family are forcing her into might be, there is also a sense in which both she and they are driven by a stubborn impulse not entirely limited to the situation at hand. 'We seem to be *impelled*, as it were, by a perverse fate which none of us are able to resist', she reflects to Anna, 'and yet all arising (with a strong appearance of self-punishment) from ourselves':

your partial love will be ready to acquit me of capital and intentional faults – but oh, my dear! my calamities have humbled me enough to make me turn my gaudy eye inward; to make me look into myself! – And what have I discovered there? – Why, my dear friend, more *secret* pride and vanity than I could have thought had lain in my unexamined heart. (C 333)

At the same comparatively early point, Clarissa is already contemplating that her circumstances and this character trait may result in her death. 'I shall not live always! – May but my *closing* scene be happy!', she says in the same letter, adding later that evening that she has been made to reassure her family that she does not intend to commit suicide (C 341). We might expect this early indication of a potentially self-destructive trace of pride to be expunged by the novel in some sort of conventional life lesson. But in fact it will actually prove to be Clarissa's major and most important source of resistance: first to the Harlowes, then to Lovelace in his attempts to seduce her, and finally to Lovelace and his family's attempts to ameliorate the rape by having Clarissa marry him. As Lovelace will eventually remark, 'who the devil could have expected ... a lady so immovably fixed' (C 1290). Even

at this early stage, the novel suggests that Clarissa's ethical resistance to such recuperations of the 'service of the goods' comes not simply from a higher plane of principle but, like Oedipus's, from an obscure part of her own desire: in psychoanalytic terms, from an inhuman commitment to the drive itself.

Terry Eagleton, among other critics, has referred to Clarissa as Antigone's 'English equivalent' and as 'another remarkable female figure of world literature who dies of refusing to relinquish her desire'.⁵² This book shares Eagleton's intuition that Clarissa is for Richardson something analogous to what Antigone is for Lacan, even if Clarissa's desire is, like Oedipus', rather more obscure and submerged than Antigone's. The eighteenth century was surprisingly indifferent to representing the Antigone myth in its art and literature, and yet Richardson writes of a woman whose commitment to a dangerous dimension within herself precipitates a tragedy.⁵³ This is tragedy not as a mere cautionary moral fable but as an attempt to write in the very caesura of meaning and identity that Benjamin and Lacan were reaching for in the twentieth century. The chapters that follow flesh out the case I have made here, proceeding through the novel roughly in narrative order. Chapter 1 concerns Richardson's representation of the dynamics of the 'received notion', the constituting mechanism of public knowledge that he says he wrote the novel to contest. It shows how, in the novel's first instalment, the imprisonment and tormenting of Clarissa by her family is executed by their quotation and repetition of certain phrases or statements from either her letters or theirs. This process, which is also in evidence in the letters between the rakes, constitutes Richardson's diagnosis of the dangerously shifting grounding for public knowledge in the novel. Chapter 2 takes up the novel on the other side of its major caesural moment, Lovelace's rape of Clarissa, and investigates the remarkable set of fragmentary texts, or 'mad papers', she composes at this point. Here I am influenced by Benjamin's analysis of how quotations and allegorical images became eerily alienated from meaning under the melancholic gaze of the *Trauerspiel* authors, to show how the novel seems

to register the new loss of effectiveness of the ‘received notion’ at the level of its form. Chapter 3 remains with the mad papers and their surrounding letters, drawing attention to how their problematisation of authoritative quotation extends to the strange way in which they are mediated in the transcriptions of other characters in the novel. This chapter also analyses Lovelace’s psychologically fascinating response to the rape of Clarissa and argues that it is Clarissa’s Antigone-like resistance to his attempts to reverse that tragedy that drives the latter stages of the novel. The landscape of the novel in its final volumes is the subject of Chapter 4, in which I show the relevance of Benjamin’s analysis of the baroque to Clarissa’s long approach to death. The Conclusion, finally, returns to the theories of tragedy discussed in this introduction, making a final Nietzschean ‘attempt at self-criticism’ of my theory of *Clarissa*, through the lens of Lacan’s later work on sexual difference.

Notes

- 1 See Clifford Siskin and William Warner, ‘Introduction’, in Clifford Siskin and William Warner (eds), *This Is Enlightenment* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 2010), pp. 1–36; see also John Bender, ‘Novel Knowledge: Judgement, Experience, Experiment’, in Clifford Siskin and William Warner (eds), *This Is Enlightenment* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 2010), pp. 284–300.
- 2 Mary Wollstonecraft, *Political Writings*, ed. Janet Todd (London: William Pickering, 1993), pp. 202, 205–6; Wollstonecraft is adapting Shakespeare’s words about a king who has failed to remain sufficiently aloof from the gossip of his subjects in *Henry IV, Part 1*: ‘so common hackneyed in the eyes of men’ (III.ii.40). Throughout this book, quotations from Shakespeare are referenced parenthetically by act, scene and line and are from *The Complete Works*, ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006).
- 3 Wollstonecraft, *Political Writings*, p. 206.
- 4 Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 189–90.

- 5 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Douglas Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 30.
- 6 A recent article by Felicity A. Nussbaum suggests that his work was not alone in the century in making this choice. As she asks in 'The Unaccountable Pleasure of Eighteenth-Century Tragedy', *PMLA*, 129 (4) (2014): 688–707: 'if Enlightenment hope and faith in progress were not compatible with portraying tragic suffering, why did old and new tragedies continue to be produced on the eighteenth-century stage?' (p. 689).
- 7 This was reflected in the sales of the novel's final instalment, which came out at less than two-thirds that of its first two; see Thomas Keymer, 'Clarissa's Death, *Clarissa's* Sale, and the Text of the Second Edition', *Review of English Studies*, 45 (179) (1994): 389–96; for Richardson's commitment to the tragic outcome from the earliest drafting stage, see E. Derek Taylor, *Reason and Religion in Clarissa: Samuel Richardson and 'The Famous Mr Norris of Bemerton'* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 1–2.
- 8 Adam Budd, 'Why Clarissa Must Die: Richardson's Tragedy and Editorial Heroism', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 31 (3) (2007): 1–28 (p. 3); Alex Eric Hernandez, 'Tragedy and the Economics of Providence in *Clarissa*', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 22 (4) (2010): 599–630 (p. 605).
- 9 For Samuel Johnson's irritation with Richardson's perpetuating this affectation even during the publication of *Sir Charles Grandison*, see *The Letters of Samuel Johnson*, ed. Bruce Redford, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), vol. I, p. 48.
- 10 Thomas Rymer, *The Critical Works*, ed. Curt A. Zimansky (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1971), p. 22.
- 11 Timothy Reiss, *Tragedy and Truth: Studies in the Development of a Renaissance and Neoclassical Discourse* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1980), p. 9; see also Terry Eagleton, *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), p. 138.
- 12 See Lucien Goldmann, *The Hidden God: A Study of the Tragic Vision in the Pensées of Pascal and the Tragedies of Racine*, trans. Philip Thody (London and New York: Routledge, 1964).
- 13 Leopold Damrosch Jr., *God's Plots and Man's Stories: Studies in the Fictional Imagination from Milton to Fielding* (Chicago, Ill.: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), pp. 213, 258–9.
- 14 Sandra Macpherson, *Harm's Way: Tragic Responsibility and the Novel Form* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), p. 61.

- 15 Jonathan Kramnick, *Actions and Objects from Hobbes to Richardson* (Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2010), p. 194.
- 16 Tom Keymer, *Richardson's Clarissa and the Eighteenth-Century Reader* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 143; on these, see also Rebecca Tierney-Hynes, *Philosophers and Romance Readers, 1680–1740* (London: Palgrave, 2012), pp. 141–4.
- 17 On Lillo's distinctiveness from the Restoration tragedies, see J. Douglas Canfield, *Heroes and States: On the Ideology of Restoration Tragedy* (Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 2000), pp. 171–5.
- 18 On Richardson's interest in the anthology form, see Leah Price, *The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel: From Richardson to George Eliot* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), Chapter 1; on the ongoing importance of the Renaissance tradition of the commonplace book in eighteenth-century culture, see David Allan, *Commonplace Books and Reading in Georgian England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
- 19 I have altered Richardson's volume and page references to refer to the Penguin Classics edition.
- 20 Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1957), p. 243.
- 21 Friedrich Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters*, ed. and trans. Jeremy Adler and Charlie Louth (London: Penguin, 2009), p. 318.
- 22 Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography: Mimesis, Philosophy, Politics*, ed. Christopher Fynsk (Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1989), p. 213; as he later elaborates on this: 'the tragic spectacle presupposes, behind it, the irremediable loss of every secure position and determination of enunciation' (p. 234).
- 23 Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, p. 46; for another recent interpretation of this passage, see Simon Critchley and Jameson Webster, *The Hamlet Doctrine* (London: Verso, 2013), pp. 194–9.
- 24 Alenka Zupančič, *Why Psychoanalysis? Three Interventions* (Uppsala: NSU Press, 2008), p. 60.
- 25 Judith Wilt, 'He Could Go No Farther: A Modest Proposal about Clarissa and Lovelace', *PMLA*, 92 (1) (1977): 19–32.
- 26 Bonnie Latimer, *Making Gender, Culture, and the Self in the Fiction of Samuel Richardson* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), p. 191.
- 27 Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, ed. and trans. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings and others, 4 vols. (Cambridge,

- Mass.: The Belknap Press, 1996), vol. I, p. 340; vol. IV, pp. 393, 387.
- 28 Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, vol. I, p. 340.
 - 29 Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: Verso, 1998), p. 108.
 - 30 Jane O. Newman, *Benjamin's Library: Modernity, Nation, and the Baroque* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), pp. 83–4.
 - 31 Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, pp. 60, 140, 63.
 - 32 For a recent account of the Schmitt–Benjamin relationship, see Elizabeth Stewart, *Catastrophe and Survival: Walter Benjamin and Psychoanalysis* (New York: Continuum, 2010), pp. 1–4; and on Schmitt and the early modern period more generally, Graham Hammill and Julia Reinhard Lupton (eds), *Political Theology and Early Modernity* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 2012).
 - 33 See Giorgio Agamben, *The State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 2005), pp. 52–3.
 - 34 Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, pp. 74, 71.
 - 35 Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, vol. IV, p. 392.
 - 36 Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, p. 81.
 - 37 For a full discussion of Benjamin's interpretation of Lutheranism and its sources, see Newman, *Benjamin's Library*, pp. 154–69.
 - 38 Samuel Weber, *Benjamin's -abilities* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 187.
 - 39 Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, pp. 166, 176, 175.
 - 40 See Jeremy Tambling, *Hölderlin and the Poetry of Tragedy: Readings in Sophocles, Shakespeare, Nietzsche and Benjamin* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2014), p. 233: 'we can now align Hölderlin's caesura, and the expressionless, and the pure word, as analogous terms whose other name is Benjamin's "allegory"'.
 41 Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, pp. 166, 139.
 - 42 Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, vol. IV, p. 392.
 - 43 Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques Alain-Miller, trans. Dennis Porter (London: Norton, 1992), pp. 279, 321.
 - 44 Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id and Other Works*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: Vintage, 2001), p. 122.
 - 45 Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques Alain-Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Norton, 1998) p. 165.

- 46 'The miracle of desire' is Alenka Zupančič's phrase; see *The Shortest Shadow: Nietzsche's Philosophy of the Two* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2003), p. 175.
- 47 Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, p. 112.
- 48 Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion, Civilisation and its Discontents and Other Works*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: Vintage, 2001), p. 108.
- 49 Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, p. 187.
- 50 Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, pp. 305, 259, 263, 149.
- 51 Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, p. 304.
- 52 Terry Eagleton, *Trouble with Strangers: A Study of Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), p. 206; for a similar passing comparison, see Damrosch, *God's Plots and Man's Stories*, p. 256.
- 53 On the virtually complete absence of Antigone from eighteenth-century art and literature, see George Steiner, *Antigones* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), pp. 6–7; and Edith Hall and Fiona Macintosh, *Greek Tragedy and the British Theatre: 1660–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 317.