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Keywords

Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa*, *Sir Charles Grandison*, formalism, form, eighteenth-century literature

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SAMUEL RICHARDSON distils the plot of his second novel *Clarissa* (1747–48) into Clarissa's warning: "my story, to all who shall know it, will afford these instructions: that the eye is a traitor, and ought ever to be mistrusted: that form is deceitful."¹ This constitutes a distinctly impersonal gloss of Clarissa's trials at the hands of the rake Lovelace: it is neither she nor he, but her "eye" and his "form" that propel Clarissa's fatal decision to put herself in Lovelace's power. When she uses the word "form" to evoke what, at the start of *Clarissa*, turns her eye "traitor," Clarissa does not refer to Lovelace's effusively personalized duplicity; she instead blames the capacity of his visible attractions to elicit her belief in the improvised doctrine she calls "*consentaneousness*" (184; emphasis Richardson's), which would tether his still fluctuating moral pretences to the palpable

¹ Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa, or the History of a Young Lady*, ed. Angus Ross (1747–48; London: Penguin, 1985), 601. References are to this edition. I am grateful to Ruth Mack and Vivasvan Soni for insightful comments on earlier drafts of this essay. I also thank John Richetti and James Turner for their scrupulous editorial attention.

appeal of his body. “Consentaneousness”—the assurance of “a soul and body ... fitted for, and pleased with, each other” (184)—promises a “fit” between external appearance and still hidden virtue which would defuse the scandal of Clarissa’s revelation that “were he *now* but a moral man, I would prefer him to all the men I ever saw” (185), the scandal of a pre-existing preference, or pre-preference, motivated by nothing more than what Clarissa “saw.”

As Clarissa’s “instructions” assert, the false promise of consentaneousness marks an explicitly formal danger, or rather the danger of form itself. For Lovelace’s form entails not the fit between outer and inner virtues but their “deceitful” and irreducible difference. In the present essay, I argue that Lovelace embodies the form of objecthood posited by the mechanical or corpuscular philosophy of Robert Boyle and the empiricism of John Locke, which divide perceptual impressions received by the senses from an imperceptible reality residing inside the object. Then, I suggest that the protagonist of Richardson’s third novel *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753–54) offers an explicitly formal antidote to Lovelacean deceit. Sir Charles Grandison, I argue, revises both Lovelace’s form and the form of eighteenth-century empirical objecthood. Cited in *Sir Charles Grandison* as the truism Grandison is constructed to redeem, the fact that “womens [*sic*] eyes are sad giddy things”² motivates neither the defensive fortification of the female sensorium, nor the insistence that good men must be perceptually anodyne, but the renovation of masculine form itself.

Because she is attracted solely by what she can perceive, Clarissa’s eye is deceived, and her pre-preference compelled, by Lovelace’s secondary qualities. Secondary qualities are defined by Boyle in *The Origine of Formes and Qualities, (According to the “Corpuscular Philosophy”)* (1666) as “those Qualities ... which we call Sensible, though by virtue of a certain Congruity or Incongruity in point of Figure or Texture, (or other Mechanical Attributes,) to our Sensories, the Portions of Matter they Modifie are enabled to produce various Effects, upon whose account we make Bodies to be Endow’d with Qualities; yet They are not in the Bodies that are Endow’d with them any Real or Distinct Entities.”³ To refute the Aristotelian or “Scholastick opinion”

² Richardson, *Sir Charles Grandison*, ed. Jocelyn Harris, 7 vols. (1753–54; Otago: Otago University Print [after Oxford University Press, 1972], 2001), 1:182. References are to this edition.

³ Robert Boyle, *The Origine of Formes and Qualities, (According to the Corpuscular Philosophy)* (1666), in *The Works of Robert Boyle*, vol. 5, ed. Michael Hunter and

that, for Boyle, wrongly claims perceptible attributes like color as “Real or Distinct Entities,” Boyle distinguishes between a body’s atomic or particulate “Texture,” which cannot be perceived, and the “Sensible” impression that this texture “produce[s]” when it stimulates the sense organs of an observer (*OFQ*, 308). The difference between imperceptible corpuscular texture and its sensible “Effects”—which in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) Locke names the difference between primary and secondary qualities⁴—breaks the reality posited by Boylean mechanical philosophy and Lockean empiricism in two.⁵ Secondary qualities triggered by infinitesimal particulate “Figure or Texture” are “not in the Bodies that are Endow’d with them,” because qualities like color, taste, smell, or temperature exist only as ideas “in” the mind of their perceiver. Corpuscular texture is real but imperceptible, while apprehensible qualities are perceptible but not “Real.”

The break between an imperceptible reality and the ideas that this reality produces inside its observer is exposed by *Clarissa* as the discrepancy that enables a rake’s plots. “The whole world is governed by appearance!” (789) Lovelace crows, and the surroundings he engineers for *Clarissa*—through both the performative artifice of his own person and such environmental fakery as “the fatal inner house” (1008)—severs the perceptions Lovelace contrives for *Clarissa* from the schemes he discloses in his letters. At least initially, *Clarissa* lacks the resources to plumb Lovelace’s form: “The dear sly rogue looking upon me, too, with a view to discover some emotion in me: *that* I can tell her lay deeper than her eye could reach, though it had been a sunbeam” (472). Despite her subsequent acquisition of the more acutely penetrative visual powers Richardson calls “eye-beams” (824, 827, 836), for *Clarissa*, the discrepancy between what she sees and what is “inner” is “fatal.” Lovelace’s form fatally deceives her, and after her

Edward B. Davis (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999), 310. References are to this edition, cited as *OFQ*.

⁴ See John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (1690; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), II, 8, § 11–25. References are to this edition. Boyle does not use this terminology consistently, but in *Origine of Formes and Qualities* he does refer to “these Secondary Qualities” and to “primary Affections of Matter” (317, 334).

⁵ For an excellent if streamlined account of the rise of mechanical philosophy and its experimental repercussions, see Richard S. Westfall, *The Construction of Modern Science: Mechanisms and Mechanics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

rape she declares, in a statement whose condensation of sexual and perceptual orifices amplifies the novel's overriding concern with the latter, that "the sad event has opened my eyes" (902).

In what follows, I invoke Lovelace's or Grandison's form, and the form of empirical objecthood more broadly, to refer to primary-secondary difference; I suggest that the perceptual limitations dictated by this difference precipitate formal attributes of novelistic character as well as formal attributes of novels themselves.⁶ I thus use the word "form" to refer both to literary artifacts and to the empirical doctrine that structures an observer's encounter with objects. In her appraisal of recent developments in formalism, Marjorie Levinson notes the "proliferation ... of synonyms for form,"⁷ a term that, when employed most diffusely, seems to encompass any discursive manifestation of "structuring principles and categories."⁸ Yet it is possible to identify two leading tendencies in the object of the formalisms Levinson surveys. Reviewing an article by W.J.T. Mitchell, Levinson invokes "the work of form" as what "instantiates and effectuates commitment, commitment not to an agenda but to the project of radically

⁶ My use of the word "form" represents something of a foreshortening of Boyle's deployment of the term (in part because length precludes a full elaboration). To refute Aristotle's definition of "form," Boyle employs the word to signify "an Aggregate or Convention of Qualities ... enough to make the portion of Matter 'tis found in, what it is" (*OFQ*, 324). Boyle defines what something "is" based on a perceptible "Aggregate or Convention of such Accidents" (*OFQ*, 323) rather than on Aristotelian substance or essence. In shifting my emphasis to the novelistic forms engendered by the primary-secondary split, I am thus emphasizing the formal dimension of Boylean mechanical philosophy overall. See Peter R. Anstey, *The Philosophy of Robert Boyle* (London: Routledge, 2000): "for Boyle, form is merely the arrangement of parts or figure of an object" (27).

⁷ Marjorie Levinson, "What Is New Formalism?," *PMLA* 122, no. 2 (2007): 561.

⁸ Caroline Levine, "Strategic Formalism: Toward a New Method in Cultural Studies," *Victorian Studies* 48, no. 4 (2006): 632. Levine's definition of "form" is so diffuse, so lacking in textual specificity other than the often tautological qualification "literary," that it assumes the level of resolution of power in Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1975): "Foucaultian history takes shape through the introduction of new formal tactics" (Levine, 637). See J. Paul Hunter, "Formalism and History: Binarism and the Anglophone Couplet," *Modern Language Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (2000): 109–29; and Frances Ferguson, "Jane Austen, *Emma*, and the Impact of Form," *Modern Language Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (2000): 157–80, for exemplary discussions of historically specific formal practices (for Hunter, the couplet; for Ferguson, free indirect style) and their historico-cognitive implications (for Hunter, concerning binary oppositions in eighteenth-century poetic argument; for Ferguson, concerning the individuation of actors in the late eighteenth-century marriage plot).

reorganizing perception, propaedeutic to social change.”⁹ The first tendency of form falls under the mandate of mutually perceptual and, Levinson writes, “cognitive regrouping.”¹⁰ Mitchell, for example, suggests that formalists examine the “way of being in the path rather than ... where the path leads,” thereby inhabiting the experience engendered by form instead of taking form as “a spatial or temporal pattern that has value only in relation to the end it serves.”¹¹ J. Paul Hunter invokes the early eighteenth-century couplet as “an exercise in how to think”; Hunter’s “formal analysis” thus explicates simultaneously cognitive, “historical,” and “textual practices.”¹² Robert Kaufman proposes that “formal dynamics may enable perception and critical thought,” effectuating the hybrid powers of “thought-experience.”¹³ This leading tendency of form resides in the fusion of phenomenological and critical aptitudes, a fusion which is critical—or, at least, augurs some kind of “change”—because it is distinctively felt, because it catalyzes the apprehension of the normative conditions of apprehension and, therefore, the possibility that those conditions can be altered.

The second leading tendency of form sustains the first: form is concrete and variably rule-governed. For Mitchell, form is “the precise way things are said or shown”; for Frances Ferguson, form entails “palpability” that is not a hermeneutic by-product but a “given”; for Richard Strier, form specifies “the texture as well as the content of ideas ... most fully experienced at the level of verbal and stylistic detail”; for Kaufman, form involves “preexistent conventions and rules”; for Caroline Levine, form “refers to shaping patterns.”¹⁴ Richardson’s *Clarissa* and *Sir Charles Grandison* implicate form’s concreteness and reliance on “patterns” as well as its power to incite perceptual regrouping. Within the world of *Clarissa*, Lovelace possesses a shape or structure that refers to

⁹ Levinson, 567.

¹⁰ Levinson, 567.

¹¹ W.J.T. Mitchell, “The Commitment to Form; or, Still Crazy after All These Years,” *PMLA* 118, no. 2 (2003): 324, 322.

¹² J. Paul Hunter, “Formalism and History,” 119, 129.

¹³ Robert Kaufman, “Everybody Hates Kant: Blakean Formalism and the Symmetries of Laura Moriarty,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (2000): 135, 141.

¹⁴ Mitchell, 324. Ferguson, “Jane Austen, *Emma*, and the Impact of Form,” 159. Richard Strier, “How Formalism Became a Dirty Word, and Why We Can’t Do Without It,” in *Renaissance Literature and Its Formal Engagements*, ed. Mark David Rasmussen (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 212. Kaufman, 141. Levine, 632.

pre-existing empiricist theory. The novel's own form instantiates Lovelace's primary qualities as epistolary interiority that Clarissa cannot penetrate and his secondary qualities as the attractions taken in by her eye; *Clarissa* concretizes a kind of dramatic irony whereby the reader perceives, by means of the confessional letter, primary qualities that remain inaccessible to Clarissa within the empirical microclimate of her place in the novel. Form's capacity to renovate cognitive-perceptual habit is animated by Richardson's attempt, in *Sir Charles Grandison*, to recompose masculine character. By compose, I refer to how character becomes a layered, dimensional, or articulated entity in the mind of the reader; I also refer to how character is assembled, from the vantage of the formalist critic, out of varieties of novelistic discourse like the personal letter. Because how masculine character is composed defines how susceptible Clarissa will be to a man whose perceptible appeal does not index his suitability as a husband, the form of masculine character in *Clarissa* and *Sir Charles Grandison* determines the moral, religious, and institutional viability of eighteenth-century marriage (which, notably, Clarissa dies to avoid). Richardson's representation of the formal and social stakes of women's apprehension of masculine character explicitly engages the empiricist construction of objecthood. Richardson thereby elaborates formal and social dimensions of Boylean and Lockean reality.

Richardson did not, it looks certain, read Boyle; he did not print Boyle's work and, as T.C. Duncan Eaves and Ben D. Kimpel affirm, "when he was an active printer and active writer Richardson read few books but his own except when business or friendship forced him to."¹⁵ However, Richardson printed the *Philosophical Transactions* of the Royal Society from 1753 until his death in 1761, and as William M. Sale suggests, his business relations with multiple Royal Society fellows indicate that he may have been the Royal Society's "incumbent" printer well before then.¹⁶ The fact that Richardson printed the *Transactions*, contemporary texts on

¹⁵ T.C. Duncan Eaves and Ben D. Kimpel, *Samuel Richardson: A Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 570. For information about which books Richardson printed, I rely on William M. Sale, *Samuel Richardson: Master Printer* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1950).

¹⁶ Sale, 75. For a discussion of Richardson's connections, dating from at least 1731, with the texts of Royal Society fellows and initiatives, see Sale, 73–75. Whether Richardson was the printer for the Royal Society before he was officially chosen in 1752, Sale explains, "is a question that must remain unanswered, since no official records of the printing for the Society were kept before 1752" (74).

medicine and chemistry, and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1727) ensures his familiarity with post-Boylean treatments of material reality and its human apprehension.¹⁷ While Eaves and Kimpel hazard that Richardson "must have read a good many of the works that came from his press,"¹⁸ however, the most substantive evidence for Richardson's inextricably novelistic and moral interest in empirical philosophy lies in his engagement with Locke. Michael Hunter explains that Boyle, whose seminal works of the 1660s were central to Locke's philosophical and scientific training during that decade, crucially assists Locke's formulation of primary-secondary difference in the *Essay*: "[Boyle's *Origins of Forms and Qualities*] provided a significant source for the well-known distinction between 'primary' and 'secondary' qualities which was to be made by an author who owed much to Boyle but whose influence was much greater: John Locke. Boyle thus stands at the roots of what later came to be known as British empiricism."¹⁹ Richardson demonstrates detailed knowledge of Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) in *Pamela* 2 (1741), where Mrs B evaluates pedagogical directives that proceed straight from the anti-innatist principles of Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.²⁰ But ultimately it is *Clarissa* and *Sir Charles Grandison* that show the profundity of Richardson's engagement with the Boylean "roots" of British empiricism, for, as I hope to show, in these novels Richardson elaborates the fallibilities, corrective susceptibilities, and figural potencies inherent in understanding that must be mediated by the eye.

¹⁷ Richardson's most topical reference to Jonathan Swift occurs in *Clarissa* when Belford refers to Sinclair's whores as "Swift's Yahoos" (1388). This moment, which occurs when Belford witnesses the unkempt prostitutes in the early morning, bears a striking textual resonance with Swift's poem "The Ladies Dressing-Room" (1732) because Belford remarks that "as a neat and clean woman must be an angel of a creature, so a sluttish one is the impurest animal in nature" (1388). With *Clarissa's* filthy prostitutes, Richardson shows his interest in the potentially local applicability of Swift's own treatment of mechanico-corpuscular and empirical philosophy, which involves the grotesque perceptibility of particulate matter itself.

¹⁸ Eaves and Kimpel, 570.

¹⁹ Michael Hunter, *Boyle: Between God and Science* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 118.

²⁰ See Thompson, *Ingenuous Subjection: Compliance and Power in the Eighteenth-Century Domestic Novel* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 121–23, where I argue that Mrs B cannot reconcile Locke's insistence that environmental influence entirely determines a child's tractability and her eldest son's innately passionate—or, that is, lordly—disposition.

Flattery's Form: Lovelace and Bilateral Masculinity

To suggest that in his function as a rake Lovelace is composed of two parts, that he adheres to a primary-secondary model whereby something inside of him produces the ideas that Clarissa apprehends as reality, is to diverge from characterizations of him that insist on his indefinitely signifying depths. William Warner, for example, claims Lovelace as a kind of phallically endowed Derridean whose rape of Clarissa is the same thing as his deconstruction of her text. But at the same time, Warner offers a poignant gloss of one of *Clarissa's* early marriage proposal scenes: "That Lovelace reaches Clarissa, with a genuine proposal and a new and fervid opening toward her, just moments after she has pivoted away, that their timing is off, that they are out of 'synch' (coming so near but never touching), is the bit of contingency upon which the whole comedy of Clarissa and Lovelace turns toward tragedy."²¹ This recapitulation resembles *Of Grammatology* less than it does *Gone With the Wind*, for as in Scarlett and Rhett's case, Clarissa and Lovelace are "out of 'synch' (coming so near but never touching)," whereas the coordinated revelation of their "genuine" proclivities would have produced a happy outcome. Warner's slip into humanist presumptions he elsewhere eschews jars revealingly against Richardson's construction of Lovelace, because what *Clarissa* most exhaustively divests of any claim to genuineness is, precisely, Lovelace's "proposal[s]"—although Lovelace may feel something "fervid" in the act of making them, he cannot, he repeatedly informs his epistolary confidant Belford, expect to sustain that feeling "after the first fortnight or so" (521) of marriage. Richardson's exhaustive disqualification of Lovelace's marital aspirations echoes the explicitly formal articulation of masculine courtship advanced by Mary Astell in *Some Reflections upon Marriage* (1700; 3rd ed., 1706). Astell's elucidation of courtship's form is as inimical to Warner's ascription to Lovelace of "new and fervid opening"—or, potentially uncharted depths—as it is to the truthfulness of proposals translated by Lovelace into, at best, a "fortnight" of erotic appetite.

In *Some Reflections upon Marriage*, Astell argues that fulsome courtship should propel a feminist hermeneutic trained upon the doubled structure of what is, at once, masculine flattery and masculine interiority. Astell promotes this hermeneutic as

²¹ William Warner, *Reading Clarissa: The Struggles of Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 82–83.

a prophylaxis for unmarried women susceptible to suitors' performance of romantic abjection, a performance which so clearly belies these future husbands' conjugal prerogative that, Astell writes, "She must be a Fool with a witness, who can believe a Man ... will lay his boasted Authority, the Dignity and Prerogative of his Sex, one Moment at her Feet, but in prospect of taking it up again to more advantage; he may call himself her Slave a few days, but it is only in order to make her his all the rest of his Life."²² For the royalist Astell, whose treatment of flattering suitors is keyed to her denunciation of the disinterested pretences of hypocritical Whigs, it is specifically slavish courtship that serves as a litmus for post-marital tyranny. Because the most slavish suitor most egregiously plays his object for a "Fool," he has with this abuse of her credulity already anticipated how he will deploy the domestic authority he assumes upon marriage.

As if to convert her third-person indictment of fool-making suitors into the reader's simulated experience of foolishness, Astell next offers a transcript of flattery's "truth" as it is rendered into the "plain English" of the suitor's inner appraisal of his object (24):

to be. For nothing is in truth a greater
outrage than Flattery and feign'd Submiſſions,
the plain English of which is this,
"I have a very mean Opinion both of your
Understanding and Vertue, you are
weak enough to be impos'd on, and vain
enough to inatch at the Bait I throw;
there's no danger of your finding out
my meaning, or difappointing me of my
Ends. I offer you *Incenſe* 'tis true, but
you are like to pay for't, and to make
me a Recompence for your Folly in I-
magining I would give my ſelf this trou-
ble, did I not hope, nay were I not ſure,
to find my own account in it. If for

Figure 1. Mary Astell, *Reflections upon Marriage*, 3rd ed. (London, 1706). ECCO. Gale. Northwestern University – CIC, 24.

²² Mary Astell, *Reflections upon Marriage*, 3rd ed. (London, 1706). Eighteenth Century Collections Online. Gale. Northwestern University – CIC, 23. References are to this edition.

As, she concludes, “the true sense of his heart,” Astell’s translation marks the endpoint of an hermeneutic process that converts “Flattery” into “outrage” (24). But Astell’s analysis is also a formal one, because she appropriates the interiorizing “I” to locate this suitor’s true sense more deeply inside him than the flattery that a courted woman perceives in the outside world. Astell mobilizes flattery’s truth, quite literally, as a layer, a core, or as what might mark, from the perspective of the Richardsonian novel, a germinal form of Lovelacean epistolarity: this revelation of true sense does not deconstruct flattery but rather specifies as epistemologically and formally primary the “mean Opinion” that produces a woman’s secondary perceptual experience of “*Incense*.” Astell’s strikingly innovative assumption of masculine interiority anticipates Lovelace’s demand to Belford: “my letters ... are too ingenuous by half to be seen. And I absolutely insist upon it that, on receipt of this, thou burn them all” (1202). As Lovelace insists, his letters manifest not the shifting sands of *différance* but rather disclosures so frank or “ingenuous” that they materialize as the confluence of duplicity and his deepest depth.

Because Astell’s appropriation of her model suitor’s internal voice activates the typographical convention signalling speech, the interiorizing mutation undergone by her text is made visually inescapable by the quotation marks that run down this passage’s left margin (see Figure 1). Here, form is flagged *as* mendacity or, that is, as the concretely typographical equivalence of masculine interiority and the revelation of flattery’s true sense. Richardson avails himself of an homologous visual and hermeneutic resource when, in his 1751 revised third edition of *Clarissa*, he places in the left margin, at the start of each newly added line, “turn’d *Full Points*, as we call them, or Dots, in the manner of turn’d Commas” (see Figure 2).²³ In an inserted passage, Lovelace imagines the scenario that will finally sustain his willingness to marry Clarissa:

²³ Richardson to David Graham, 3 May 1750: “I intend to restore a few Letters, and not a few Passages in different Places of the Work long as it already is (by particular Desire) and shall distinguish the Additions by turn’d *Full Points*.” *Selected Letters of Samuel Richardson*, ed. and intro. John Carroll (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 158. References are to this edition.

- And now imagine (the Charmer overcome) thou
- feelt me fitting supinely cros-kneed, reclining on
- my sofa, the god of Love dancing in my eyes, and
- rejoicing in every mantling feature; the sweet
- rogue, late such a proud rogue, wholly in my power,
- moving up slowly to me, at my beck, with heav-
- ing sighs, half-pronounced upbraidings from mur-
- muring lips, her finger in her eye, and quicken-
- ing her pace at my *Come hither, Dearest?*
- One hand stuck in my side, the other extended
- to encourage her bashful approach—*Kiss me, Love!*
- —Sweet,

• —Sweet, as Jack Belford says, *are the joys that come with willingness.*

- She tenders her purple mouth [Her coral lips
- will be purple then, Jack!]: Sigh not so deeply,
- my Beloved!—Happier hours await thy humble
- love, than did thy proud resistance.

• Once more bend to my ardent lips the swanny glossiness of a neck late so stately.—

- There's my precious!—
- Again!—
- Obliging Loveliness!—
- O my ever-blooming Glory!—I have try'd thee
- enough.—To-morrow's Sun—

• Then I rise, and fold to my almost-talking heart the throbbing-bosom'd Charmer.

• And now shall thy humbled pride confess its obligation to me!—

- To-morrow's Sun—And then I disengage myself from the bashful Passive, and stalk about the
- room—To-morrow's Sun shall gild the Altar at
- which my vows shall be paid thee!

Figure 2. Richardson, *Clarissa; Or, the History of a Young Lady ... In Eight Volumes*, 3rd ed., vol. 4 (London, 1751). ECCO. Gale (Gale document # CW110373301). Northwestern University – CIC, 21–22.

Lovelace's fantasy marriage is a more lurid—and more overtly orientalized—version of the state of domestic slavery predicted by Astell as the flip side of obsequious courtship.²⁴ As it does in *Clarissa's* first edition, Lovelace's anticipation of marriage entails a wife who is "wholly in my power."²⁵ But in 1751 Richardson augments Lovelace's anticipated tyranny with a vision of Clarissa's sexual breaking-in—or, to cite the political discourse employed throughout *Clarissa* to voice this threat, her breaking—that would, presumably, render the specter of his performance as a husband noxious even to those readers of *Clarissa's* first edition who wished, as Richardson complains in his final note to *Sir Charles Grandison*, for Lovelace's "hasty reformation, introduced ... for the sake of patching up what is called a happy ending" (7:466).

As perhaps the revised *Clarissa's* most extravagant rendition of the "mean Opinion" of women transcribed by Astell, this passage

²⁴ Saree Makdisi suggests that "radical hostility to supposed Oriental degeneracy has for far too long been either overlooked or misunderstood in modern scholarship, although it forms a central feature of the radical culture of the period [the 1790s]." Makdisi, *William Blake and the Impossible History of the 1790s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 44–45. Richardson's vision of Lovelace as an erotic despot reclining on a "soffa" claims one genealogy in the indictment of arbitrary domestic power, and its resulting conversion of sons into broken slaves, advanced by Locke in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*. Arbitrary power, in this text and in Locke's other political writings, is centrally qualified by its representation as "Egyptian tyranny." Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693; Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1996), 130. Richardson's vision of Lovelace's sexual tyranny expresses a latent political thematic dating at least from the Glorious Revolution. See Letter 232: "I would have gone to war with the Great Turk, and the Persian, and the Mogul, for their seraglios; for not one of those Eastern monarchs should have had a pretty woman, till I had done with her" (762).

²⁵ See, for example, *Clarissa*, Letter 202, for a milder version of the wifely slavishness that Lovelace anticipates: "all that expostulatory meekness and gentle reasoning, mingled with sighs as gentle, and graced with bent knees, supplicating hands, and eyes lifted up to your imperial countenance, just running over" (655). As Richardson makes clear in his letters, in *Clarissa* he rejects the expedient, uneasily proposed in *Pamela* 1 and 2 (1740–41), of a submissive wife who would pre-emptively neutralize her husband's domestic authority. In *Clarissa's* 1751 edition, as we can see, Richardson pathologizes this expedient by rendering it continuous with the perverse (and, again, orientalized) spectacle of Clarissa's total sexual passivity. We thus must read in Richardson's bulleted insert *some* endorsement of feminine sexual activity, an endorsement which, however ambivalent—leading as it does to Clarissa's death—also legitimizes her resistance to the revolting and sexually tyrannical Solmes.

appropriates and amplifies the visual force of her articulation of courtship as form, for Richardson's "Dots, in the manner of turn'd Commas" make his monitory intention typographically manifest.²⁶ It is as if Richardson is a meta-textual version of Astell, exposing the true meaning not of suitors in the world but of his own first edition of Lovelace's letters, as if the first publication of Lovelace's rakish opinions has itself become a secondary effect compelling Richardson to add an even more depraved, even more primary rock bottom. While the first edition of *Clarissa* also adheres to a doubled model—Lovelace's epistolary discovery of his opinions and plans motivates a reality structured, he writes, like "the theatre (the epitome of the world)" (1145)—Richardson's bullets vividly instantiate this formal logic. As the would-be final specification of Lovelace's meanest opinion, his bulleted interiority heralds not indefinite depth but, on the contrary, Richardson's reinforcement of the bilateral scheme that enables the speciousness of the reality Lovelace perpetrates. It is the form of this reality that Sir Charles Grandison is built to obviate.

Goodness Blazes: Grandison and the End of Form

Clarissa does contain a character who anticipates Grandison's formal mandate: this is neither Lovelace, nor Anna Howe's virtuously dull suitor Hickman, but *Clarissa* herself. For misapprehension in *Clarissa* cuts both ways. Writing to Lovelace in her mad papers, *Clarissa* concedes her failure to distinguish his primary from his secondary qualities as the cause of her ruin: "At first I saw something in your air and person that displeased

²⁶ See Thomas Keymer's claim that "By 1751 ... the simplification of his [Richardson's] own work had now become an acceptable price to pay ... Readers had abused the liberties extended to them; the author's authority was now to regain its place." Keymer, *Richardson's "Clarissa" and the Eighteenth-Century Reader* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 247–48. Keymer does not mention the bullets, but I would disagree with the overall point that this editorial intervention constitutes a necessary "simplification": the "author's authority," inserted into the printed page, is itself an interpretable text. Richardson converts authorial intention into pure typography, into a non-alphabetic character that stands in for the entirety of his moral, metaphysical, and religious insistence upon Lovelace's unfitness as a husband. Perhaps here we witness Richardson's anti-Rousseauian investment in print as presence, the profundity of Richardson's faith, as both a printer and a moralist, in the capacity of a black dot to render Lovelace (or, that is, Lovelace's text) irredeemable.

me not ... You seemed frank, as well as generous ... whoever kept up those appearances, I judged of their heart by my own; and whatever qualities *I wished* to find in them, I was *ready* to find; and, *when* found, I believed them to be natives of the soil" (892). By assuming that at "heart" Lovelace must be as "frank, as well as generous" as he appears, Clarissa takes a position on the likeness of external and internal "qualities" at odds with Locke's insistence, in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, upon the incommensurability of an object's insensible texture and its perceptible or "*sensible Qualities*; which, whatever reality we, by mistake, attribute to them, are in truth nothing in the Objects themselves, but Powers to produce various Sensations in us" (II, 8, §14, p. 137). Locke repeats Boyle: perceptible qualities, which as such are "nothing in the Objects themselves," exist only as "Sensations" inside the mind of their perceiver. In her mad letter, Clarissa concedes the very "mistake"—the mistaken ascription to Lovelace of a "reality" which is in fact only her own secondary sensation—that Locke proceeds to elucidate in terms even closer to those of her plight: "[Sensible] Qualities are commonly thought to be the same in those Bodies, that those *Ideas* are in us, the one the perfect resemblance of the other, as they are in a Mirror" (*Essay*, II, 8, §16, p. 137). Because she assumes the "resemblance" of Lovelace's appearance and what is in his heart, because she believes that "*Ideas*" he produces inside her must perfectly "Mirror" qualities inside him, Clarissa is deceived by what "at first I saw." In *Clarissa*, Lovelace's form, which is the form of Boylean and Lockean objecthood, precipitates Clarissa's confusion of secondary effects and attributes that must be "natives of the soil." But even a moral habitus perceived by Clarissa as Lovelace's "air" does not mirror the primary qualities found in his letters.

On the other hand, Lovelace assumes that Clarissa has his form. Like a Boylean chemist, he aims to test her apparent virtue "as gold is tried by fire" (519). Yet sometimes, even in spite of himself, he apprehends her differently, as is the case when he first encounters her after she has escaped to Hampstead. Lovelace approaches Clarissa in disguise:

Then my charmer opened the door, and blazed upon me, as it were in a flood of light, like what one might imagine would strike a man who, born blind, had by some propitious power been blessed with his sight, all at once, in a meridian sun.

Upon my soul, I was never so strangely affected before. I had much ado to forbear discovering myself that instant. (772)

Richardson borrows the figure of the adult “man who, born blind,” recovers “his sight, all at once” from Locke’s *Essay*, which broaches a conundrum posed to Locke by the mathematician William Molyneux as follows: “*Suppose a Man born blind, and now adult, and taught by his touch to distinguish between a Cube, and a Sphere of the same metal... Suppose ... the Blind Man to be made to see. Quære, Whether by his sight, before he touch’d them, he could now distinguish, and tell, which is the Globe, which the Cube.*” To which the acute and judicious Proposer [Molyneux] answers: *Not*” (Locke, *Essay*, II, 9, §8, p. 146). Molyneux’s “*Not*,” with which Locke concurs, denies any affinity between ideas gleaned by “touch” and ideas gleaned by “sight”; by dramatically staggering the timing of an adult man’s acquisition of tactile and visual knowledge, Molyneux stages the failure of the latter to ratify ideas already imparted by the former. The blind-then-sighted man thus reveals the capacity, Locke writes, of “experience, improvement, and acquired notions” (*Essay*, II, 9, §8, p. 146) to reconcile discrepant sets of ideas into the perceived coherence of external objects.²⁷

Lovelace’s brief transformation into an avatar of Molyneux’s blind-then-sighted man appropriates the key conceit of the Molyneux scenario: an adult person’s accession to de-habituated sight, a grown-up sight purified of a lifetime of associations. Richardson thus exploits Clarissa’s escape, the interruption of Lovelace’s everyday exposure to her, to renovate her perceptual impression upon him. Re-experienced, this impression is not continuous with Lovelace’s former apprehension of the “full bloom of vernal graces, by which she attracts every eye” (431); upon Clarissa’s sudden appearance from behind the door, Lovelace is struck by “a flood of light” powerful enough to blind him and invest him with new sight. Lovelace no longer sees the “bloom”

²⁷ George Berkeley, Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, Denis Diderot, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau all exploit the figure of the newly sighted man to imagine the progress of empirical understanding in a person untouched by the influence of culture. For an account of how the Molyneux problem was formulated historically as the need to rectify blind persons’ mathematical, abstracted, or overly Cartesian cognitive processes, see Jessica Riskin, *Science in the Age of Sensibility: The Sentimental Empiricists of the French Enlightenment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), chap. 2.

that, according to his rake's or chemist's creed, signals feminine modesty's deeper willingness to be seduced; instead, he sees an apparition of light that is not, however, emitted by Clarissa: it *is* Clarissa who "blazed upon me," Clarissa who *is* (Lovelace's sensation of) blazing.

During the instant of Lovelace's Molyneux experience, Clarissa has no form. This moment departs even from those in *Clarissa* where—as, most notably, in the pen-knife scene—Clarissa most effectively awes Lovelace or, that is, most effectively extroverts her virtue, because when she blazes upon him, Clarissa is not divisible into primary and secondary qualities at all.²⁸ As Daniel Tiffany writes of the material status of the rainbow in Boylean mechanical philosophy, "the appearance of such things is identical to their substance or essence."²⁹ When Clarissa is blazing or, as Anna Howe writes, "SHINING" (579), Richardson reconstitutes "appearance" not as a secondary effect but as something like a rainbow, an apparition whose collapse of primary and secondary qualities defines its inextricably (anti-) formal and moral virtue.

Lovelace's blinding may be an extreme effect, but it is the antipathy of blazing to form that Richardson appropriates to recuperate Sir Charles Grandison's perceptual appeal. This appeal is first described by Harriet Byron after Grandison has rescued her from her libertine abductor Sir Hargrave Pollexfen:

Sir Charles Grandison, in his person, is really, a very fine man ...

His complexion seems to have been naturally too fine for a man: But as if he were above being regardful of it, his face is overspread with a manly sunniness [I want a word] that shews he has been in warmer climates than England: And so it seems he has ... He has visited some parts of Asia, even of Afric, Egypt particularly.

I wonder what business a *man* has for such fine teeth, and so fine a mouth, as Sir Charles Grandison might boast of, were he vain.

In his aspect there is something great and noble, that shews him to be of rank. Were kings to be chosen for beauty and majesty of person, Sir Charles Grandison would have few competitors. His eye—Indeed, my Lucy, his eye shews, if possible, more of sparkling intelligence than that of his sister—

²⁸ Given Richardson's thorough-going discomfort with appeals to the "eye," I would suggest that he is uncomfortable with the staginess of the pen-knife scene, as its subsequent mockery by the whores (who often expose latent tensions in this text) might indicate.

²⁹ Daniel Tiffany, *Toy Medium* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 108.

Now pray be quiet, my dear uncle Selby! What is beauty in a man to me? You all know, that I never thought beauty a qualification in a man. (1:181)

Although this is Harriet's first impression of Grandison, already it may be possible to register the immanence of virtue that supersedes the logic of inside and out. Both his face's "manly sunniness" and his eye's "sparkling intelligence" seem to exude goodness that will require neither much digging nor the backward extrapolation of inner virtue from outer attractions promoted by Clarissa's failed theory of "consentaneousness." "Sunniness" might itself annul a form of masculinity structured by primary-secondary difference, because while the word refers to the "warmer climates" where Grandison's skin has become less "fine," it also signifies that he is, like Clarissa behind the door in Hampstead, sunny or sun-like: the fact that Harriet "want[s] a word" may gesture towards the uncertain semantic status, at this inaugural moment in the novel, of her evocation of the dissolving boundary between outside and in.³⁰

But with these hints at Grandison's anti-formal virtue—a sparkling and a sunniness that *are* what his goodness will consist of—Harriet's insistence upon his "beauty" seems to present a paradox. As we have seen, Richardson endorses a gloss of *Clarissa's* plot whose complementary expression by Lovelace enforces the point of Clarissa's own: "Many a girl has been

³⁰ The *OED* gives three meanings for "sunniness": "The state of being illumined by the sun, or full of sunshine"; "Sunburn, tan"; and "Brightness of aspect, feeling, manner, etc." *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 17:198. *Grandison's* use of the word is cited to support the second definition ("tan"). I would suggest that Richardson implicates all three of these meanings, and that this is precisely the aim of his revision of masculine form: emitting sun, being sunned, and brightness are thus continuous or, more precisely, continuously apprehended. See Tita Chico, "Details and Frankness: Affective Relations in 'Sir Charles Grandison,'" *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 30 (2009), who cites the *OED* definition with the claim: "Through this neologism, Harriet documents the physical trace of foreign experience, a sign of experiential knowledge from beyond the borders of England" (54). While I am most interested in reading Grandison's sunniness as a formal entity, its thematic signification also resides in what we later discover is Grandison's absolute imperviousness to the orientaling influence of "Asia, even of Afric, Egypt particularly." Compared to Lovelace, who wishes to simulate "Egyptian" sexual despotism, Grandison manifests preternatural control over his "warmer" desires despite exposure that has burnt him. (Here the correlation between the temptations of hell and those of "warmer climates" seems unavoidable.)

carried, who never would have been *attempted* had she showed a proper resentment when her ears or her eyes were first invaded" (521). From the start of *Sir Charles Grandison*, Harriet echoes Astell's and Lovelace's appraisals of the medium in which rakes manifest their mean opinions: "How painful it is ... when the ear is invaded by contemptible speeches, from a man who must think as highly of himself for uttering them, as meanly of the understanding of the person he is speaking to!" (2:293). Grandison pithily disavows either courtly or romantic influence on the "ears" when he declares that "I will never flatter either a Prince, or a Lady" (2:400). Yet his relation to the "eyes" poses a more complex challenge, proceeding in part from Richardson's dismayed discovery of his readers' predilection for Lovelace. Writing in 1750, Richardson chastises his correspondent Lady Bradshaigh for her proposed recovery of Lovelacean form: "But what a sad thing say you, my dear lady, that these sober men will not put on the appearance of rakes! ... 'The good man need only to assume the dress and address of the rake, and you will wager ten to four that he will be preferred to him.' ... And can a good man put on these appearances? We have heard that the devil has transformed himself into an angel of light ... but never that an angel of light borrowed a coat and waistcoat of the devil" (*Letters*, ed. Carroll, 170). In an ingenious extension of the logic of Lovelacean form, Lady Bradshaigh proposes beating the rake at his own game: rather than an appearance that seems to mirror inner goodness but does not, Lady Bradshaigh imagines a supplemental layering of outer over outer that would correct the course of Clarissa's faulty induction of primary from secondary qualities. Good women would not, like Clarissa's confidante Anna Howe, have to content themselves with perceptual dullness as an indicator of the unimpeachability of non-rakish men's inner worth, but have their cake and eat it: they would enjoy the perceptual pleasures of rakish attractions that, laid over a virtuously non-seductive person, are only "dress"-deep.

Richardson rejects Lady Bradshaigh's expedient as a sugar-coating of masculine rectitude aimed to indulge women's corruptible tastes. He thus also rejects the aggravated depravity of a form whose parts can be "put on" to the nth degree. We might ask, then, why Richardson makes Grandison such "a very fine

man.” Why, if *Sir Charles Grandison* offers its “GOOD MAN” (2:368) as a corrective to readers too easily swayed by Lovelace’s charms, would Grandison possess such a superabundance of “beauty?” In March 1751, Richardson writes to Lady Bradshaigh in advance of his introduction of the character Grandison—who “has not peeped out yet” from the pages she has been reading in manuscript—to confess: “the fear I have, that a good man must have a tame appearance, must not a little dishearten me” (*Letters*, ed. Carroll, 179). Harriet’s description makes clear that Richardson elects not, as he has done with *Clarissa*’s strenuously unattractive Hickman, to give Grandison “a tame appearance.” Instead, as Grandison’s sunniness intimates, Richardson undoes the formal structure of appearance itself. Of course, Grandison is still visible; but the ideas that he stimulates in his observers resist classification as secondary effects, as when his sister Caroline remarks, upon his return to England at age 26 from eight or nine years abroad, that “His goodness only looks stronger, and more perfect” (2:359). In a resonant correction of Lovelace, who looks good, Grandison’s “goodness ... looks.” This syntactic revision does not simply invert the primary-secondary difference that tricks *Clarissa*. Goodness that looks repudiates the formal construction of Boylean and Lockean reality.

In *The Sceptical Chymist: or Chemico-Physical Doubts & Paradoxes* (1661), Boyle advances a skeptical critique of Aristotelian and contemporary “Chymical” theories of elements or “Materiall Ingredients of Bodies”³¹ (for Aristotelians, earth, air, fire, water; for chymists, salt, sulphur, mercury). This critique is so thorough-going that Boyle doubts the capacity of experiment to induce the existence of elements at all:

Next, I consider, that there being but one Universal matter of things, as ’tis known that the *Aristotelians* themselves acknowledge ... the Portions of this matter seem to differ from One Another, but in certain Qualities or Accidents, fewer or more; upon whose Account the Corporeal Substance they belong to receives its Denomination, and is referr’d to this or that particular sort of Bodies; so that if it come to lose, or be depriv’d of those Qualities, though it ceases not to be a Body; yet it ceases from being that kind of Body as a Plant, or Animal, or Red, Green, Sweet, Sowre, or the like. (*SC*, 271–72)

³¹ Boyle, *The Sceptical Chymist: or Chemico-Physical Doubts & Paradoxes*, in *The Works of Robert Boyle*, vol. 2, ed. Michael Hunter and Edward B. Davis (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999), 215, 216. References are to this edition, cited as *SC*.

In the *Sceptical Chymist*, Boyle practices chemistry as something of a phenomenology; it is not pre-existing elemental “Ingredients” that define differences between bodies, but the chemist’s apprehension of “Qualities” like color and taste. The chemist identifies bodies not as a result of elemental innateness but rather because he perceives effects produced by the “certain Qualities or Accidents” that distinguish an otherwise neutral “Universal matter.” A given portion of matter “receives its Denomination” because of qualities the chemist can perceive; if the chemist no longer perceives them, the same matter “ceases from being that kind.” Boyle’s slippage between receiving a denomination, or being “referred to,” and simply “being that kind”—between being named by the chemist, and being *tout court*—is telling, because for Boyle receiving a denomination reflects the most ontological stability that any contingent mechanical arrangement of featureless matter can claim.

Boyle’s universal matter becomes chemically intelligible only upon its assumption of secondary qualities.³² Its non-innate, strictly contingent appearance as any given perceptible “kind”—“Plant, or Animal, or Red, Green, Sweet, Sowre, or the like”—is produced by changes in primary texture or “Schemes of Matter” (*SC*, 323) like those involved in the following collision:

[The collision occurs between] Clusters wherein the Particles stick not so close together, but that they may meet with Corpuscles of another Denomination, which are dispos’d to be more closely United with some of them, then they were among themselves. And in such case, two thus combining Corpuscles losing that Shape, or Size, or Motion, or other Accident, upon whose Account they were endow’d with such a Determinate Quality or Nature, each of

³² A number of critics have noted the incorrectness of the ascription to Boyle of an elemental theory. For a strong argument, see Thomas S. Kuhn, “Robert Boyle and Structural Chemistry in the Seventeenth Century,” *Isis* 43, no. 1 (1952): 12–36. Kuhn suggests that Boyle’s “rejection of explanations in terms of inherent characteristics of the ultimate corpuscles” (19) did not assist the development of chemistry later achieved by Antoine-Laurent Lavoisier. See also Marie Boas, “The Establishment of Mechanical Philosophy,” *Osiris* 10 (1952), who argues: “Modern discussions of Boyle’s definition [of elements] often overlook the fact that this seemingly correct definition led Boyle to doubt the existence of any elementary substance whatsoever” (498). In *A History of Chemistry* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), Bernadette Bensaude-Vincent and Isabelle Stengers remark that “Corpuscular chemistry ... provided explanations in which concepts were relevant to any chemical compound indiscriminately, independent of the production processes or tests that established its identity” (29).

them really ceases to be a Corpuscle of the same Denomination it was before; ... Since this Concretion is really endow'd with its own Distinct qualities. (*SC*, 272)

Boyle admits no gap between the “Distinct qualities” perceived by the chemist and the denomination that a recombined corpuscle “really” is: he anticipates the irrelevance of elements to the mechanical changes in “Shape, or Size, or Motion, or other Accident” that produce what the chemist sees, tastes, smells, and touches.³³ (In this, of course, he was wrong; but that is beside my point.) In the *Sceptical Chymist*, Boyle pushes the neutrality of his “Catholick or Universal Matter” (*OFQ*, 305) as far as it will go, for according to his endlessly regressive mechanical causality, only “Accident[s]” cause subsequent accidents.³⁴ Concerning the featurelessness of the matter posited by Boyle, Locke complains that mechanical philosophy “leaves us in the dark, concerning the cohesion of the parts of the Corpuscles” (Locke, *Essay*, II, 23, § 23, p. 308). While accidents *do* cause accidents, Boyle cannot explain why, in the first place, the smallest parts of any given corpuscle would “stick” or “not.”³⁵

In the *Sceptical Chymist*, primary qualities—or, any primary ontology—threaten to become epistemologically nugatory,

³³ See Boyle’s conclusion: “*it may as yet be doubted, whether or no there be any determinate Number of Elements*” (*SC*, 342).

³⁴ As I recently discovered while reading the new wave of Boyle scholarship, in some cases Boyle does posit corpuscles with innate attributes, as well as operationally indissoluble, qualified corpuscles resistant to analysis by fire or solvents; he also routinely affirms the extra-mechanical agency of seminal particles or seeds and certain “occult” powers. For crucial historiographical revisions of Boyle that refute his status as a reductive mechanist, see William R. Newman, *Atoms and Alchemy: Chymistry and the Experimental Origins of the Scientific Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); Lawrence M. Principe, *The Aspiring Adept: Robert Boyle and his Alchemical Quest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); and Antonio Clericuzio, *Elements, Principles, and Corpuscles: A Study of Atomism and Chemistry in the Seventeenth Century* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2000). The larger project of which this article forms a part engages the literary-historical and empirical significance of Boyle’s non-reductionist mechanism.

³⁵ See Catherine Wilson’s claim that for Locke, microscopes cannot provide any fundamental illumination of a corpuscular reality whose explanatory logic relies on “analogy” all the way down: “But a good picture of Locke’s alienation from microscopical science is given by his suggestions that subvisible corpuscles and supernatural beings pose similar problems for epistemology and must be addressed by similar means, by analogical reasoning.” Wilson, *The Invisible World: Early Modern Philosophy and the Invention of the Microscope* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 230.

an outcome David Hume appreciates when, in *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739–40), he argues that the empiricist “opinion concerning colours, sounds, tastes, smells, heat and cold; which it asserts to be nothing but impressions in the mind, deriv’d from the operation of external objects” lays the ground for “the most extravagant scepticism.”³⁶ Boyle’s sceptical chemistry thereby elaborates what becomes, in *Clarissa’s* Lovelace, another danger of rakish form. For even though Boyle does not, like *Clarissa*, mistakenly assume that an object’s imperceptible primary attributes mirror the qualities that he can perceive, he does predicate what an object “really” is upon the chemist’s sensation. Although matter must undergo accidents to produce perceptible qualities—that is, although primary texture does remain implicated in what something appears to be—its identity can be denominated only by means of those secondary effects. According to the formal logic of Astell’s feminist hermeneutic, interiority is discrepant from exteriority; according to Boyle’s sceptical chemistry, interiority is contingent upon how exteriority happens to be perceived.

With Grandison’s goodness, *Sir Charles Grandison* aims entirely to circumvent this potentially Humean or sceptical fall-out of the primary-secondary split. Because it is seen, because it “looks,” Grandison’s goodness violates the core tenet of Boyle’s experimental chemistry and its formulation as Lockean empiricism: Grandison’s goodness is akin to something like fireness or earthness or goldness, terms that would, for Boyle, nonsensically denominate the primary identity of things before they are perceived. But if, for mechanical and empirical philosophy, denomination is secured only by secondary effects, Grandison’s goodness and his sunniness assert what Boyle or Locke would take as a countervailing Aristotelian tautology. Caroline recognizes Grandison’s goodness as goodness; his perceptual effect *is* what he is (as we have seen, her assessment of Grandison’s goodness is not descriptive but quantitative: his goodness “only looks stronger and more perfect”). It is perhaps because Grandison’s goodness is nothing other than what it appears to be—because it is not effected by a contingent or discrepant interiority—that Richardson affirms the enhanced

³⁶ David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 226, 228.

phenomenality of blazing, which, as we have seen with *Clarissa*, dissolves primary-secondary difference in the immanence of the onlooker's experience. Richardson stresses the intensity of this experience for Grandison's two sisters: upon his generous treatment of their recently deceased, rakish father's mistress after Grandison first arrives in England, the sisters' "minds were thus open'd and enlarged by the example of such a brother, blazing upon them all at once, as I may say, in manly goodness, on his return from abroad" (2:373). Here the sisters undergo a version of Lovelace's Molyneux moment; returned from abroad, Grandison exposes their minds "all at once" to the spectacle of his "goodness" "blazing." Harriet recapitulates: Grandison's sisters encountered "his superior excellence, like sunshine, breaking out on a sudden" (2:375). Shortly thereafter, upon her return from Grandison-Hall to her family, she writes of her own experience: "There is no living within the blazing glory of this man!" (2:384). She affirms: "The active, the restless goodness, of this Sir Charles Grandison, absolutely dazzles me, Lucy!" (3:38).

Richardson places insistent pressure upon the irreducibility of what Grandison is and how Grandison is perceived. At his entrance into the novel, where his constitution is still being, so to speak, theorized, Grandison's "excellence," his "goodness," and his "glory" exist only insofar as they are "active" or, that is, insofar as they are actively experienced by Harriet and his sisters. These virtues blur into Grandison's "breaking out," his "dazling," and his "blazing," for Grandison's "blazing" is continuous with his "glory," just as his "breaking out" is not clearly distinguishable from his "goodness." They thus resist the ascription of form. Grandison's blazing, apprehended as his goodness by the dazzled Harriet, is neither a primary nor a secondary quality.³⁷

³⁷ See Lynn Shepherd, *Clarissa's Painter: Portraiture, Illustration, and Representation in the Novels of Samuel Richardson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), for the suggestion that Richardson models Grandison on the "coronation medals" (180) bequeathed to Sir Charles by his mother: "the 'Carolus' stands, in every sense, for the 'Charles.' ... It is the medal that is the defining metaphor for the man" (180). Shepherd illustrates this claim with a printer's ornament that Richardson fashioned as "the head-piece for the index" (182) of *Grandison*, which shows a medallion-like profile emanating unidirectional rays of light. Richardson designed another head-piece, unmentioned by Shepherd, which features a frontal view of a small, poorly legible face radiating unidirectional beams to the circumference of its larger encircling frame. See Sale, 271, for a reproduction of the head-piece and the claim that it was used in *Grandison's* "larger paper edition."

Dazzling and blazing are not superficial perceptual effects. Although Grandison does not, strictly speaking, blind his sisters, Richardson's specification of how they react engages a variant iteration of what can be called the anti-formal effectivity of his blazing: their "minds were thus open'd." Here Richardson shifts between a phenomenological evocation of how goodness blazes—a phenomenology that appropriates the enabling premise of the Molyneux scenario—and a figural one. *Grandison* most clearly occupies the latter register when, writing from Grandison-Hall at the apotheosis of her marital good fortune ("Here I am! The declared mistress of this spacious house, and the happiest of human creatures!" [7:269]), Harriet describes its grounds. These too are "spacious": "The orchard, lawns, and grass-walks, have sheep for gardeners; and the whole being bounded only by sunk fences, the eye is carried to views that have no bounds" (7:273). If Harriet's description evinces some confusion over property that, "being bounded," nonetheless produces the impression of "no bounds," then the residual persistence of some kind of primary-secondary problem—which could perhaps be aligned with her cognate sublimation of human labour into "sheep"—dissolves when she advances one of *Grandison*'s most emphatic instances of meta-formal commentary: "The gardens and lawn seem from the windows of this spacious house to be as boundless as the mind of the owner, and as free and open as his countenance" (7:272). Familiar as we and Harriet are, at this point in her plot, with Grandison's blazing, the revelation of his interiority is not at stake here; rather, Harriet translates the anti-formal effectivity of his goodness into the vanishingly equivocal status of the "sunk fences" or ha-has that undo the boundary between inside and outside. If one figural articulation of the primary-secondary divide is the enclosure of what is inside from what is out, then Richardson offers as a paradoxically anti-formal figuration of "mind" the dissolution of private property into an indefinitely expansive prospect. Grandison's mind is "open"—and it operates, as we have seen, to open the minds of other characters—not to disclose still latent interiority but to transform what was once enclosed into the seemingly boundless apprehensibility of his goodness.

Both *Clarissa* and *Grandison* possess what can be called a formally retributive imaginary. In *Clarissa*, Anna Howe wishes

“that I had the eye the basilisk is reported to have ... and that [Lovelace’s] life were within the power of it—directly would I kill him!” (1133) (She also insists that “were I to have been ... in your situation, and been so treated, I would have torn his eyes out” [603].) Here Anna broaches the fantasy of a gaze that is not receptive but projective, a gaze that emits rather than receives: that this fantasy implicates, alternately, Lovelace’s death and the tearing out of his eyes speaks to the potency of *Clarissa*’s anti-patriarchal or feminist “unconscious” as it has been attributed to Anna by Terry Eagleton.³⁸ But I mean to stress the salience of Anna’s projectile “eye of the basilisk”—and *Clarissa* is rife with such imaginings—as an explicitly formal fantasy, for *Grandison* likewise imagines what can be done to rectify its own cast of formally recalcitrant characters.

Grandison is quite graphically concerned with opening men up. The libertine Sir Hargrave Pollexfen, for example, loses “three of his fore-teeth” (1:200) when Grandison rescues Harriet from his clutches, and the disfigurement of his oral cavity remains an object of morbid reference for the rest of his compromised life. Another rake, Jeronymo Porretta, receives a retributive blow to his groin that entails the opening of a therapeutic “aperture” as well as the “extreme anguish” of surgical attempts to “distend the wound” (4:451–52).³⁹ In the formal economy of this novel, men must be opened or, in perhaps the next-best case, lanced and distended. Even though his goodness would seem to make such intervention unnecessary, Grandison himself is bled and nearly stabbed (the latter by a woman); Harriet, as we have seen, remarks on the anomaly of a “*man*[s]” possession of “so fine a mouth.” These incursions into masculine form belie Eagleton’s overall appraisal of the redundancy of *Grandison*’s plot, which Eagleton motivates by claiming that “The simplest possible contrast between the two novels [*Clarissa* and *Grandison*] lies in the fact that *Grandison* cannot be raped. The novel thus dramatizes a

³⁸ Terry Eagleton claims that “Anna is part of *Clarissa*’s own unconscious, able to articulate that which it would be improper for the heroine herself to voice.” Eagleton, *The Rape of Clarissa* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), 78.

³⁹ Juliet McMaster points out that *Grandison* “was remarkably explicit about the body, while still maintaining its own standards of delicacy.” McMaster, “*Sir Charles Grandison*: Richardson on Body and Character,” in *Passion and Virtue: Essays on the Novels of Samuel Richardson*, ed. David Blewett (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 250.

major contradiction: its genuinely progressive drive to generalize the discourse of femininity to men exposes, in the very thinness of the text, an insurmountable sexual difference."⁴⁰ But in the terms of *Grandison*'s formal economy, "sexual difference"—if this is, as Eagleton suggests, gauged by a character's capacity to be penetrated or opened—does not seem to be "insurmountable." If his superlative openness is any indication, *Grandison* *can* "be raped." This is, perhaps, simply to say that by not enforcing the impermeability of men, *Grandison* divests sexual difference of a formal correspondence that Eagleton seems to assume is impervious to form.

Insofar as it is determined by a character's openness, sexual difference is not insurmountable in *Grandison*. But neither are all of *Grandison*'s epistolary characters reducible to one formal model, for, as we have seen, *Grandison* is more open than the novel's women. Most germane to feminine formal specificity is Harriet's admission of her susceptibility to *Grandison*'s blazing: "It is, I hope, a secret to myself, that never will be unfolded, even to myself, that I love a man, who has not made professions of Love to me" (2:386). Of course, because *Grandison*'s appeal is the immanence of his goodness, Harriet's pre-preference evinces not (Clarissa's) desire but only reciprocal goodness;⁴¹ her "secret" failure to comply with the proscription of feminine amorous agency laid out by Richardson in his *Rambler* 97 (1751) assumes the form of self-knowledge that cannot be "unfolded."⁴² Indeed, *Grandison* promotes the feminizing instrumentality of obscured self-understanding as an occasion for the exercise of masculine discernment, because a good man's reticent, unflattering courtship gives him time "to develop the plaits and folds of the female heart" (2:429). Harriet relies on such "plaits" to obfuscate the

⁴⁰ Eagleton, 100.

⁴¹ See Wendy Jones's claim that in this novel "merit has been eroticized in a dialectical resolution of reason and passion," in "The Dialectic of Love in *Sir Charles Grandison*," *Passion and Virtue*, 310. I am interested in the *formal* determination of perceptual appeal as virtue, but Jones cogently evokes the dominant concern of Richardson's third novel.

⁴² In *Rambler* 97 (Tuesday, 19 February 1751), Richardson promotes the feminine exercise of dutiful reciprocity required by the prohibition: "That a young lady should be in love, and the love of the young gentleman undeclared, is an heterodoxy which prudence, and even policy, must not allow." A virtuous woman's love, for Richardson, can be elicited only by masculine love that is approved by all the relevant parental authorities. Richardson, *Rambler* 97, ed. Jack Lynch, at <http://ethnicity.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Texts/rambler97.html>.

brief lag between her pre-emptively virtuous preference and its masculine sanction; but even other women's less salutary employment of their "folds" cannot engender a female Lovelace: "It is easy," Grandison writes, "from small crevices, to discover day in an artful woman's heart" (3:53). *Grandison's* women may be folded, but they harbour "small crevices" that make masculine discovery "easy." (Although Clarissa's blazing marks an exception, this moment only briefly volatilizes her own folds.⁴³) Feminine form in *Grandison* involves not imperceptible texture but an innerness that can be glimpsed, as if women's interiority and exteriority are constituted from a plaited but ontologically unbroken expanse of stuff. It is thus rakish men who incarnate the formal dangers of the primary-secondary divide. I now ask whether Grandison's revision of masculine form anticipates changes to the social world that enables Lovelace.

"Grandison's Politics: Patriarchy and Form

With Sir Charles Grandison, Richardson defines masculine goodness as its own blazing apprehensibility. This, I have argued, marks Richardson's anti-formal vision of virtue, conjured as an antidote to the Astellian and Lovelacean correlation of masculine interiority and the disclosure of misogynist opinion. Grandison's dazzling goodness undoes the Boylean and Lockean divide between imperceptible primary texture and sensational secondary appearance, which, in Clarissa's case, divorces the palpable evidence of good looks from the hidden qualities that she mistakenly assumes good looks mirror. The virtue exuded by Grandison is not reducible to the secondary charms that, after Lovelace, Richardson insistently derogates, for Grandison's virtue *is* the immanence of goodness that would render flattering courtship phenomenologically repulsive. How far, I will now ask by way of conclusion, might Grandison's goodness extend? By realizing the dissolution of primary-secondary difference, does Grandison give other men a chance to dazzle the eyes of virtuously stimulated women?

⁴³ For a compelling historical claim for the emergence of Clarissa's psychological complexity from rape law, see Frances Ferguson's "Rape and the Rise of the Novel," *Representations* 20 (Fall 1987): 88–112. Clarissa is especially folded during the novel's first half, when her folds obfuscate her deployment of "consentaneousness," her disaggregation and attempted recombination of Lovelace's mental qualities and his person.

These questions require a return to the patriarchal and perceptual economy of *Clarissa*. In perhaps *Clarissa's* most symptomatic gesture toward the interrelation of this novel's women, Belford advances a Platonic defence of Clarissa: begging Lovelace to spare her, he writes that "I am ready to regret that such an angel of a lady should even marry. She is, in my eye, all mind" (555). But Belford's defence of Clarissa does more than exempt her from the labours of childbearing and "the vulgar offices of domestic life" (555), because he proceeds to suggest that as a result of Clarissa's ethereality, Lovelace would not enjoy sleeping with her: "Thinkest thou, truly admirable as this lady is, that the end thou proposest to thyself, if obtained, is answerable to the means ...? In every real excellence she surpasses all her sex. But in the article thou seekest to subdue her for, a mere sensualist of her sex, a Partington, a Horton, a Martin, would make a sensualist a thousand times happier than she ever will or can" (555–56). "[A] Partington, a Horton, a Martin" refer to *Clarissa's* whores. In an expedient twist of Platonic metaphysics, Belford suggests that the novel's prostitutes act as accessories to Clarissa's virtue. For her to remain "an angel of a lady," these other relatively undifferentiated women must supply the bodies that will satisfy Lovelace "in the article." *Clarissa's* attribution of ethereal "excellence" to Clarissa is thus sustained by a division of metaphysical labour whereby some women can be angels only because others appease the needs of "sensualist" rakes. Anna's exasperated appraisal of Lovelace's appeal—"Well may our sex be the sport and ridicule of such libertines! Unthinking eye-governed creatures!" (1137)—would then seem to enable an outcome useful to *Clarissa*, because "eye-governed creatures" who succumb to libertines, like Polly Horton and Sally Martin, stock London's brothels with the sensualists who sustain angelic women's status as "all mind."

Because it is Anna who survives to perform the "vulgar" marital "offices" decried by Belford, it is Anna, not Clarissa, who demonstrates how this dispensation plays out in practice. Eye-governed creatures sate rakes, while good women forgo the pleasures of the eye (and, presumably, other organs as well) to reciprocate the virtuous proposals of unattractive suitors like Hickman. Sir Charles Grandison thus provides an antidote to Lovelace and Hickman at once: as Grandison remarks of his sister Charlotte's susceptibility only to men of "very striking

qualities,” “Ladies have eyes; and the eye expects to be gratified. Hence men of appearance succeed often, where men of intrinsic merit fail” (3:112). By reconciling “appearance” and “intrinsic merit”—by reconciling “striking,” or secondary, and “intrinsic,” or primary, “qualities”—in his blazing virtue, Grandison offers women a salutary source of gratification, recuperating the desires of “Ladies[’]” “eyes” in the dazzling immediacy of his goodness. (As a correction of Lovelace, *Grandison* also, far more cursorily, invokes Grandison’s chastity.) Whereas *Clarissa* endorses perceptually unappealing continence as the sole alternative to the duplicity of “men of appearance,” *Grandison* seems to acknowledge the intractability of the desire stimulated by women’s eyes: Grandison makes goodness itself “very” striking.

After Astell’s ventriloquized misogynist and after Lovelace, Grandison’s anti-formal virtue is, at once, his striking goodness and the impossibility of his premarital hypocrisy. But *Grandison* also gestures towards deficiencies of patriarchy that a good man cannot single-handedly fix. Like Astell, Grandison advocates “*Protestant Nunneries*; in which single women of small or no fortunes might live” (4:355); in advance of Richardson’s promotion, in 1758, of London’s Magdalen-House for Penitent Prostitutes, Grandison also proposes “An Hospital for Female Penitents; for such unhappy women, [who were] once drawn in, and betrayed by the perfidy of men” (4:356). Whether aimed at “single women” or “unhappy women,” these institutions absorb redundant women: as if in response to *Clarissa*’s plot, they offer protection to friendless or terrorized dependents as well as credulous victims of rakish “perfidy.”⁴⁴ The double instrumentality of the “Nunneries” and the “Hospital” marks a neatly architectonic solution, for if Sinclair’s brothel and its “fatal inner house” contain both kinds of women at once, then *Grandison* would separate and detoxify these structurally impacted elements of *Clarissa*’s patriarchy.

⁴⁴ See *The Histories of Some of the Penitents in the Magdalen House* (1759), ed. Jennie Batchelor and Megan Hiatt (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2007), written (probably by Sarah Fielding) to promote the new institution. The four discrete narratives included in this text are—despite their own institutional affiliation—thoroughly sentimentalized and personalized, assigning their protagonists’ descent into prostitution or adultery to individual cases of masculine perfidy, husbandly tyranny, or extreme feminine innocence (as in the case of a friendless arrival to London who, like *Clarissa*, does not realize that she has been harboured by a procuress in a brothel).

Because in Grandison's institutional imagination ruined women need not devolve into either mere sensualists or emaciated angels, *Grandison's* answer to *Clarissa* entails a significant relaxation of *Clarissa's* metaphysics. But nunneries and hospitals do not restructure an economy that dictates ruin for eye-governed females only; these projects offer a supplemental corrective in the shape of what are, literally, patriarchy's outbuildings.⁴⁵ Indeed, Grandison's broader institutional vision is not a progressive one. Despite his "universal benevolence," he "yet is not a leveller" (6:241): he recommends "that only such children of the poor, as shew a peculiar ingenuity, have any great pains taken with them in their *books*. Husbandry and labour are what are most wanting to be encouraged among the lower class of people" (5:477–78). On the topic of his wife's dress, he declares that he has "always wished for the revival of Sumptuary Laws" (6:124). In his own person, Grandison undoes form; but his blazing may require certain ambient formal conditions.

At *Grandison's* close, Harriet's cousin recapitulates *Clarissa* to gloss the ending that Grandison has averted: "when our eye has led our choice, imagination can easily add all good qualities to the plausible appearance" (7:396). Composed of the "plausible appearance" that, in a mistaken woman's "eye," would mirror his hidden "good qualities," this masculine object models Lovelace's form. Yet a few pages later, Harriet's grandmother invokes the "eye" to gesture toward an outcome not anticipated by *Clarissa*: "will you suffer your eye to lead you into misery ... by eloping with a well-drest captain, a spruce dancing-master, or a handsome player?" (7:400) Here we reach a point at which the stipulation that Grandison is no "leveller" may further qualify the apparently unimpeded immanence of his goodness. Cited to portend the "misery" unleashed by marriage to a dancing-master, this man's "spruce" secondary attributes—like the external signs of status that

⁴⁵ See Jennie Batchelor, "Industry in Distress': Reconfiguring Femininity and Labor in the Magdalen House," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 28, no. 1 (2004): 1–20, which shows the ideological and practical difficulties involved in the redemption of women's sexual transgression through labour. Martha J. Koehler, in "Redemptive Spaces: Magdalen House and Prostitution in the Novels and Letters of Richardson," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 22 (Winter 2009–10), argues that Richardson "reconceptualizes Magdalen House ... as a sheltering sanctuary that reflects the interior space of Grandison's benevolent mind" (273).

are regulated by “Sumptuary Laws”—would pre-emptively signal the speciousness of his claim to outer and inner value. Sumptuary laws and, inversely, the denial of poor children’s access to “books” would bring inside and outside into alignment not to facilitate the immediate apprehensibility of masculine virtue, but rather to exclude from the marital purview of upper-class women like Harriet “handsome” captains, dancing-masters, and players. As we have seen, Harriet describes the initial impact of Grandison’s “majesty” (1:181) as well as his sunniness: not quite as obvious as his goodness, then, is “majesty” whose self-evidence would require the assistance of educational and sartorial policy. As a corollary of the happy outcome enabled by Grandison’s dazzling, Harriet’s resistance to the good looks of captains, dancing-masters, and players sanctions a pre-emptive regulation of upwardly mobile marital aspirants that would disable these men’s claim to both palpable and impalpable value. The overwhelming self-evidence of Grandison’s “great and noble” (1:181) virtue is thus contingent on the novel’s projected exclusion of an entire field of other men. Grandison’s revision of form enables not only his blazing goodness but also the revived apparition of his majesty, a majesty that eighteenth-century empiricism—and, eighteenth-century British history—have divested of elemental perdurability.

I have suggested that empirical reality has a form, which is modelled in *Clarissa* by Lovelace. This suggestion opens a critical vantage upon Grandison’s character: his lack of hidden qualities is critically legible not as an absence of depth or personality but as the concretely historical intransigence of the liabilities of patriarchy he is constructed to remedy.⁴⁶ At the same time, Grandison’s dazzling restores the perceptual immanence of nobility. To make these claims, I have chosen to dwell on *Grandison*’s formal attributes rather than its plot, for the novel’s plot transpires—most notably, Grandison dazzles two prospective wives at once—to stage a phenomenology of masculine virtue that refuses the induction of goodness from good looks. As one avenue of formalist criticism in eighteenth-

⁴⁶ Grandison’s lack of personality, interiority, or depth is something of a critical truism in treatments of this novel. For an astute twist of this diagnosis, see George Haggerty’s claim that *Grandison* concocts “a kind of domestic public spirit,” in “*Sir Charles Grandison* and ‘The Nature of Language,’” in *Passion and Virtue*, 320.

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century studies, I thus propose attention to how the novel elaborates the formal and perceptual repercussions of primary-secondary doctrine. A profound interaction between mechanical philosophy, empiricism, and literary history resides here, because it is the difference between primary and secondary qualities that shapes a character like Lovelace and, with Grandison, Lovelace's undoing.



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