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1

Dress and the Discourses of the Mind

To understand the relationship between body and dress, and the connections among body, dress, thoughts, words, gestures, history, and mind, is to understand the epistemology that underlies Richardson's use of dress as discourse in his novels. And the place to begin understanding these relationships is by comprehending how the majority of eighteenth-century English men and women, in particular, Samuel Richardson himself, understood the relationship between body and mind and between mind and soul.

As Roy Porter, Christopher Fox, and others have demonstrated, numerous and often conflicting notions about the relationships among body, mind, and soul circulated during the early part of the eighteenth century, framed by religious, scientific, and philosophical debate.¹ However, Richardson's published writings and personal correspondence show compelling evidence of engagement with and admiration for the philosophical works of John Locke, as does Richardson's appreciation for *The Spectator*, among the first literary productions to advocate and promote Locke's ideas. Locke's treatises, then, serve as a base point for discussion, and, through an examination of those precepts of Locke's philosophy that Richardson embraced and those that he clearly rejected, Richardson's own philosophy regarding the mind and its outward expressions may be determined.

As any reader of *Pamela*, Part Two, can attest, Richardson had studied Locke's treatise, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, as Pamela comments extensively on the work and on Locke himself. Although Mr. B. "holds a very high regard for this Author," Pamela finds "some few things which I think want clearing up" in regards to Locke's treatise, and, indeed, she is able to find "fault with such a genius as Mr. Locke."² Yet Pamela's fault finding is over minor points and "little matters" (IV:224),

not larger theoretical principles; she largely subscribes to Locke's thoughts on the education of children, though she offers small, yet sensible, modifications.³ As Pamela notes, "... I thought it an excellent piece, in the main" (IV:217), and, from this, we may assume that Richardson himself approved of Locke's theories on education, "in the main." In addition, in *The Apprentice's Vade Mecum*, Richardson paraphrases Locke's thoughts on the soul, as articulated in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, and some of the language of *Clarissa* vividly echoes *An Essay*, Locke's most renowned text.⁴

For Locke, the body, soul, and consciousness work in unison to fashion the individual. The body, consisting of "the cohesion of solid, and consequently separable, parts and a power of communicating motion by impulse," is "but a participation of the same continued life, by constantly fleeting particles of matter, in succession vitally united to the same organized body."⁵ Locke's description of the body allows for aging, change, loss of limb, as it is "the same continued life" and "the same organized body." This physical body is animated by the soul. As Locke writes, "our idea of soul, as an immaterial spirit, is of a substance that thinks, and has a power of exciting motion in body, by willing, or thought."⁶ George Cheyne, the celebrated Bath medical doctor, both friend and physician to Richardson, viewed body and soul in a similar, though rather more mechanical, way, with the body as some complicated piece of machinery, operated and overseen by the soul:

the Human Body is a Machin of an infinite Number and Variety of different Channels and Pipes, filled with various and different Liquors and Fluids, perpetually running, glideing, or creeping forward, or returning backward, in a constant *Circle*, and sending out little Branches and Outlets, to moisten, nourish, and repair the Expences of Living. That the Intelligent Principle, or *Soul*, resides somewhere in the Brain, where all the Nerves, or Instruments of Sensation terminate, like a *Musician* in a finely fram'd and well-tun'd Organ-Case; that these Nerves are like *Keys*, which, being struck on or touch'd, convey the Sound and Harmony to this sentient Principle, or *Musician*.⁷

Within the brain, "the Intelligent Principle, or *Soul*" resides. Cheyne further notes that "the Intelligent Principle is like a Bell in a Steeple, to which there are an infinite Number of Hammers all around it, with Ropes of all Lengths, terminating or touching at every Point of the Surface of the Trunk or Case."⁸ Thus, the soul or spirit animates, regulates,

and directs the body. As *The Spectator* observes, the soul “remembers, understands, wills, or imagines.”⁹ This general understanding of the relationship between body, mind, and spirit was so ubiquitous that it entered into conduct-book literature of the time, appearing in *The Virgin’s Nosegay* (1744) and Wetenhall Wilkes’s *A Letter of Genteel and Moral Advice* (1740), for example. (Indeed, conduct-book authors appeal to Locke’s theories with surprising regularity.)

To Locke, “the *idea of a man*” or human is “not the idea of a thinking or rational being alone ... but of a body, so and so shaped, joined to it.”¹⁰ Yet neither body nor soul truly constitutes the person for Locke, though both necessarily play an integral part in the creation of personal identity. No, consciousness alone is responsible for self-identity, though soul or spirit proves the animating force behind thought and action, and though the body provides the raw materials for consciousness and thought, through the five senses. Consciousness unites body and soul, “with the same personality.”¹¹

Locke likens the mind to a “cabinet,” a “closet,” or a “room,” empty and dark at birth, with the bodily senses akin to windows letting in sunlight, and soon furnishing the darkened room with ideas gathered from sensation, which are, in turn, reflected upon and stored in memory.¹² For Locke, the mind is the storeroom of memory, the workshop of consciousness, where simple ideas become transmuted or refashioned into complex ones. The body and soul identify the individual as “man,” or human, but consciousness identifies him or her as “person.” Consciousness is personal identity, selfhood, and yet Locke still insists that “this consciousness is annexed to, and the affection of, one individual immaterial substance,” that is, the soul.¹³ Thus, personal identity requires both body and soul in order to operate, as the former provides sensory input necessary to provide the objects of thought, as well as the physical form necessary to be identified as human, and the latter initiates thought and animates the physical body; however, for Locke, consciousness identifies the person and always will, regardless of whether the individual changes his body or her soul for another. Specifically, Locke plays with the ideas that, if what constitutes consciousness enters into a different body, the person is still the same, though the physical body is different, and if the soul, after death, forgets the personal identity it formerly had, then it and the person with which it formerly co-existed are not the same. Locke does not worry about the afterlife of the soul, viewing mysteries of the soul as mysteries of God. Although Locke believes the soul is immortal, he remains skeptical about or perhaps indifferent to the soul’s ability to remember its past consciousness

or its need to reunite with a particular physical body at Judgment Day. The soul would be judged on its past, somehow or other, whether remembered or not, whether possessed of material presence or not.

Locke's position on the soul and its relationship to the body presented many of his contemporaries with quandaries regarding the Resurrection, as scripture indicated that the physical body was necessary for reanimation at Judgment Day. So too did his ideas of the primacy of consciousness over soul and the possibility that consciousness could be transferred from soul to soul, as this suggested a separation between soul, the intelligent principle behind thought, and thoughts themselves.¹⁴ Nonetheless, many individuals subscribed to Locke's general principles regarding human understanding, with some modifications and concessions made to accommodate the notions that some essential self existed, in the form of the soul; that the soul could be readily identifiable in another life and in the afterlife; that this soul retained consciousness after the death of the physical body; and, finally, that it was somehow capable of perpetual progression. Addison and Steele, and, later, Richardson himself, would be among this group.

Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, authors of *The Spectator*, were among the earliest literary proponents of Locke's work, and, while it is evident that Richardson himself had read Locke's treatises, many of Richardson's own interpretations of Locke's theories appear heavily influenced by *The Spectator*. In humorous fashion, *The Spectator* dissects a "Beau's Head" to find it stuffed, in the mode of Locke's cabinet or room, with "Ribbons, Lace, and Embroidery," "Billet-doux, Love-Letters, pricked Dances," powder and scent; "Fictions, Flatteries and Falsehoods, Vows, Promises and Protestations" and "Oaths and Imprecations"; and "a bundle of Sonnets and little Musical Instruments."¹⁵ The interior of the beau's skull is described in terms of "Apartments" filled with "several kinds of Furniture."¹⁶ Similar language is used in *Clarissa*, when Belford, writing to Lovelace, reminds Lovelace that "thou ... sayst, That we do but hang out a Sign, in our dress, of what we have in the Shop of our Minds," and he asks Lovelace, "tell me, if thou canst, What sort of Sign must thou hang out, wert thou obliged to give us a clear idea by it of the furniture of *thy* mind?" (6:403). The idea of the mind as shop also appears in *Pamela*, Part Two, in an exchange between Polly Darnford and an unidentified masquerader (IV:53). For Richardson, as for so many of his contemporaries, the mind is the storehouse of thoughts, where consciousness is housed and where personal identity exists.

Richardson's transformation of Locke's room, or *The Spectator's* apartments, into a shop is suggestive, though, in fact, this particular

trope became commonplace rather quickly, playfully alluded to in Swift's *A Tale of a Tub* (1704), wherein "the faculties of the mind were deduced" as follows: "embroidery was sheer wit; gold fringe was agreeable conversation; gold lace was repartee; a huge long periwig was humor; and a coat full of powder was very good raillery."¹⁷ *The Connoisseur*, a mid-century periodical primarily authored by Bonnell Thornton and George Colman, taking its cue from Swift, devoted two issues to the discussion, with a pretend letter to the editor, inquiring, "But where, Mr. Town, can these people go to cloath their minds, or at what shops are retailed sense and virtue?"¹⁸

In Richardson's case, the choice of shop over room or apartment is deliberate, at least in *Clarissa*, as Richardson seeks to establish a link between the selling of merchandize and the selling of young girls on the marriage market. He may also wish to draw the reader's attention to Lovelace as salesman, falsely advertising damaged or shoddy goods. However, it also suggests that Richardson views the mind and the person in more social terms, possibly as a contractual obligation to represent oneself accurately. In addition, whereas personal identity and consciousness in Locke seem oddly isolated from social interaction, as the only entry into this "closet" of the mind comes from the physical senses, Richardson instead seems to feel that sympathetic minds can meet at some level, and, in *The History of Sir Charles Grandison*, he even imaginatively employs Locke's notion that the same mind, the same consciousness, can exist simultaneously in two different individuals. It is no wonder that Sir Charles, faced with two such "Sister-excellencies!" as Harriet Byron and Clementina della Porretta, is afflicted with a "divided heart."¹⁹ Sir Charles repeatedly comments upon the seemingly identical nature of the two young women's essential selves: "You are Clementina and Harriet, both in one: One mind certainly informs you both" (3:191), he muses. To Harriet, Sir Charles remarks: "There spoke Miss Byron, and Clementina, both in one! Surely you two are informed by one mind! What is distance of countries! What obstacles can there be, to dissever Souls so paired!" (3:145). To Clementina, he approvingly comments, "Generous, noble Clementina! ... My Harriet is another Clementina! You are another Harriet!" (3:343). In Richardson's fictive worlds, kindred minds and souls will seek each other, as Anna Howe writes to Clarissa: "—But LIKE little souls will find one another out, and mingle, as well as LIKE great ones" (1:88).

Richardson also appears to have accepted, within limits, Locke's somewhat nebulous stance on the soul, at least in terms of human inability to comprehend the workings of God. For instance, in *The Apprentice's*

Vade Mecum, when confronting a world “over-run with Atheism, Deism, and Infidelity,”²⁰ Richardson argues for religious belief based on faith. He speaks of the “Soul, whose *Substance, Origination, Constitution, Operation*, and every thing of it, but that we know *it is*, and *feel* by its *Effects*, is altogether hidden from us.”²¹ He continues, saying, “Our coming into the World is totally a *Mystery*: No human Reason can attain unto it. And must there be no *Mystery* at all in our *Regeneration*, being born unto the never-ending World of Spirits? Is not the *other World*, is not *Heaven*, a *Mystery* to us? Do we *understand* it perfectly? Can we describe it?”²² Thus, Richardson, like Locke, appears largely unconcerned with where the soul has been, prior to its inhabitation of the body; what form the soul will take, after the demise of the body; or even if a material body will attach itself to the soul at Judgment Day.

Yet, as anyone might expect from the author of *Clarissa*, Richardson, like most of his contemporaries, nonetheless required the assurance and comfort of an afterlife, where good was rewarded and evil punished, for where can such a tragic young creature as Clarissa find comfort, if not in her “*Father’s house, Heaven*” (7:252). Once again, *The Spectator* offers a solution. Although Addison and Steele embrace Lockean philosophy, they refashion it in ways that ameliorate the Lockean soul, by suggesting that the soul of the departed retains consciousness of its earthly existence and that earthly deeds affect not only life on earth, but the afterlife as well. *Spectator* No. 90 muses on the Platonic notion that the soul, after death, retains the passions that enslaved it during life: “When therefore the obscene Passions in particular have once taken Root and spread themselves in the Soul, they cleave to her inseparably, and remain in her for ever after the Body is cast off and thrown aside.” Punishment in the afterlife, thus, is a fitting one, in Dante-ish fashion: “In this therefore (say the *Platonists*) consists the Punishment of a voluptuous Man after Death. He is tormented with Desires which it is impossible for him to gratify, solicited by a Passion that has neither Objects nor Organs adapted to it.”²³ And *Spectator* No. 447 assures its readers that they but plant the seeds of their afterlife while on earth:

The Seeds of those spiritual Joys and Rapture, which are to rise up and flourish in the Soul to all Eternity, must be planted in her, during this her present State of Probation. In short, Heaven is not to be looked upon only as a Reward, but as the natural Effect of a religious Life.

On the other Hand, those evil Spirits, who, by long Custom, have contracted in the Body Habits of Lust and Sensuality, Malice and Revenge, an Aversion to every thing that is good, just or laudable, are

naturally seasoned and prepared for Pain and Misery. Their Torments have already taken root in them. . . . They may, indeed, taste a kind of malignant Pleasure in those Actions to which they are accustomed, whilst in this Life, but when they are removed from all those Objects which are here apt to gratifie them, they will naturally become their own Tormentors.²⁴

Certainly, one need only be reminded of the sordid deaths experienced by Richardson's rakes and libertines, like Sir Hargrave Pollexfen and the brutish Mowbray, or the horrific death of the wicked madam, Magdalen Sinclair, to see how Richardson subscribed to this view of the soul, both when housed in the earthly body and in its afterlife. Clarissa, in contrast, no doubt enjoys "those Supernumerary Joys of Heart, that rise from . . . the Prospect of an happy Immortality."²⁵

Richardson also departs from Lockean philosophy on the issue of whether or not the soul possessed "certain *innate principles* . . . which the soul receives in its very first being, and brings into the world with it."²⁶ Locke begins Book One, Chapter One, of *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* by emphatically stating that it does not. While the soul is necessary to Locke, as the animator of thought and action, it is never viewed as possessing any innate qualities or traits that might be identified with personal identity. In contrast, with Richardson, as with *The Spectator*, the soul is the essential self that is molded and modified by lived experience. While Locke threw nature out, or, at least, devalued it, in deference to nurture, Richardson, Addison, Steele, and, indeed, I would suspect, most eighteenth-century English men and women preferred a more balanced combination of nature and nurture. For instance, in a letter to Frances Grainger, dated 29 March 1750, Richardson asks her "to explain yourself on one sentence in your last letter," which apparently is that "Human nature will sometimes give the lye to virtue." Richardson responds, "and so it will, but it *ought not* nor *will* in a good girl; in a girl who is good by principle. Such a one may err by sudden impulse, thro' passion, or from persecution or provocation; but not with deliberation if she have principle. Like a bow overstrained, she will soon return to her natural bent, and be sorry for her error; and resolve to do her duty to others, whether others do theirs by her or not."²⁷ Common eighteenth-century usage of "principle," as defined in *OED*, relates it to inborn traits or characteristics: "An original or native tendency or faculty; a natural or innate disposition; a fundamental quality which constitutes the source of action." For Richardson, principle is the "natural bent" associated with the soul, rather than with the conscious

mind. Thus, Clarissa is, by nature, “a good girl.” Even Lovelace, thwarted in his efforts to “tempt her” (4:223), writes, “Then her LOVE OF VIRTUE seems to be *Principle*, native principle, or, if *not* native, so deeply rooted, that its fibres have struck into her heart, and, as she grew up, so blended and twisted themselves with the strings of life, that I doubt there is no separating of the one without cutting the others asunder” (4:224). Principles are “native,” instilled at birth, part and parcel of the soul.

Lovelace, alas, is deeply flawed not only from a lack of early discipline, but is “wicked upon Principle,” that is, his very soul is flawed.²⁸ To Lady Bradshaigh, Richardson writes, “... as shocking as his [Lovelace’s] Actions are, they are but the natural Consequences of his Principles, as laid down at this very first Appearance in the Story.”²⁹ Lovelace possesses innate character flaws, which early indulgence from an overly fond mother and a doting uncle have nurtured. As Lord M., Lovelace’s uncle, sadly comments, “Indeed, it was his poor Mother that first spoil’d him; and I have been but too indulgent to him since” (4:119). Yet, through conscious and concerted effort, any soul may improve itself, as it is the natural inclination of the soul to seek virtue: This “perpetual Progress of the Soul” generates “From its Passions and Sentiments, as particularly from its Love of Existence, its Horror of Annihilation, and its Hopes of Immortality, with that Uneasiness which follows in it upon the Commission of Vice.”³⁰

If the soul, then, possesses some sorts of innate qualities or principles, then it seeks housing suitable for its earthly sojourn, and, thus, the general belief in eighteenth-century England that physiognomy directly expressed the soul and mind housed within. As Juliet McMaster writes, during the eighteenth century, “The truth or otherwise of the doctrines of physiognomy—the study of the stable structures of face and body as indicators of lasting characteristics of the mind and soul—was hotly debated by laymen as well as by men of science and specialists in anatomy.”³¹ *The Spectator*, as is often the case, provides a succinct and elegant description of the overall debate:

Whether or no the different Motions of Animal Spirits in different Passions, may have any Effect on the Mould of the Face when the Lineaments are pliable and tender, or whether the same Kind of Souls require the same Kind of Habitations, I shall leave to the Consideration of the Curious. In the mean Time I think nothing can be more glorious, than for a Man to give the Lie to his Face, and to be an honest, just, good-natured Man, in spite of all those Marks and Signatures

which Nature seems to have set upon him for the Contrary. This very often happens among those, who instead of being exasperated by their own Looks, or envying the Looks of others, apply themselves entirely to the cultivating of their Minds, and getting those Beauties which are more lasting and more ornamental.³²

(Animal spirits were fine streams of fluids, connecting soul and mind to the various parts of the body, and, thus, might imprint a youthful, pliable face with those passions that predominate in the mind or soul.) Regardless, the soul somehow inscribes itself upon the body and the face, and a person must deliberately eschew his native bent in order to give “the Lie to his Face.”

What then are readers to make of a Lovelace possessed of “a graceful exterior which belies his moral corruption”?³³ McMaster argues that “Lovelace’s physical grace signals the good man he might have been, rather than the licentious reprobate he is,”³⁴ and, while this is indeed true, a rake, almost by definition, must possess a pleasing exterior. The devil takes many agreeable forms, as any eighteenth-century reader of Milton would know, and *Clarissa* allows Lovelace’s exceedingly good looks to seduce her better judgment, at least initially. In addition, one might argue that Lovelace’s handsome face and elegant form are the perfect abode for someone possessed of two primary vices, “Women, and the Love of plots and intrigues” (7:11). Like *Dorian Gray*, Lovelace’s handsome exterior actually aids and abets his inward corruption. Yet, in virtually all other instances, the body and face of Richardson’s characters conforms exactly to their mind and soul. From the “good” characters, such as Sir Charles Grandison, Harriet Byron, Clementina della Porretta, *Clarissa Harlowe*, Pamela Andrews, and even the naughty Mr. B., to “bad” characters, such as the bawdy Mrs. Jewkes, the loathsome Solmes, and the arrogant Sir Hargrave Pollexfen, to mixed characters, such as Colbrand, Belford, and Olivia, face and form mirror, not mask, essential character.

Together, soul, body, and mind express some sort of truth about the individual, as, while it is possible to refine or improve upon these fundamental elements, for instance, through education or religious practice, or through exercise and diet, the fact remains that, at least in eighteenth-century thought, the body, mind, and soul were difficult to falsify and impossible to alter in any real significant way. One cannot decide to lie to oneself, without being aware that one is lying, nor can one physically manipulate bone, tissue, and muscle in any substantial or meaningful way, in order to make the self taller, the bones finer, the lips fuller, or the

nose smaller (at least not in eighteenth-century England). Yet, of all of these elements, only the physical body is clearly legible to others, and, even then, only the general outlines of the body and certain body parts, such as face and hands, were normally visible in eighteenth-century dress. Thus, in order to discover or interpret the soul or mind of another requires reliance upon other discourses produced by the soul and mind—words, gestures, personal history, and, what may seem odd at first to include in this listing, dress. While the soul, mind, and body are the primary components of selfhood, constituting both human and person, as Locke would say, all of the secondary discourses of mind, body, and soul are utilized when conducting social relations, and all may be used either to communicate with others or to deceive them.

These secondary discourses, though understood to be flawed or imperfect forms of communication, nonetheless were believed to reveal something of the thoughts housed in the “cabinet” of the mind, thoughts initiated by the soul. Facial expressions, gestures, mannerisms, and deportment were studied widely in the eighteenth century and earlier, and, as McMaster notes, the theater, painting, and the novel made lavish use of the art of pathognomy, “the study of passing facial expressions and bodily motions as signs of passing emotions and states of mind, such as anger or fear or shame.”³⁵ According to McMaster, “the doctrines of pathognomy were less disputed than those of physiognomy” and “the process by which passion issues as expression and gesture, the mental motions being physically manifested, was read as good and satisfactory, whether or not the passion being manifested was approved.”³⁶ While it was acknowledged that an individual could consciously control or manipulate her gestures or facial expressions, yet, so it was thought, evidence of the true self would inevitably reveal itself, through involuntary impulses, such as a blush, a grimace, a shudder, or a shiver, particularly when confronted with events that provoked extreme passions. As discourse, it was pleasurable reading for eighteenth-century English men and women, a “familiar satisfaction in a comfortable system of signs and correspondences.”³⁷ The language of the soul and the mind is writ directly upon the body to be read and interpreted by others—or so it was believed.

Words, of course, were viewed as direct communications of thoughts: “For what are *words* but the *body* and *dress* of *thought*?” According to Locke, words function as “external sensible signs, whereof those invisible ideas, which his thoughts are made up of, might be known to others.”³⁸ Or, to restate in slightly different fashion, “words in their primary and immediate signification stand for nothing but *the ideas in the mind of*

him that uses them, how imperfectly soever or carelessly those ideas are collected from the things which they are supposed to represent."³⁹ Choice of words, style of delivery, topic, tone, and accent were all considered indicators of the relative refinement of the mind. Yet, again, the language of words is flawed, in several respects: First, words, either directly or perhaps even through their delivery, may be used to deceive. As Lord M. says to Lovelace, "And, to be sure, you have naturally a great deal of Elocution; a tongue that would delude an angel, as the women say—To their sorrow, some of them, poor creatures!" (4:242). Second, words, even if sincere and truthful communications of the mind and soul, nonetheless are merely words, which may or may not be acted upon. To quote the proverb-spouting Lord M. again, "*Words are wind; but deeds are mind*" (6:212). Or, worse yet, words may be empty of meaning. *The Connoisseur* writes, "It is supposed by *Locke* and other close reasoners, that words are intended as signs of our ideas: but daily experience will convince us, that words are used to express no ideas at all."⁴⁰ So words, whether spoken or written, whether truthful or not, require actions or deeds to give them credence, and this is where personal history enters in, as it is the record of an individual's mind and soul, as recorded through deeds or actions.

To recall an earlier point in this discussion, the soul is "*a substance that thinks, and has a power of exciting motion in body, by willing, or thought.*"⁴¹ Personal history perfectly integrates the soul, mind, and body, as the soul generates thoughts and initiates will, the mind houses the thoughts, and the body acts upon these thoughts. This is true regardless of whether or not an action has been planned or deliberated, or is spur-of-the-moment, based upon instinct or passion. While it is a commonplace that the early English novel engages consciously with the genre of history, partly as renunciation of the romance genre, partly to create an aura of verisimilitude, history is also important in that it was considered the most complete record of an individual's life, a recounting of her thoughts or his deeds, and it was thought to be the only way to record fully the interior workings of the mind. Of course, this is why "lives" of real individuals, whether historical personages, criminals, or saints, were read and studied, and this is precisely what the early English novel attempts to capture. As Sarah Fielding writes, "The Reader, like a Traveller, herein views the Manners of human Nature, and Customs of the World; the Intrigues of Policy, the Arts of Lovers, and the Exploits of Heroes; with the secret Springs and Motives of their Actions."⁴² Thus, the full title of Richardson's masterpiece is *Clarissa; or The History of a Young Lady* and, thus, his final novel is entitled *The History*

of *Sir Charles Grandison*, as personal history is a continuous record of the mind that can be traced, studied, analyzed, and utilized as exemplar. History is the sum total of experience, the very thing that Locke argues provides a person with “the *materials* of reason and knowledge,”⁴³ that is, the stuff of consciousness. As Lovelace exclaims, “What a devil does a man read history for, if he cannot but profit by the examples he finds in it?” (6:106)

Yet, like words and gestures, history may also lie. Although actions are viewed as direct indicators of “mind,” as Lord M. reminds us, personal history (or any history, for that matter) may be falsified or distorted by the teller of that history (and, of course, Richardson’s “histories” are fictions). Actions may also belie true thoughts, as when the individual feels she must act a certain way, regardless of her true feelings, or actions may only superficially indicate the depth or sincerity of the thoughts they express. *Spectator* No. 257 comments, “it is impossible for outward Actions to represent the Perfections of the Soul, because they can never shew the Strength of those Principles from whence they proceed. They are not adequate Expressions of our Virtues, and can only shew us what Habits are in the Soul, without discovering the Degree and Perfection of such Habits. They are at best but weak Resemblances of our Intentions.”⁴⁴

Thus, gestures, words, and even deeds are but “faint and imperfect Copies” of the thoughts housed in the mind, subject to falsification and misinterpretation, with gesture contradicting word, with word belying deed.⁴⁵ Yet, for all that, gestures, words, and deeds emanate directly from the mind, and they are communicated directly through the body, via the face, the hand, the mouth, etc. Clothing and accoutrement, in contrast, are material objects that exist outside the body, but that, nonetheless, rank equally with gestures, words, and actions as a discourse of the mind.

Dress, unlike other material objects, possesses certain attributes that permit it to function as one of the discourses used for communicating, understanding, and interpreting the mind and soul. First, its close proximity to the body, laying directly next to the skin and draped over bone and muscle, allows it to function as a second skin of sorts. In the eighteenth century, very little of the body was actually visible, even in the most private of circumstances, and, thus, clothing necessarily spoke on behalf of the body. It did so by providing a general indication of the shape of the body, its bone, fat, and muscle, and it drew attention to particular parts or aspects of the body, such as the texture of the skin, the tint and hue of the flesh, the shape of the face, or the size of the foot or hand. Second, while clothing may provide deliberately false or confusing messages about the body, with or without intent to deceive

(for instance, by making body parts appear larger or smaller than they really are), these “false” messages nonetheless often provide some indication of what is going on in the mind, of the desire for the body to be something that it is not. Clothing not only speaks of the real physical body enclosed within, but of the ideal body to which the individual aspires. Third, for eighteenth-century English men and women, the individual’s inner soul was believed to find expression in the choices made in dress. For example, *The Spectator* indicates that modesty is “a kind of quick and delicate *feeling* in the Soul,”⁴⁶ and modest dress would, of course, express this. In addition, clothing records memory and traces personal history, not only the physical growth, development, and aging of the human body, but events, mundane or momentous, in human lives. Last, clothing is above all a social object, with specific garments worn in deference to or defiance of social custom. However, despite all this, it is important to note that signification associated with clothing is inherently unstable, its meaning dependent upon and determined in relation to myriad other factors, many of which may be consciously manipulated by the wearer.

Let us return, then, to the questions raised by Clarissa’s original statement and what they mean in terms of what Richardson attempted to accomplish through the depiction of dress: “For what are *words*, but the *body* and *dress* of *thought*? And is not the mind strongly indicated by its outward dress?” First, words are to thoughts, as body and dress are to thoughts, mind, and soul. Dress expresses consciousness, or personal identity, which is the content of the mind, the thoughts, and memories contained within; it directly engages with the body, which, in turn, bears the outward marks of the mind and the soul; and it also expresses the innate principles of the soul. Clothing, as much as words, is “the *body* and *dress* of *thought*,” the outward manifestation of the inner self. Dress engages with conscious thought, as stored within the “shop of the mind,” but also with innate principle, as associated with the soul, the initiator of thought and action, located within the mind.

Second, dress may be read by itself, but, for dress to function fully as discourse, it must always be read in conjunction with the body, as the body provides crucial information for interpreting the full implications of dress. Garments must always be read in the context both of the clothes themselves and the bodies that are covered by them, and context is always determined by culture. For instance, as will be the case in *The History of Sir Charles Grandison*, pink and yellow ribbons are coded as “youthful” and “feminine,” and, thus, when they appear on a body that is old, or masculine, they suggest imbalance, a discrepancy between

body and mind. This is an important point to note, for though body and dress are both deemed outward expressions of the mind and soul, they may be in conflict, with the body expressing one thing (for instance, age) and the mind expressing another (for instance, the desire for youth).

Finally, clothing and accoutrement, like any other discourse of the mind, may be manipulated or falsified, yet, when read in conjunction with the other discourses of the mind, with body, words, gestures, and personal history, indications of perfidy will ultimately and inevitably reveal themselves, no matter how clever and capable the artificer, or so it was widely believed in eighteenth-century English culture. This is always the case in Richardson's novels.

As will be demonstrated in Chapter 2, in eighteenth-century England, "The taste of the present age seems to be dress,"⁴⁷ and clothing and accoutrement were objects carefully observed, studied, and interpreted by all, as indicators of the minds and souls of the wearers. The need to interpret correctly the minds and souls of others became increasingly important during the early eighteenth century, when social categories were undergoing destabilization and reinterpretation. In literature, particularly within the genre of the novel, which directly reflects and articulates the destabilization of social categories, as McKeon and others have demonstrated, the clothing choices of the characters could be studied in similar fashion, allowing readers to determine the messages that dress disclosed about the various characters and about the didactic purpose of the novel itself. It might be argued that the novel provided eighteenth-century English men and women with a primer as to the correct way to read the dress of others and how to clothe and dress themselves. In addition, with the novel's pretence of presenting the personal history of a particular character, as a written record of the character's thoughts and actions, it was a natural step to read the related discourses of mind and soul, as expressed through the character's words, looks, gestures, and dress.

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