

= The History of Sir Charles Grandison =

The History of Sir Charles Grandison , commonly called Sir Charles Grandison , is an epistolary novel by Samuel Richardson first published in February 1753 . The book was a response to Henry Fielding 's The History of Tom Jones , a Foundling , which parodied the morals presented in Richardson 's previous novels . The novel follows the story of Harriet Byron who is pursued by Sir Hargrave Pollexfen . After she rejects Pollexfen , he kidnaps her , and she is only freed when Sir Charles Grandison comes to her rescue . After his appearance , the novel focuses on his history and life , and he becomes its central figure .

The novel incorporates an epistolary format similar to Richardson 's previous novels , Clarissa and Pamela . Unlike those novels , Charles Grandison , the leading male character , is a morally good man and lacks the villainous intent that is manifested by the Lovelace or Mr. B (characters of Clarissa and Pamela respectively) . Richardson was motivated to create such a male figure because of the prompting of his many female friends who wanted a counterpart to the virtues exhibited by Richardson 's female characters .

= = Background = =

The exact relationship between Fielding 's The History of Tom Jones , a Foundling and Richardson 's The History of Sir Charles Grandison cannot be known , but the character Charles Grandison was designed as a morally " better " hero than the character Tom Jones . In 1749 , a friend asked Richardson " to give the world his idea of a good man and fine gentleman combined " . Richardson hesitated to begin such a project , and he did not work on it until he was prompted the next year (June 1750) by Mrs. Donnellan and Miss Sutton , who were " both very intimate with one Clarissa Harlowe : and both extremely earnest with him to give them a good man " . Near the end of 1751 , Richardson sent a draft of the novel to Mrs. Donnellan , and the novel was being finalised in the middle of 1752 .

While Thomas Killingbeck , a compositor , and Peter Bishop , a proofreader , were working for Richardson in his print shop during 1753 , Richardson discovered that printers in Dublin had copies of The History of Sir Charles Grandison and began printing the novel before the English edition was to be published . Richardson suspected that they were involved with the unauthorized distribution of the novel and promptly fired them . Immediately following the firing , Richardson wrote to Lady Bradshaigh , 19 October 1753 : " the Want of the same Ornaments , or Initial Letters [factotums] , in each Vol. will help to discover them [if exported into England] , although they should put the Booksellers Names that I have affixed . I have got some Friends to write down to Scotland , to endeavour to seize their Edition , if offered to be imported " . There were four Dublin presses used to make unauthorized copies the novel , but none of them were able to add the ornaments that could effectively mimic Richardson 's own . However , there were still worries about the unlicensed copies , and Richardson relied on seven additional printers to speed up the production of Grandison .

In November 1753 , Richardson ran an ad in the The Gentleman 's Magazine to announce the " History of Sir Charles Grandison : in a Series of Letters published from the Originals , ? By the Editor of Pamela and Clarissa , London : Printed for S. Richardson , and sold by Dodsley in Pall Mall and others . " The first four volumes were published on 13 November 1753 and the next two volumes appeared in December . The final volume was published in March to complete a seven volume series while a six volume set was simultaneously published . Richardson held the sole copyright to Grandison , and , after his death , twenty @-@ fourth shares of Grandison were sold for 20 pounds each . Posthumous editions were published in 1762 (including revisions by Richardson) and 1810 .

= = Plot summary = =

As with his previous novels , Richardson prefaced the novel by claiming to be merely the editor , saying , " How such remarkable collections of private letters fell into the editor 's hand he hopes the

reader will not think it very necessary to enquire " . However , Richardson did not keep his authorship secret and , on the prompting of his friends like Samuel Johnson , dropped this framing device from the second edition .

The novel begins with the character of Harriet Byron leaving the house of her uncle , George Selby , to visit Mr. and Mrs. Reeves , her cousins , in London . She is an orphan who was educated by her grandparents , and , though she lacks parents , she is heir to a fortune of fifteen thousand pounds , which causes many suitors to pursue her . In London , she is pursued by three suitors , Mr. Greville , Mr. Fenwick and Mr. Orme . This courtship is followed by more suitors : Mr. Fowler , Sir Rowland Meredith and Sir Hargrave Pollexfen . The final one , Pollexfen , pursues Byron vigorously , which causes her to criticise him over a lack of morals and decency of character . However , Pollexfen does not end his pursuits of Byron until she explains that she could never receive his visits again .

Pollexfen , unwilling to be without Byron , decides to kidnap her while she attended a masquerade at the Haymarket . She is then imprisoned at Lisson Grove with the support of a widow and two daughters . While he keeps her prisoner , Pollexfen makes it clear to her that she shall be his wife , and that anyone who challenges that will die by his hand . Byron attempts to escape from the house , but this fails . To prevent her from trying to escape again , Pollexfen transports Byron to his home at Windsor . However , he is stopped at Hounslow Heath , where Charles Grandison hears Byron 's pleas for help and immediately attacks Pollexfen . After this rescue , Grandison takes Byron to Colnebrook , the home of Grandison 's brother @-@ in @-@ law , the " Earl of L. "

After Pollexfen recovers from the attack , he sets out to duel Grandison . However , Grandison refuses on the grounds that dueling is harmful to society . After explaining why obedience to God and society are important , Grandison wins Pollexfen over and obtains his apology to Byron for his actions . She accepts his apology , and he follows with a proposal to marriage . She declines because she , as she admits , is in love with Grandison . However , a new suitor , the Earl of D , appears , and it emerges that Grandison promised himself to an Italian woman , Signorina Clementina della Porretta . As Grandison explains , he was in Italy years before and rescued the Barone della Porretta and a relationship developed between himself and Clementina , the baron 's only daughter . However , Grandison could not marry her , as she demanded that he , an Anglican Protestant , become a Catholic , and he was unwilling to do so . After he left , she grew ill out of despair , and the Porrettas were willing to accept his religion , if he would return and make Clementina happy once more . Grandison , feeling obligated to do what he can to restore Clementina 's happiness , returns to Italy ; however , Clementina determines she can never marry a " heretic " , and so Grandison returns to England and Harriet who accepts him . They are married ; and everyone is accorded their just deserts .

In a " Concluding Note " to Grandison , Richardson writes : " It has been said , in behalf of many modern fictitious pieces , in which authors have given success (and happiness , as it is called) to their heroes of vicious if not profligate characters , that they have exhibited Human Nature as it is . Its corruption may , indeed , be exhibited in the faulty character ; but need pictures of this be held out in books ? Is not vice crowned with success , triumphant , and rewarded , and perhaps set off with wit and spirit , a dangerous representation ? " In particular , Richardson is referring to novels of Fielding , his literary rival . This note was published with the final volume of Grandison in March 1754 , a few months before Fielding left for Lisbon . Before Fielding died in Lisbon , he included a response to Richardson in his preface to *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon* .

= = Structure = =

The epistolary form unites *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* with Richardson 's *Pamela* and *Clarissa* , but Richardson uses the form in a different way for his final work . In *Clarissa* , the letters emphasise the plot 's drama , especially when Lovelace alters Clarissa 's letters . However , the dramatic mood is replaced in *Grandison* with a celebration of Grandison 's moral character . In addition to this lack of dramatic emphasis , the letters of Grandison do not serve to develop character , as the moral core of each character is already complete at the outset .

In Richardson 's previous novels , the letters operated as a way to express internal feelings and

describe the private lives of characters ; however , the letters of Grandison serve a public function . The letters are not kept to individuals , but forwarded to others to inform a larger community of the novel 's action . In return , letters share the recipients ' responses to the events detailed within the letters . This sharing of personal feelings transforms the individual responders into a chorus that praises the actions of Grandison , Harriet , and Clementina . Furthermore , this chorus of characters emphasises the importance of the written word over the merely subjective , even saying that " Love declared on paper means far more than love declared orally " .

= = Themes = =

20th century literary critic Carol Flynn characterises Sir Charles Grandison as a " man of feeling who truly cannot be said to feel " . Flynn claims that Grandison is filled with sexual passions that never come to light , and he represents a perfect moral character in regards to respecting others . Unlike Richardson 's previous novel *Clarissa* , there is an emphasis on society and how moral characteristics are viewed by the public . As such , Grandison stresses characters acting in the socially accepted ways instead of following their emotional impulses . The psychological realism of Richardson 's earlier work gives way to the expression of exemplars . In essence , Grandison promises " spiritual health and happiness to all who follow the good man 's exemplary pattern " . This can be taken as a sort of " political model of the wise ruler " , especially with Charles 's somewhat pacifist methods of achieving his goals .

Although Flynn believes that Grandison represents a moral character , she finds Grandison 's " goodness " " repellent " . Richardson 's other characters , like *Clarissa* , also exhibit high moral characters , but they are capable of changing over time . However , Grandison is never challenged in the way that *Clarissa* is , and he is a static , passive character . Grandison , in all situations , obeys the dictates of society and religion , fulfilling obligations rather than expressing personality . However , a character like Harriet is able to express herself fully , and it is possible that Grandison is prohibited from doing likewise because of his epistolary audience , the public .

In terms of religious responsibility , Grandison , is unwilling to change his faith , and Clementina initially refuses to marry him over his religion . Grandison attempts to convince her to reconsider by claiming that " her faith would not be at risk " . Besides his dedication to his own religion , and his unwillingness to prevent Clementina from being dedicated to her own , he says that he is bound to helping the Porretta family . Although potentially controversial to the 18th century British public , Grandison and Clementina compromise by agreeing that their sons would be raised as Protestants and their daughters raised as Catholics . In addition to the religious aspects , the work gives " the portrait of how a good marriage should be created and sustained " . To complement the role of marriage , Grandison opposes " sexual deviance " in the 18th century .

= = Critical response = =

Samuel Johnson was one of the first to respond to the novel , but he focused primarily on the preface : " If you were to require my opinion which part [in the preface] should be changed , I should be inclined to the supression of that part which seems to disclaim the composition . What is modesty , if it deserts from truth ? Of what use is the disguise by which nothing is concealed ? You must forgive this , because it is meant well . " Sarah Fielding , in her introduction to *The Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia* , claims that people have an " insatiable Curiosity for Novels or Romances " that tell of the " rural Innocence of a Joseph Andrews , or the inimitable Virtues of Sir Charles Grandison " . Andrew Murphy , in the *Gray 's Inn Journal* , emphasised the history of the production when he wrote :

Mr. Richardson , Author of the celebrated *Pamela* , and the justly admired *Clarissa* ... an ingenuous Mind must be shocked to find , that Copies of very near all this Work , from which the Public may reasonable expect both Entertainment and Instruction , have been clandestinely and fraudulently obtained by a Set of Booksellers in Dublin , who have printed of the same , and advertised it in the public Papers I am not inclined to cast national Reflections , but I must avow , that I looked up

this to be a more flagrant and atrocious Proceeding than any I have heard of for a long Time .

Sir Walter Scott , who favoured the bildungsroman and open plots , wrote in his " Prefatory Memoir to Richardson " to *The Novels of Samuel Richardson* (1824) :

In his two first novels , also , he shewed much attention to the plot ; and though diffuse and prolix in narration , can never be said to be rambling or desultory . No characters are introduced , but for the purpose of advancing the plot ; and there are but few of those digressive dialogues and dissertations with which Sir Charles Grandison abounds . The story keeps the direct road , though it moves slowly . But in his last work , the author is much more excursive . There is indeed little in the plot to require attention ; the various events , which are successively narrated , being no otherwise connected together , than as they place the character of the hero in some new and peculiar point of view . The same may be said of the numerous and long conversations upon religious and moral topics , which compose so great a part of the work , that a venerable old lady , whom we well knew , when in advanced age , she became subject to drowsy fits , chose to hear Sir Charles Grandison read to her as she sat in her elbow @-@ chair , in preference to any other work , ' because , ' said she , ' should I drop asleep in course of the reading , I am sure , when I awake , I shall have lost none of the story , but shall find the party , where I left them , conversing in the cedar @-@ parlour . ' ? It is probable , after all , that the prolixity of Richardson , which , to our giddy @-@ paced times , is the greatest fault of his writing , was not such an objective to his contemporaries .

Although Scott is antipathetic towards Richardson 's final novel , not everyone was of the same opinion ; Jane Austen was a devotee of the novel , which was part of her mental furniture to the point where she could claim to describe " all that was ever said or done in the cedar parlour " . She would for example casually compare a flower in a new cap she got to the white feather described by Harriet Byron as being in hers . Nevertheless , throughout her life she also subjected Grandison to much affectionate , even satirical mockery - adapting it into a dramatic lampoon (not published until 1980) around 1800 . Her juvenalia also included a heroine who geyed Harriet Byron 's frequent fainting , through being ? in such a hurry to have a succession of fainting fits , that she had scarcely patience enough to recover from one before she fell into another ? . As late as 1813 , she would respond to a long letter from her sister Cassandra by exclaiming ? Dear me ! ... Like Harriet Byron I ask , what am I to do with my Gratitude ? .

Later critics believed that it is possible that Richardson 's work failed because the story deals with a " good man " instead of a " rake " , which prompted Richardson 's biographers Thomas Eaves and Ben Kimpel to claim , this " might account for the rather uneasy relationship between the story of the novel and the character of its hero , who is never credible in his double love ? or in any love . " Flynn agrees that this possibility is an " attractive one " , and conditions it to say that " it is at least certain that the deadly weighted character of Sir Charles stifles the dramatic action of the book . " John Mullan suggests that the problem stems from Grandison 's role as a hero when he says , " his hero is able to display his virtue in action ; as a consequence , Sir Charles Grandison presents its protagonist without the minutely analyzed reflexes of emotion that brought his heroines to life . "

Some critics , like Mark Kinkead @-@ Weekes and Margaret Doody , like the novel and emphasise the importance of the moral themes that Richardson takes up . In a 1987 article , Kinkead @-@ Weekes admits that the " novel fails at the [moral] crisis " and " it must be doubtful whether it could hope for much life in the concluding volumes " . However , those like Jean Hagstrum believe that " Richardson 's last novel is considerably better than can be easily imagined by those who have only heard about it . But admittedly it represents a falling off after *Clarissa* " . Morris Golden simply claims that the novel is a book for old men .