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### **Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandison* and the symptoms of subjectivity**

The eighteenth-century novel has long been implicated in the creation of modern subjectivity. For Nancy Armstrong the very “history of the novel and the history of the modern subject are...the same.”<sup>1</sup> Conventionally, the early novel’s preoccupation with the individual has been credited with the turn from the pre-modern self toward an inward-turning “subject.” Individuality, it seems, is inextricable from subjectivity. The capacity of the novel to represent “non-generic types, particular and independent, and thus (essentially) non-social ‘moral’ beings” marks the evolution of autonomous individuals.<sup>2</sup> The first-person narratives of the early novel empower “the production of ...written interiority,” and the novel thus represents a space for individual response, separate from, often antithetical to, the social.<sup>3</sup> This alliance of individuality and subjectivity can be traced to Ian Watt’s influential study, which characterized the novel as “individualist and innovating.” His insistence on “the interconnection of aesthetic particularism, economic and epistemological individualism, and privatization... subsumed under the term *individualism*” has continued to shape critical discourse.<sup>4</sup> Samuel Richardson’s status in Watt’s novelistic triumvirate is as the father of the psychological novel, and his works, primarily *Clarissa; or the history of a young lady* (1747–8), have long been claimed as evidence of the eighteenth-century evolution of an “autonomous, independent individual” or “juridical subject.”<sup>5</sup>

Yet criticism’s claim for Richardson as a forefather for individual subjectivity rests on a selective reading of his work, one which excises both *Pamela*’s continuation, *Pamela in her*

<sup>1</sup> Nancy Armstrong, *How Novels Think: The Limits of Individualism from 1719–1900* (New York, 2005), 5.

<sup>2</sup> John Richetti, *The English Novel in History, 1700–1780* (London, 1999), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Felicity A. Nussbaum, *The Autobiographical Subject: Gender and Ideology in Eighteenth-century England* (London, 1989), xiii.

<sup>4</sup> Ian Watt, *Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (London, 1957), 13; Carol Kay, *Political Constructions: Defoe, Richardson, and Sterne in relation to Hobbes, Hume, and Burke* (London, 1988), 9.

<sup>5</sup> Laura Hinton, “The Heroine’s Subjection: Clarissa, Sadomasochism, and Natural Law,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 32, no. 3 (1999), 294; John Zomchick, *Family and the Law in Eighteenth-Century Fiction: The Private Conscience in the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, 1993), xi.

*Exalted Condition* (1742), and his final work, *The History of Charles Grandison* (1753) from his corpus. Effectively halving Richardson's *oeuvre*, such a critical selection seems to confirm Clifford Siskin's claim that our analysis of eighteenth-century novels has been dictated by presumptions of interiority.<sup>6</sup> In light of works by Deirdre Lynch, Carol Kay, and Patricia Meyer Spacks that have questioned the equivalence of the novel with individualist subjectivity, this essay will seek to examine *Grandison* as a novel concerned with creating an anti-individualist subjectivity.<sup>7</sup> Long relegated to a post-script in studies of Richardson's work, critical attention is returning to *Grandison* as academics seek to further understand the complex origins of the novel.<sup>8</sup> Its influence on Jane Austen alone (who Armstrong sees as inaugurating the dominant form of nineteenth-century fiction) suggests a richness of style and content that is obscured by contemporary impatience with its moral ratifications and reconfirmations.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, Spacks includes *Grandison* in her study of boredom, as an instance of the difficulty of recapturing interest in a novel whose "insistence on community" alienates and flummoxes modern readers.<sup>10</sup> Critics similarly evince irritation at the work's solutions of the contradictions of individual life, as

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<sup>6</sup> Clifford Siskin, *Historicity of Romantic Discourse* (Oxford, 1988).

<sup>7</sup> In *The Conversational Circle: Re-reading the English Novel, 1740–1775* (Lexington, 1996), Betty Schellenberg notes Richardson's anomalous position in "individualist" histories of the novel, as well as the anti-individualist aspects of both *Grandison* and his sequel to *Pamela*. Deirdre Lynch's *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning* (Chicago, 1998) and Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Novel Beginnings: experiments in eighteenth-century fiction* (New Haven, 2006) both address the material construction of character in terms which complicate accounts of the form which see it as inherently privileging the subject.

<sup>8</sup> For example Terry Eagleton's *The Rape of Clarissa: writing, sexuality and class struggle* (Minneapolis, 1982), despite recognizing *Grandison* as "the logical culmination of Richardson's ideological project" (95), deals with the novel in a summary and dismissive fashion as a bathetic sequel to the sublimity of *Clarissa*. Recently Bonnie Latimer has completed a book which aims to "centralize" Richardson's final work and has published two articles relating to this project, "Apprehensions of control": the familial politics of marriage, choice and consent in "Sir Charles Grandison", *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 32:1, 2009: 1-19, and "Pious Frauds: 'Honest Tricks' and the Patterns of Anglican Devotional Thought in Richardson", *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 32:3, 2009: 339-351, other recent work on *Grandison* includes Tita Chico, "Details and Frankness: Affective Relations in 'Sir Charles Grandison'", *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture*, 38, 2009: 45-68; Elaine McGirr, "Manly Lessons: Sir Charles Grandison, The Rake, and the Man of Sentiment", *Studies in the Novel*, 39 (2007): 267-283; Robert G. Walker, "Hyenas and Black Swans: Notes on Annotating Richardson's *Grandison*", *The Eighteenth-Century Intelligencer*, January 2009: 17-22, and 2008 American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies sessions on this novel, likewise signal a renewal of interest in the work.

<sup>9</sup> Jocelyn Harris's *Jane Austen's Art of Memory* (Cambridge, 1989) traces the extent of Austen's engagement with Richardson's novels.

<sup>10</sup> Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Boredom: The Literary History of a State of Mind* (Chicago, 1995), 134.

individuals behave well, unselfishly, without *sufficient* conflict between the private self and social demands: Mark Kinkead-Weekes bemoans the novel as “turning aside from that inner drama which produced his greatest works”; Doody notes how the openness of interpersonal tensions diminishes their power to attract interest; Sylvia Kasey Marks comments on the “public” nature of the correspondences.

Unarguably, *Grandison* lacks *Clarissa*’s carceral interiority; private individuals are supplanted by a corresponding society of astonishing frankness. There appears to be critical consensus that private individuals are the pre-eminent source of novelistic interest and that *Grandison*’s failure to provide individual conflict is a mark of the triumph of its author’s didacticism over his aesthetic instinct. Yet Richardson’s novels explicitly rework and respond to their immediate predecessors and critics, representing a conscious formal, thematic and ideological development. The author himself claimed that this final work was the culmination of his “whole plan” of writing, that is, the renovation of social relations at the level of the reader.<sup>11</sup> Such a statement, notwithstanding Richardson’s comments on his own prolixity, deserves credence given his habits of persistent editorial revision and intervention. Indeed, numerous poetic panegyrics assert *Grandison* as “This last great work, which leaves all praise behind”.<sup>12</sup> Anna Williams, Samuel Johnson’s companion, places *Grandison* above *Clarissa* - “Thus every mind Clarissa’s tomes rever’d; / Great work of art, till *Grandison* appear’d.”<sup>13</sup> Like Richardson’s own prefaces and literary theorizations, these queasy encomia to Richardson’s work fuse aesthetic achievement with didactic aim. *Grandison*, like all of Richardson’s work, is underpinned and sustained by moral claims that create a coercive dynamic within the novels

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<sup>11</sup> Samuel Richardson, *Selected Letters of Samuel Richardson*, ed. John Carroll, (Oxford, 1964), 235.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Edwards, ‘To the Author of Sir Charles Grandison’, *Sonnets* (1758), Literature online, <http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk>, accessed 10/14/2009.

<sup>13</sup> Anna Williams, ‘Verses addressed to Mr. Richardson, on his History of Sir Charles Grandison, *Miscellanies* (1766), Literature Online, <http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk>, accessed 10/14/2009.

themselves. Moral claims also justify and explicate certain formal choices that suggest that viewing *Grandison* as technically and ideologically coherent – a success rather than a failure – helpfully deconstructs Richardson’s persistent image as a moralistic and untutored original, offering not merely the rehabilitation of this final work but a means of elucidating the anti-individualist strain in his work.

Much critical censure of *Grandison* follows a dual and interconnected critique, lambasting the novel’s thoroughgoing refusal of the primacy of private individuality and its veneration of an elusive male hero who fails to achieve concrete characterization. Margaret Anne Doody notes the novel’s panoptic epistolary insistence on community, and draws attention to the subjective pain postulated as the price of such community. The synonmity of moral community with anguish thus “raises doubts about the almost totalitarian vision of social judgement at the same time as it evokes the need for communal values and responsibilities.”<sup>14</sup> Doody’s designation of *Grandison*’s fictional community as “almost totalitarian” neatly encapsulates the novel’s paradoxical achievement. Its infiltration and negation of the private space of the individual is the very ground upon which its moral community, and its moral subjects, are founded. As Tita Chico has noted, Richardson’s final novel “endorses modes of suffering and humiliation purportedly in the service of moral and social improvement.”<sup>15</sup> For Chico, the novel represents an affinal network that harks back to older forms of communal life whilst actively reducing the power of its members through oppressively regulatory affective relations. In this essay I wish to develop Doody’s comments, and by treating *Grandison* as an instance of “totalitarian fiction” to explore its treatment of relationship and morality, power and affect, its skilful interpellation of subjects. Proceeding from the academic

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<sup>14</sup> Margaret Anne Doody, “Identity and Character in *Sir Charles Grandison*,” in *Samuel Richardson: Tercentenary Essays*, ed. Margaret Anne Doody and Peter Sabor (Cambridge, 1989), 110-132: 114.

<sup>15</sup> Chico, “Details and Frankness,” 63.

orthodoxy that the eighteenth-century novel is a site of modern subjectivity, this essay will look at the precise form of subjectivity fostered by the novel. However I will also elucidate the way in which *Grandison* produces subjects willing to suspend or renounce their autonomy for a moral ideal, pursuing its totalitarian tendencies. In focussing on the “totalitarian” aspects I hope to complicate the prevailing notion of this novel as static, its subjects without agency, whilst simultaneously accounting for its erasure from genealogies of the novel. Crucial to this re-reading is Slavoj Žižek’s conception of totalitarianism, based on his readings of the psychoanalytic structure of Stalinist or totalitarian regimes. Žižek’s analytic model avoids a reflexive rejection of totalitarianism and offers a dynamic and persuasive model of the complexities of successful subjectivity produced in such societies. *Grandison*’s idiosyncratic blend of coercion, subordination to a central figure of power, of constant self-examination and openness mirrors the structure of power and knowledge characteristic of totalitarianism. Reading *Grandison* as a novel of totalitarian morality offers insight into the delights of self-negation, and the appeal of this anti-individualist novel, and helps explicate critical rejection.

### Structuring subjectivity

At the very core of Richardson’s novel is “the un-ostentatious merit of a TRULY GOOD MAN.”<sup>16</sup> As numerous critics observe, the titular focus of the novel, Sir Charles Grandison, remains unsubstantiated throughout. He is “an effect of feminine awe,” his character a by-product of an “accretion of praise.”<sup>17</sup> In epistolary terms, the hero is conspicuously absent; of 319 letters, Sir Charles himself writes only sixty-five. Yet his name resonates throughout the correspondence, his letters copied, distributed, and dissected by his domestic correspondents. Sir Charles’s intangibility has been seen as the

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<sup>16</sup> Samuel Richardson, *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753–54), ed. Jocelyn Harris, 3 vols (London, 1972), 3:462. References are to this edition.

<sup>17</sup> John Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1988), 83; Tassie Gwilliam, *Samuel Richardson’s Fictions of Gender* (Stanford, 1996), 112.

novel's primary flaw: lacking complexity or indeed interiority, he remains an ideal rather than a character. A composite of so many calm virtues and so few conflicts, his views a magazine of polite and considered opinions assembled from Richardson's assiduous reading of *The Spectator* and the Bible, Sir Charles is a subjective vanishing point. His being is "a condition of empty potential, one who is imagined as being able to comprehend everything, and yet who may give no evidence of having comprehended anything."<sup>18</sup> Sir Charles is the hero as cipher; a figurehead whose sole division is the crime of loving two women equally.

Yet this characterological nullity is not unique in the mid-eighteenth-century novel. This disinterested (and, for modern readers, uninteresting) position signals privilege and powerful discourse. In his dedication to *Ferdinand Count Fathom* (1753) Smollett claims that novels require a central character to "attract the attention, unite the incidents, unwind the clue of the labyrinth ... by virtue of their own importance."<sup>19</sup> This structural centre-point enables interpretive consensus and structural coherence. Whilst Smollett's anti-hero enables the reader to construct a moral response to evil, Sir Charles provides an opportunity for consensus about moral actions. Such figures are narrative vehicles rather than objects, or subjects, of interest in their own right. As Deirdre Lynch suggests, they operate more as "a means for producing a sense of social context" than as explorations of subjectivity, functioning structurally or instrumentally, like "a prosthetic device that enables readers to apprehend the comprehensive, impersonal systems that bind them together."<sup>20</sup> For Lynch such absent heroes with "typically unrecognizable" or impalpable qualities suggest an eighteenth-century renegotiation of the gentlemanly ideal itself, an exploration of the social inequities that rendered such bland, characterless characters

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<sup>18</sup> John Barrell, *English Literature in History 1730–1780: An Equal, Wide Survey* (London, 1983), 203.

<sup>19</sup> Tobias Smollett, *The Adventures of Ferdinand Count Fathom* (1753), ed. Paul Gabriel-Boucé (Harmondsworth, 1999), 43.

<sup>20</sup> Lynch, *Economy of Character*, 86.

potent and mobile.<sup>21</sup> The sense of the inherently limited abilities of individual characters is echoed by Smollett's structural analysis of novels as governed by a "uniform plan, and general occurrence, to which every individual figure is subservient" (*ibid.*). The overarching structure of the novel, and its moral aim, render the individual a subsidiary concern rather than the primary focus of the form. Smollett also distinguishes the novel's ability to deploy terror, fear and violence as efficacious ideological tools from theatre's fixation with positive figures of happiness and "transcendent worth, conducted through the vicissitudes of fortune to that goal of happiness" (*ibid.*). The efficacy of fear is superior to the allure of virtue. Published in the same year, Richardson's novel unites these two considerations in an eponymous hero of moral perfections whose presence and adulation is associated persistently with characters' physical pain, mortification and dread. Most recently Elaine McGirr has argued that the novel achieves Sir Charles's presence through the physical dysfunction and brutalization of other male bodies. The narrative dismantles, subjugates and terrorizes competing forms of masculinity, creating "an epic cast of inadequate men".<sup>22</sup> The female correspondents of the novel, whose letters constitute the bulk of the text, act as an enthusiastic chorus whose labor is the celebration, adulation and promulgation of Sir Charles's invincible and virile virtue.

That this virtue dispenses pain is evident from the outset. Those subjected to the hero's supererogatory philanthropy are prone to discomfort and agony: "How shall I bear this goodness!" (1:145) asks one. Others burst "out into tears and speech together—And is it thus, Is it thus, you subdue me? Is it thus you convince me of my shameful littleness? I cannot bear it" (3:55). His brilliance is intolerable: "there is no living within the blazing glory of this man!" (1:384). Benevolence is overpowering: "what consciousness of

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<sup>21</sup> Lynch, *Economy of Character*, 104.

<sup>22</sup> McGirr, "Manly Lessons," 269.

inferiority fills even a mind not ungenerous, when it labors under the sense of obligations it cannot return!” (1:204). Subjects complain of his “*intolerable* superiority!”; if only “he would do something wrong, something cruel” (2:89), they could refuse his perfections. Overseeing his subjects with irreproachable goodness, Sir Charles produces a paradoxical self-laceration. Harriet Byron dwindles beside Sir Charles: “I am such a nothing...I cannot bear my own littleness” (1:298, see also 1:280–2 and 3:132). Constant comparison mortifies all members of his society. For the members of his community his presence appears to dwarf their existence: his largesse diminishes their virtues, highlighting their own “littleness” when faced with his omnipotence. Exclamations of admiration consistently return the subject to their own inferiority. Sir Charles’s “superior excellence, like sunshine, breaking out upon a sudden, finds out, and brings to sight, those spots...that were hardly before discoverable” (1:375). These reflective judgements tell us more about the correspondents’ perceptions than about the character of Sir Charles. Their worship of Sir Charles insists upon his status as the apotheosis of goodness, his structural centrality in the community of believers. Louis Althusser’s model of subjection helps explicate the novel’s insistence on the irreproachability of its hero, his goodness an article of faith that enables identification from writing subjects and generates correspondence.

The Absolute Subject occupies the unique place of the Centre, and interpellates around it the infinity of subjects in a double mirror-connexion such that it *subjects* the subjects to the Subject, while giving them in the Subject in which each subject can contemplate in its own image...God *will* recognize his own in it, i.e. those

who have recognized God, and have recognized themselves in Him, will be saved.<sup>23</sup>

As Betty Schellenberg has asserted, “meaning can only be determined through a prior act of submission to the narrative’s central premise, that Sir Charles Grandison is a good man.”<sup>24</sup> The nebulous nature of his being only serves to confirm his ideological power as a “Master Signifier” in the novel. Disembodied, virtuous, perfect, “The Good Man” can retain the allure of a transcendental illusion and a constituent part of ideology.

Yet this belief is inextricable from discomfort. The unpleasant reproach of *Grandison*’s love object seems to provide a perfect reason for its literary failure to stimulate readers’ desire to read it. Yet the novel nonetheless possesses a seductive ideological logic. Harriet Byron’s violent and eroticized first encounter with Sir Charles provides the novel’s paradigm of moral subjectivity. At a masquerade Harriet is abducted by the licentious Sir Hargrave and is saved by Sir Charles’ interposition. During his rescue of Harriet, Sir Charles inadvertently assaults her abductor, lacerating Sir Hargrave’s mouth and face with his sword. Once safe Harriet is “oppressed with obligation!—Such goodness!—No words!—My gratitude!—My full heart!” (1:143). She is rendered powerless, “what shall I do with my gratitude...I am overwhelmed with my gratitude; I can only express it in silence” (1:167). As a woman of independent financial means and of vigorous mental faculties, Harriet’s self-reproach is excessive. Through this romantic episode Richardson establishes Sir Charles as a kind of novelistic *deus ex machina*, a hero who produces the violent punishment of offenders usually left to Providence. The conferring of these

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<sup>23</sup> Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” *Lenin and Philosophy, and other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (London, 1971), 168.

<sup>24</sup> Betty Schellenberg, “Using ‘Femalities’ to ‘Make Fine Men’: Richardson’s *Sir Charles Grandison* and the Feminization of Narrative,” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 34, No. 3, (1994), 599-616: 613.

mythic qualities onto his hero can be seen in Harriet's subjection to the Grandison family.

I have not yet forgiven myself...and yet self-partiality has suggested strong pleas in my favor... How my judge, CONSCIENCE, will determine upon those pleas...I cannot say. Yet, I think, that an acquittal from this brother and sisters would...make my conscience easy. (1:186)

Already circumstantially "punished" in the plot by abduction and near-rape, Harriet's wish to be tried and "acquitted" is excessive, even masochistic. Her guilt is exacerbated rather than relieved by her host's goodness. Transferring her own sense of culpability to Sir Charles, she renders him what Žižek calls, via Lacan, the "Other supposed to Know." Believing that Sir Charles knows her secret guilt—her own weakness—Harriet relinquishes her individual agency, displacing it onto the moral collective of the family and, despite her financial independence, subjects herself to their law. Her anguish is merely an indication of her desire for total submission. Individual conscience is already relegated to a position of secondary importance to group morality. Harriet's guilt is not inauthentic, but is the sign of her internalization of Sir Charles's moral authority: she has failed to live up to his moral code by choosing to attend a masquerade, she has deserved his violent intervention. At its core even *Grandison's* romantic narrative is ineluctably authoritarian.

### **The symptom of subjection**

Subjection to Sir Charles's benign authority is marked by distress or trauma throughout the novel. The cost of his protection is public mortification and personal pain, as can be seen in his rescue of Harriet, Emily Jervois's rejection by her mother, and his valiant

intervention in Jeronmyo's near-fatal duel. Each episode represents pain as the sign of a transaction between the inadequate individual and Sir Charles's unimpeachable moral potency. As a result, anguish is celebrated as a sign of moral capitulation. Harriet's "little pain" on suppressing her jealousy is an instance of what Carol Houlihan Flynn has termed the "pains of compliance."<sup>25</sup> For Flynn, these "pains of compliance" are manifestations of subjective resistance to social control, an index of the novel's excessive demands on characters' individuality. Certainly, the psychological pain represented in the novel emanates from the interface between the subject and society's moral demands. However *Grandison's* harmonious community is not an incipiently fractious society bristling under imperious subjugation, desperate to break into liberal individualism. Instead the novel represents the subtleties of subjectivity in totalitarian circumstances. Richardson's novel explores, and arguably celebrates, the internalization of moral law and the subordination of the individual in the cause of a collective good. Here again Žižek's critique of Althusser offers an alternative to the dichotomous model of self and society that dominates much criticism, teasing out the tensions of subjectivity in the novel. Žižek argues that, rather than representing resistance or dissent, these pains are symptomatic of *successful* socialisation—the guilty enjoyment of repression itself. For Žižek, subjection is experienced as "a traumatic, senseless injunction." As the subject is interpellated into an ideology,

there is always a residue, a leftover...this leftover, *far from hindering the full submission of the subject to the ideological command, is the very condition of it;* it is precisely

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<sup>25</sup> Carol Houlihan Flynn, "The Pains of Compliance in *Sir Charles Grandison*," *Samuel Richardson: Tercentenary Essays*, ed. Margaret Anne Doody and Peter Sabor (Cambridge, 1989), 133-160: 133. My analysis is indebted to Flynn's essay.

this non-integrated surplus of senseless traumatism which confers on the Law its unconditional authority.<sup>26</sup>

This surplus manifests itself in the symptom, which is “a fissure, and asymmetry, a certain “pathological” imbalance which belies the universalism of the bourgeois rights and principles.”<sup>27</sup> Rather than auguring a conflict between subjectivity and objectivity capable of superseding bourgeois society and morality, the symptom “functions as their constitutive moment.”<sup>28</sup> Thus the pain that Lois Chaber sees as the fissure between religious injunction and individual agency and Harris sees as the nascent alienation of the individual is rather the sign of their union—the constitutive moment of subjectivity itself.

As subjection’s constant ancillary, pain has moral value: “it is a generous pain that I have made you suffer: I adore you for it” (2:113). Generated by the disjunction between internal desires and social demands, its presence attests to the subject’s participation in community and is consequently feted. Pain as a symptom of subjection is embodied through the hyper-sensitivity of sensibility as bodies respond to their incorporation into a wider community. An instance of Žižek’s unassimilable pain of subjectivation and its surplus value of successful subjection is provided by the Italian heroine, Clementina della Porretta. Though Richardson claimed the della Porrettas allowed him to represent “indulgence in the character of parents along with their parental authority, without making it necessary to call in an Harlowe violence to oppose their child’s inclinations,” the Italian episodes are the displaced locus for the brutality that pervades much of the novel.<sup>29</sup> Though Colnebrook may seem a haven of liberty in comparison with Italy, both spaces are saturated by repression. Sir Charles’s status as paragon pertains in both, and

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<sup>26</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London, 1989), 43.

<sup>27</sup> Žižek, *Sublime Object*, 21.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Richardson, *Selected Letters*, 290.

thus his disabling goodness is able to procure spectacular pain in both loci – the effects of his power being duly reported and disseminated to his correspondents in England. Following her refusal to marry Grandison, Clementina's hysteria is treated medically by blood-letting. In assenting to the requests of both her family and Sir Charles she is not silently quiescent but articulates the ideological content of her submission:

Do you wish to see me wounded? - To see my heart bleeding at the arm, I warrant...Will it, will it, comfort you to have me bleed?—Come then, *be* comforted; I *will* bleed; But you shall not quite leave me...Now methinks I am Iphigenia, Chevalier, going to be offered. (2:193–4)

The dramatic explicitness of the scene contrasts only in its extremity with the subjection found in the Grandison household. The Italian episodes externalize the subjugation and sacrifice found in *Grandison's* extended community of writers: Clementina's innovation is to aestheticize her plight and to perform subjection through her body. It is force and intensity that distinguish the della Porretta episodes from the scenes of normative self-abasement in Colnebrook. Both produce pain as a laudable symptom of the triumph of subjection; the della Porrettas merely impose external violence in order to produce subjection rather than the orderly totalitarianism of their Protestant counterparts.

The novel overtly relates Clementina's madness to Harriet, and her own self-abasement and mortification, thus foregrounding its own interest in the processes of subjection and the ways in which the subject is active in colluding in his or her own subjugation, by conferring authority on an external power such as Sir Charles. *Grandison's* narrative offers “Lessons of morality, given in practice, rather than by preaching theory...not only where there is no interest proposed to be served, but *against* interest,” subduing the characters

by their “own consents” (3:59). Clementina’s hysterical illness is an extreme instance of the renunciation of self-interest: as she rejects Sir Charles for religious reasons her body protests her simultaneous worthiness and unworthiness as his bride by assuming illness. Her worthiness resides precisely in her performance of psychological inadequacy alongside her expressed recognition of the moral superiority of Sir Charles. The subjection of the individual becomes the highest expression of her inclusion in a moral community. Harriet Byron’s bivalent “open heart” is paradigmatic of such a refusal of individual boundaries:

Were you ever sensible, my Harriet, of the tender pain that an open heart (yours is an open and enlarged one) feels; longing, yet, for its friend’s sake, *afraid to reveal unwelcome tidings, which, however, it imports the concerned to know?* How loth to disturb the tranquillity which is built upon *ignorance of the event!* (3:350, my emphasis)

The “compassionating friend” (*ibid.*) describes a process of revelation that introduces both “friends” to a shared subjection, a shared pain. As in Sarah Scott’s *Millenium Hall*, the “boundaries and barriers raised by those two watchful and suspicious enemies, Meum and Tuum...[are] broken down.”<sup>30</sup> This shared pain is a guarantee of harmony: “it is a moral security of innocence, since the heart that is able to partake in the distress of another, cannot wilfully give it” (3:258). Similarly, community in Sarah Fielding’s sentimental novel *The Adventures of David Simple* results through the shared experience of pain: sensible reactions to pitiable tales confirm emotional eligibility but also bind the group in their mutual pursuit of a higher moral standard inadmissible in the sublunary world. As David witnesses Camilla’s reactions to the report of Cynthia’s misfortunes he “was melted into Tenderness at the sight of her Tears; and yet, inwardly, rejoiced at the

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<sup>30</sup> Sarah Scott, *Millenium Hall*, ed. Gary Kelly (Ontario, 1995), 93.

Thoughts of her being capable of shedding them on so just an Occasion.”<sup>31</sup> In *Grandison* the “feeling” or “enlarged heart” creates a type of embodied inter-subjectivity in which sensitivity is both erotic stimulus and appetite.<sup>32</sup>

[It was] a sort of you-know-not-what of *pleasure*... a fretting, gnawing pain in your stomach, that made you I can't tell how to describe it; yet [you] were humble, meek, as if looking out for pity from every-body, and ready to pity every-body.

(1.284-5)

Harriet tells Emily Jervois that “[y]ou have given me pain, 'tis true; but I think it is the sweetest pain that ever entered into an human heart” (2:37). Sufferance strengthens social sympathy: “we pity others then most cordially, when we want pity ourselves” (1:402–3). The symptom acts as the assurance of the subject’s interdependence, the safeguard of co-operation. Armstrong notes how Althusser’s social contract rests upon a fiction of consent that requires a “cultural apparatus”,

[a] third party to ensure that the exchange between individual and collective is in fact between...an aggregate of more or less similar individuals...embracing much the same realism, diverse individuals will assume that those who embrace it are all much the same.<sup>33</sup>

*Grandison*’s epistolary apparatus renders correspondents an indistinguishable chorus united by their ratification of Sir Charles’s objective goodness. Richardson’s refusal to represent any viable alternative to a Grandisonian morality means that the novel’s

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<sup>31</sup> Sarah Fielding, *The Adventures of David Simple*, ed. Martin Kelsall (Oxford, 1994), 173.

<sup>32</sup> See Žižek, *Sublime Object*, 20–21, on the pleasure of the symptom.

<sup>33</sup> Armstrong, *How Novels Think*, 50.

ideology is relentlessly enforced. Yet *Grandison*'s totalitarian ethics are not entirely dissimilar to the moral choices posed by many conventionally "individualist" novels, in which characters must make decisions that prioritize the good of the collective over their personal desires. What Richardson's novel does is to make clear the compromised nature of freedom. *Grandison*'s unedifying negation of individual autonomy is part of its totalitarian conception of morality. The choices open to the characters – whether to accept the second-hand affections of a divided heart, whether to trust their children, money and inheritance to Sir Charles – are cherished illusions rather than actual dilemmas. As Bonnie Latimer has convincingly argued, *Grandison*'s subplot of Miss Mansfield's engagement to an elderly rake is an instance of Sir Charles's disregard of female consent in marriage.<sup>34</sup> Whilst Latimer stresses his manipulation of Manfield's family, and their pressure on her to marry to consolidate family ties irrespective of their daughter's distaste for a physically and morally repellent partner, I want to emphasize the actual illusoriness of Mansfield's choice. The novel offers no *genuine* options to its characters but it is absolutely central that it appears to. In Žižek's terms, totalitarian ideology creates the semblance of a choice whilst predetermining its outcome.

The subject's relationship to the community to which he belongs...is always such a paradoxical point of *choix forcé* ... the community is saying to the subject: *you have the freedom to choose, on the condition that you choose the right thing*...it is by no means accidental that this paradox arises at the level of the subject's relationship to the community to which he belongs: the situation of the forced choice consists in the fact that the subject must freely choose the community to which he already belongs...*he must choose what is already given to him.*<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Latimer, "Controul," 7.

<sup>35</sup> Žižek, *Sublime Object*, 165 (my emphasis).

Such communal coercion animates *Grandison's* vision, with its stress on surveillance and openness. Žižek's paradox of the *forced choice* explicates the novel's "contradictory desire for mutual subordination and voluntary compliance."<sup>36</sup> The novel stages this paradoxical desire for subjective obedience and communal policing through parodies of legal procedure. Through these juridical performances individuals enact their subjective participation in their own disciplining.

Arraigned in domestic parlors, *Grandison's* accused are indeed inevitably guilty. Charlotte Grandison's trial is a prime instance of Richardson's use of the *choix force*. Charged with conducting a clandestine correspondence with an inappropriate paramour, she must admit her indiscretion. The family are to "sit in judgement upon...letters...[where] confessions are brought as so many demonstrations of...diffidence" (1:28). Charlotte's trial follows directly from Sir Charles's assumption of his role as Danby's executor. This melancholy office provokes a welter of punning mortification, as the blushing sister begs for "no *warrants*", but "demands her tryal" (1:394), Harriet hoping that her "charming innocence" illuminates "some fault...in this almost perfect brother" (1:394-5). Charlotte's nerves betray anxiety in this most polite of courthouses, yet to refuse a public hearing would be to risk being marginalized by the group and the censure of the family head. Charlotte *must choose* the trial. Only transparency can redeem her indiscretion: "every one here is dear to me. Every one present must hear either my acquittal or condemnation" (1:401). Yet she baulks at the paradox of her exposure: "what an accuser I have. And so generous a one too, that one must half condemn oneself at setting out" (1:397). Yet Sir Charles refuses to be both "judge and accuser"; Charlotte's "own heart" will judge her (1:397). Such a refusal of external, repressive authority corresponds with

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<sup>36</sup> Flynn, "Pains of Compliance," 134.

totalitarianism's appearance of freedom, which veils the threat of coercion made possible by the constant surveillance of subjects. Yet Sir Charles's dutiful administering of domestic justice suggests an inherent sadism in the familial and social bond. Charlotte's tearful assent to her "crimes" demonstrates her internal submission to Sir Charles's interpellating regime, her shame a sign of the "omniscient *guilt* that haunts" the subjects of a totalitarian authority. As Matthew Sharpe argues, "this guilt hails from how, insofar as the totalitarian authority presents itself as only serving subjects' 'objective' interests, their failure to achieve its demands can only be experienced as a failure *towards and of themselves*".<sup>37</sup> Far from confirming her resistance, Charlotte's trial testifies to her commitment to and investment in society. She is an instance of a supposed universal subjective inadequacy, for, as Sir Charles pronounces, "we *all* have something to be forgiven for" (1:402). His moralizing sentiment uses an inclusive noun that the reader cannot help but feel excludes its speaker. Charlotte's confession shows the way in which subjectivity manifests its obedience in symptomatic "acts of self-reproach, conscience and melancholia that work in tandem with the processes of social regulation."<sup>38</sup> Domestic law proves a "strange site of love", demonstrating Charlotte's meekness, collective ratification of Sir Charles's authority and the supposed clemency of his law.<sup>39</sup> Charlotte's guilt is also a symptom of the subjective enjoyment of repression. Her tears and trembling mortification are signs of her paradoxical desire for exposure at the behest of her brother. Like Harriet's lingering feelings of guilt, Charlotte's self-sacrifice to group judgement proves her perverse enjoyment and exhibition of the symptoms of subjectivity. Charlotte, far from being a rebel *manqué*, is an ideal totalitarian subject.

### **"Worthy hearts:" assimilation, subjection and pain**

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<sup>37</sup> Matthew Sharpe, *Slavoj Žižek: a little piece of the real* (Aldershot, 2004), 79.

<sup>38</sup> Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories of Subjection* (Stanford, 1996), 18–19.

<sup>39</sup> Butler, *Psychic Life of Power*, 129.

This paradoxical pleasure in pain extends to the nuptials of Sir Charles and Harriet Byron. Like *Clarissa*, *Grandison* refuses conventional romance, replacing the unalloyed joy of love with submission to the divided heart of the perfect man. Instead of personal gratification, the heroine's union is a symbolic consolidation of the moral family. As Charlotte exclaims rapturously at Harriet and Sir Charles's marriage: "May our Hearts be ever united! ... But they must: for were not our Minds kindred Minds before...Ours yours! Yours ours! We are all of one Family, and will be for ever" (2:230). In contrast to an affectionate union of individuals, Richardson's novel represents marriage as political and performative.<sup>40</sup> The non-exclusive affinity of Harriet and Sir Charles's marriage is normalized and supported by the transparency of the novel's characters and its epistolary form. In contrast to *Pamela* and *Clarissa*, where letters are at least notionally private, *Grandison*'s letters are group missives: duplicated, transcribed and redistributed as impersonal documents or newspapers. Sir Charles's own epistles, copied by Dr Bartlett in the role of secretary, are received in mass instalments for public reading. As Leah Price has noted, this epistolary "copia" matches the economy of surplus in the novel:

The text is too long, letters circulate to too many readers, the hero has too many virtues, the characters have too much money, too many characters are in love with Grandison ...[who] loves too many of them in return.<sup>41</sup>

Epistolary excess ensures total access to subjective states. The novel's heroine, Harriet Byron, models the ideal of submissive subjectivity in this epistolary novel. "The frankest and most communicative of all women" (1:146), she has a "will to oblige" (3:285–9) and does so. Her expressive letters restrain scarcely any emotion from public view, no matter

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<sup>40</sup> Althusser, "Ideology," 163.

<sup>41</sup> Leah Price, "Sir Charles Grandison and the Executor's Hand," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, vol 8, no. 3 (1996), 329-42: 337.

how exhaustive or excruciating such minutiae might be. Here again, Richardson dismantles the opposition between the public and private self. Subjective interiority is shared, submitted to consensus, and disciplined; rather than marking isolation, the subject is produced and sustained by society. The very feelings Harris identifies as “private,” such as love and desire, generate and sustain *Grandison*’s group life: “Worthy hearts find out, and assimilate with, each other” (1:212). This “assimilation” is distinct from affiliation, as it elides subject-positions, effacing difference between individuals, and confirming the primacy of the collective. As in Fielding’s *David Simple*, sensible friendship is embodied as “a Union of Minds, that each should consider himself but as a Part of one Entire Being; a little Community.”<sup>42</sup> In Fielding’s pessimistic fable the siblings Camilla and Valentine marry as a unit, their own “reciprocal Love” often indistinguishable from spousal affection, marital romance a sociable bond rather than a private emotion.<sup>43</sup> *David Simple*’s pattern of female twinning resembles *Grandison*’s, as women identify with each other’s narratives of betrayal and pain, constituting a “little Society” based on mutual commiseration, compassion and sympathy. In February of 1753 Fielding published *David Simple, Volume the Last*, the grim conclusion to her story. Both *Volume the Last* and *Grandison* contract the world to an embattled phalanx whose sympathetic inter-subjectivity is as much a testament to moral worth as a practical liability. Both novels use filial terms to stress moral similarity and sensibility, emphasizing the strength of these affective relations. In this way Charlotte G., Lady L, and Clementina are all “sisters”: Harriet a “third sister”, the Grandisons’ “next self” (3:69). Just as Richardson’s novel stresses the sacrifices requisite in a moral community, so Fielding’s fable praises the bleak, self-abnegatory solace of a family in which each individual endeavors to

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<sup>42</sup> Fielding, *David Simple*, 26.

<sup>43</sup> Fielding, *David Simple*, 126.

contribute to the happiness of the Others. The very Infirmitie...such as Pain – Sickness, &c – were by their Contrivance not only made supportable, but fully compensated in the fresh Opportunities they gave each Individual of testifying their Tenderness and Care for the whole.<sup>44</sup>

In both works pain is a moral requisite, as both pursue an agonized and orderly “ensemblization” of characters in which similarity and identification is valued over autonomy, differentiation and individuation. Whilst Fielding’s work sees its moral community as doomed to failure in the face of self-interest and social hostility, Richardson’s work envisages the success of its ideological vision through self-policing subjects, through the reinscription of pain as the symptom of pleasure, and through the assimilation of desire by ideology.

Thus the novel represents desire for Sir Charles as natural, spontaneous and omnipresent. For his sisters his excellence renders “all other men indifferent” as “such infinite difference!” (3:339) between the mortals of the world and their paragon problematizes the direction of their erotic drives. *Grandison*’s consanguineal love-story confirms Foucault’s charge that the eighteenth century witnesses an “affective intensification of the family space.”<sup>45</sup> Incestuous desire “is constantly being solicited and refused; it is an object of obsession and attraction ... an indispensable pivot.”<sup>46</sup> In a similar fashion passion dominates the Grandison household in which Sir Charles is the ideological focus, “the *House-Band*, that ties all together” (3:235). Sir Charles’s authority requires Richardson to generate desire for his person and constrain its tendency toward

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<sup>44</sup> Fielding, *David Simple*, 237.

<sup>45</sup> Caroline Gonda, *Reading Daughters’ Fictions 1709–1834: Novels and Society from Manley to Edgeworth* (Cambridge, 1996), 58.

<sup>46</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge: History of Sexuality, Volume I*, trans. Robert Hurley (London, 1979), 109.

passionate (and romantic) excess simultaneously. This dynamic of desire and repression is embodied in Emily Jervois, Sir Charles's enamored adolescent ward. For Emily, as for all, the affectionate duty of being a "sister of [Sir Charles's] heart" (3:107) is surcharged with desire. Like Charlotte, Emily must publicly acknowledge the improper, because self-interested, nature of her illicit passion in order to conform to the group's inter-subjective morality. Yet the novel stresses the understandable nature of her love by comparing it with Harriet's (3:317–9). The openness with which Emily's love is expressed allows for it not only to be managed, but to be used as a means for paralleling the relative inadequacy of Harriet's love for Sir Charles. It provides another opportunity for the frank heroine to suppress the competitive instinct, to negate her claims to the hero and proclaim their shared position as "sisters" to the Good Man (3:107): "I would love her as my sister...Look upon me, my dear Emily, as your entire friend: we will have but one heart between us" (2:25). The shared heart maps out their emotional resemblance and mutual identification. In this emotional symbiosis the worth of each is garnered by her ability to forgo possessive claims, to renounce private desire. "Worthy hearts" assimilate, sacrificing private interiority for harmonious moral relations. Harriet's rationalization of sacrifice amounts to the novel's credo: "there is no perfect happiness to be expected in this life. I could be content to bear a little pain, were that dear girl to be either benefited or pleased by it" (3:119). Emily's gratitude to her "sister" mirrors Harriet's. In order to overcome her feelings, she will

be received as a *second Harriet* in your family...tread in your steps at Selby-house, and Shirley-manor...*to form myself by the model by which you were formed; to be called by Mrs Shirley, by Mrs Selby, their Emily.* (3:321, my emphasis)

Emily vows to assume Harriet's very position within identical domestic spaces and familial relationships. Within this moral community the production of subjectivity is infinitely repeatable, iterable as a social mode.

This “specular...and double-specular” aspect is at the heart of *Grandison*'s ideology of relationship.<sup>47</sup> By duplicating characters, the novel undercuts autonomy or individuality whilst increasing its claims to provide a workable model for improved social relations. Though individuality persists in the novel, in the Italian or unruly “bad” characters, *Grandison* emphasizes the interchangeability of subject-positions. Characters identify enthusiastically with others, and physical boundaries between subjects are traversed. As Harriet and Emily “share one heart,” so Clementina and Harriet are “souls...paired” (3:145); “two in one” (3:191). With Clementina’s arrival at Colnebrook Emily declares she “now [has] two Harriets instead of one” (3:363). Harriet’s pre-nuptial anxiety dream emphasizes the interchangeability of female subject-positions.

I was married to the best of men: I was *not* married...I was rejected with scorn...

A dear little baby was put into my arms: Once it was Lucy’s; another time it was Emily’s; and at another time Lady Clementina’s... [Sir Charles] upbraided me with being the cause that he had not Lady Clementina...he said he thought me a much better creature than I proved to be. (3:148)

This anxiety is generated by the equivalence or “sister-excellence” (3:77) of other female characters. Lois Chaber sees the tension in this episode as produced by novelistic characterisation of active, self-conscious individuals and religious ideas of providence. For Chaber Harriet’s dream discloses “the permanent insecurity bred of humanity’s

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<sup>47</sup> Althusser, “Ideology,” 168.

existence within this temporality.”<sup>48</sup> She identifies this “obsessive anxiety” as “emerging from the conflict between the conscious desire to submit piously to a cosmic plan and the burgeoning sense of self which cannot help but be concerned with the individual’s fate in this life.”<sup>49</sup> Yet Harriet’s dream also expresses a kind of erotic prostration in which Sir Charles remains the epicentre of group desire. Rather than reproaching Sir Charles for his relationships with other women, Harriet’s subconscious accuses her of inadequacy, the vague guilt of the totalitarian subject. “Hiding herself in holes and corners,” expecting “to be punished for [her] audaciousness,” she instead is “turned into an angel of light” (3:148). Her acceptance of her disposability and Sir Charles’s transcendent virtue makes her *Grandison*’s perfect subject.

Though it is discomfiting to modern readers, the characters of *Grandison* rejoice in their ideology: unlike *Clarissa*’s bleak refutation of earthly justice, Richardson’s final novel imagines what Miss Harlowe’s “father’s house” might resemble were it to be built on earth. Those characters who subordinate themselves enthusiastically to the Grandisonian ideology of sacrifice are rewarded, even beatified by the novel. Here, the *jouissance* structuring totalitarian subjectivity can be seen most clearly. Charlotte Grandison, whose public acknowledgement of her misdemeanors marked her full entry into subjectivity, is later apotheosized within the textual community. Writing to Harriet fifteen days following childbirth, Charlotte describes being caught in an act “that confessed the *whole* mother” (3:402) by her husband. This is the suckling of her infant child, a topic that Richardson had previously treated in *Pamela in her Exalted Condition*.<sup>50</sup> Lord B.’s refusal to allow his wife to breastfeed is replaced by Lord G.’s prurient ecstasy at the revelation of

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<sup>48</sup> Lois A. Chaber, “‘Sufficient to the Day’: Anxiety in *Sir Charles Grandison*,” *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 1, no. 4 (1989), 301.

<sup>49</sup> Chaber, 304.

<sup>50</sup> For a discussion of the earlier novel’s representation of breastfeeding see Toni Bowers, “‘A Point of Conscience’: Breast-feeding and Maternal Authority in *Pamela*, Part 2,” in *Inventing Maternity: Politics, Science, and Literature, 1650-1865*, ed. Susan C. Greenfield and Carol Bash (Lexington, KY, 1998).

his wife's maternity. Lord G.'s "speechless rapture" (3:404) has a quasi-erotic edge, "Let me, let me, let me ... behold again the dear sight. Let me see you clasp the precious gift, our Harriet's Harriet too, to that lovely bosom." (3:403). The presence of "little Harriet at [Charlotte's] breast" (3:402) renders this moment of almost sexual joy curiously communal, as does Charlotte's frank admission of her pleasure in the episode. Though we might descry the waning of Charlotte's lively wit, the novel does not mourn the change.

### **The vincibility of love: celebrating disappointment**

Charlotte's domestication as wife and mother is a triumph for Sir Charles's prudential conception of marriage. Charlotte admits that she "married with indifference" (3.402), compelled by fraternal love rather than personal desire. Yet she promotes the rational felicity that derives from such a union: she "stands forth, an example of true conjugal felicity, and an encouragement for girls who venture into the marriage state, without that prodigious quantity of violent passion, which some hare-brained creatures think an essential of Love" (*ibid.*). Richardson's mistrust of romantic love and its capacity to endanger both the individual and society is brought to its conclusion in *Grandison*. Though seemingly generated by such desire, the novel subordinates that passion to the moral society: unalloyed, individual gratification will not be indulged. As we have seen, Harriet's desire for a love of her "whole undivided heart" (1:15) is refused. Only after having renounced this ideal and acknowledged Clementina's pre-existent claim to Sir Charles can Harriet be granted the mitigated reward of his partial heart. The plot rewards her selflessness with marriage, a seeming "triumph" bought by sustained self-abnegation and near physical collapse. Richardson's novel eschews fantasies of romance, aiming to recondition erotic expectations. This ideological intention is clear in his comments that *Grandison* was intended to "shew the Vincibility" of love, and Sir Charles was to "give an

Example of that Vincibility.”<sup>51</sup> Richardson’s correspondence with Hester Mulso reveals the intensity with which the morality of love was debated.<sup>52</sup> For Richardson, erotic or romantic passion that seems to “desire the happiness of its object preferably to its own” was a form of self-gratification inimical to social happiness.

What means the person possessed, but to gratify self...This cannot be selfishness, though they combine to cheat father and mother, renounce brother and sister; and having made themselves the world to each other, seek to draw every public and private duty into their own narrow circle...is not the object pretended to be preferred to self, a single object? A part of self? And is it not a selfishness to propose to make all the world but two persons, and then these two but one; and intending to become the same flesh as well as spirit, know no public, no other private?<sup>53</sup>

Romantic love risks a collapse into a solipsistic sensibility; in order to forestall such danger *Grandison* opens the most private “recesses of the heart” to public inspection and regulation. Both Harriet and Charlotte’s first loves must be rejected, their sensibilities mortified before they can be granted marriage. In this way, romantic attachment is replaced with submission to generalized benevolence: marital intimacy replaced with communal stability and affection. Rather than a declaration of affection, Sir Charles questions the very viability of his affection toward Harriet and indeed the conditions upon which their union would be founded.

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<sup>51</sup> Richardson, *Selected Letters*, 285.

<sup>52</sup> See Wendy Jones, “The Dialectic of Love in *Sir Charles Grandison*,” *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 8, no. 1 (1995), 15–34, for an exploration of Richardson’s representation of love, the role of reason and the will.

<sup>53</sup> Richardson, *Selected Letters*, 191.

Ought that Lady to accept of a man whose heart had been another's, and that other living and single, and still honoring him...sufficient to attract a grateful heart, and occasion a divided Love...can I do justice to the merits of both, and yet not appear to be divided by a double Love? (3:11)

Richardson's statement that Sir Charles is an instance of "the vincibility" of love is disingenuous. It is the women of *Grandison* who must labor to overcome romantic aspirations and attachments, who produce acquiescence and ratify the glamor of their hero. Conventional emotion would render Harriet unfit for the paragon of disinterested virtue. She must thus prove her capacity to sacrifice her own feelings in order to do justice to her rival's. *Grandison* demands the ultimate self-sacrifice from Harriet Byron, an ongoing demonstration that *her* affection is not "narrower of the heart" (1:387, 3:131) by sharing Sir Charles with her rival. She vows that, if she is unable to wish Clementina and he married, "from my heart, I will disown that Heart" (1:387).

Harriet's test is to "prefer another to one's self," pursuing "the dictates of judgement, against the biasses of [her] more partial heart" (2:372). As Flynn has argued women's exaltation in *Grandison* "depends on [the] voluntary transformation of their very nature."<sup>54</sup> Harriet must learn from Clementina how to "love every body better than... [her]self" (2:127) but surpass her Italian counterpart's singularity by accepting Sir Charles unconditionally. Despite Sir Charles testimony that he never "WILFULLY gave pain to either the Motherly or Sisterly Heart, nor...to any other woman" Harriet's tortured sense of unworthiness remains. She remonstrates, "what is it you call *pain*, if at this instant...that which your goodness makes me feel, is not so" (3:125). Submitting to Sir Charles's requests for marriage, Harriet renounces her own preferences and even

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<sup>54</sup> Flynn, "Pains of Compliance," 135.

substitutes her own anguish with the contemplation of pain he must have felt. Charlotte and Harriet submit to imperfection and are promoted as behavioral models within the novel. Subjection to others is advertized as producing durable happiness, “If we cannot be as happy as we wish, we will rejoice in the happiness we can have. We must not be our own carvers” (1:373). Self-gratification is replaced by submission to a communally produced contentment. An authoritative instance of the successful vincibility of love is Mrs Selby, who acquiesces to her amiable husband on the advice of Miss Eggleston, a virtuous spinster whose own amatory history has been tragic. She tells Mrs Selby “a match so advantageous to you, will be of benefit to the whole family...the only sort of Love that suits this imperfect state; a tender, a faithful affection. ...condescend to be happy in such a way as suits this mortal state.” (3.398). Miss Eggleston’s authority is based upon sufferance and pain, and her recommendation shows how Richardsonian virtue is valorized by pain, and produced by vanquishing subjective pre-dispositions. Morality and subjection must be proven, for “how shall we call virtue by its name, if it be not tried; and if it hath no contest with inclination?” (2:387). Richardson’s novel insists that the trial of pain be transformed into the triumph of love, legitimated and sanctified by its subjects.

While *Clarissa* aimed to turn “delight into a sacrifice,” converting a reading multitude habituated to the pleasure of novels, *Grandison* attempts the reverse: to render the sacrifice of pleasure, of autonomy, of privacy, a necessary delight.<sup>55</sup> Insisting upon the inevitability of mitigated happiness, on individual imperfection, the symptom becomes the assurance of “moral” subjection and the means by which characters gain significance and representation. *Grandison* elevates those who prefer another’s happiness to their own

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<sup>55</sup> George Herbert’s “The Church Porch”, quoted by Richardson to Lady Bradshaigh, *Selected Letters*, 88, and in his Postscript to *Clarissa: or, The History of a Young Lady*, 3rd ed, 8 vols (1751), 8:279.

(3:355): the pain and tyranny of their moral system may be distasteful to modern sensibilities but Richardson's novel is unimpeachable in its totalitarian logic. Incorporating *Grandison* into the Richardsonian canon, and into the genealogy of the novel, is an opportunity to acknowledge the potential tyranny of subjectivity. *Grandison's* totalitarian aesthetics provide a strong and successful instance of the novel's anti-individualist tradition, found also in sentimental and utopian novels such as Sarah Fielding's *The Adventures of David Simple* and Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall*. Not only does Richardson's work adduce the pain at the threshold of subjectivity but it exhibits the disturbing accommodation of force and sadism in the novel. In Richardson's novel an idealized consensual community constellates around the male paragon of Sir Charles Grandison. Seeking affinity, these predominantly female correspondents self-consciously exhibit their self-mortification as a sign of their subjection to Sir Charles as an ideal figurehead. *Grandison* subordinates individuality to the cause of inter-subjectivity: self-consciousness is achieved at the very point of entry into a signifying system that relegates individual freedom in the service of communal happiness. In this way *Grandison* is a logical product of sensibility, but also points to formal developments by Jane Austen and George Eliot. Eliot found the novel's morality "perfect", and her affirmation of Grandisonian principles can be sensed in her valorization of pain as educative process; likewise Austen's work alludes to, reworks and critiques *Grandison's* form, characters and preoccupations.<sup>56</sup> That two of the most influential novelists of the nineteenth century have absorbed *Grandison* argues for its reappraisal at least. Richardson's novel aimed to provide a picture of attainable human excellence, "kindling ambition" (3.466) for moral

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<sup>56</sup> *The George Eliot Letters*, ed. Gordon S. Haight, 9 vols (New Haven, 1954-78), vol 1, 240. See also Margaret Anne Doody, "George Eliot and the Eighteenth-Century Novel," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 35 (December 1980): 260-91. For Richardson's influence on Austen see Harris, *Art of Memory*, chapter 3; Joe Bray, "The source of "dramatized consciousness": Richardson, Austen, and stylistic influence", *Style*, 35, 1 (2001), 18-33; Park Honan, "Richardson's Influence on Jane Austen (Some Notes on the Biographical and Critical Problems of an 'Influence')," in *Samuel Richardson: Passion and Prudence*, ed. Valerie Grosvenor Myer, (London, 1986), 165-177.

improvement in his readers. *Grandison* represents the way in which ideological power works transitively, through subjects rather than from a pre-existent authority. Sir Charles Grandison is a cipher precisely because the novel relies on the totalitarian fiction of his power. Obedience to his law is part of an incomprehensible injunction obeyed by all, their painful symptoms ratifying their subjection to Sir Charles's "goodness". Richardson's novel exposes the very origins and mechanisms of social power by creating a hero constituted by subjective lack, desire and pain. *Grandison* is not a failure of aesthetics but the triumph of an ethical stance that problematizes both communitarian morality and resistance to such morality by exposing the impossibility of free subjective choice.